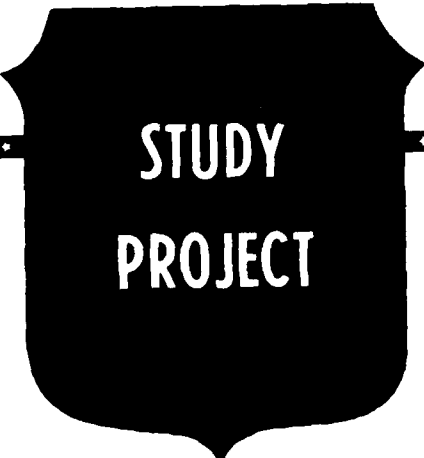


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THE U.S. MARITIME STRATEGY AND ITS EFFECT ON U.S.--NORWEGIAN RELATIONS AND SECURITY

BY
COLONEL ODD V. SKJOSTAD

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THE U.S. MARITIME STRATEGY AND ITS EFFECT
ON U.S.-NORWEGIAN RELATIONS AND SECURITY

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

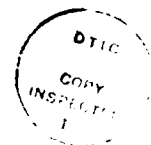
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and political fields. *Keywords: Military strategy, Naval operations,
Norway, International politics, (etc)*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.	11
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.	1
Background.	1
Purpose	2
Figure 1 - Northern Europe.	3
CHAPTER II. THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT	4
The Strategic Importance of the Nordic Countries	4
Security Politics in the Nordic Countries	4
The Significance of Norwegian Territory .	6
CHAPTER III. THE DEFENSE OF NORWAY	8
Norwegian Defense and the Balance of Power.	8
Figure 2 - Airfields in North Norway. . .	9
Soviet Operations Against North Norway. .	12
CHAPTER IV. THE UNITED STATES MARITIME STRATEGY . . .	15
CHAPTER V. THE NORWEGIAN SECURITY CALCULUS	18
General	18
The Base Policy	18
The Nuclear Policy.	19
Chemical Weapons.	19
The Practice as Regard to Military Exercises	20
Norway and Naval Operations	20
CHAPTER VI. U.S. MARITIME STRATEGY'S INFLUENCE ON U.S.-NORWEGIAN RELATIONS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	23
A More Aggressive Pattern of Operations .	23
A Crisis Management Scenario.	24
A War-fighting Scenario	25
Conclusion.	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	29

THE U.S. MARITIME STRATEGY AND ITS EFFECT
ON U.S.-NORWEGIAN RELATIONS AND SECURITY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

After the Second World War and through the fifties the Soviet fleet was considered much less a threat to the United States and her allies than the other services of the Soviet forces. This changed dramatically in the sixties with Admiral Gorshkov's new fleet plan. Norway was one of the first allied nations to warn other nations about the new development in the late sixties. She herself felt cut off by a new and more offensive manner of operations exhibited by the Soviet Northern Fleet. The Soviets were venturing increasingly out of their coastal waters off Kola to conduct operations along the Norwegian coast as far south as the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap (see Map, Figure 1). With a constant fleet build up, also in the seventies, this development threatened not only the remote Northern Flank of NATO, but also the decisive Central Command, by threatening the Atlantic Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOC).

The most recent and perhaps the most decisive countermove to this threat is the new U.S. Maritime Strategy. This strategy, centered around a fleet of capital ships (mainly aircraft carriers), advocates a naval offensive to gain the initiative, force the Soviet fleets back to their home waters, and finally to destroy them if necessary to gain peace on favorable terms.

PURPOSE

The Maritime Strategy, as part of U.S. Military Strategy, has not been met with unanimous support. It has been criticized for both political and military reasons. On the military side the critics are questioning the operational feasibility of the strategy because of the potentially high military risk involved. On the political side, there are fears that this is a more aggressive strategy that may provoke adverse Soviet reactions, increase the chances of war in Europe, and increase the chance of nuclear escalation.

On the Eastern Hemisphere the Maritime Strategy has lead to U.S. naval exercises and operations in Norwegian waters. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss if these operations are more aggressive today, and if they already have--or in time of tension and war would have--an influence on U.S.-Norwegian relations. We are discussing the positive influence of common goals, and common interests, but also the possible negative impacts. It is the thesis of the paper that the Maritime Strategy has increased the military operational interdependence between U.S. and Norway but that this development, although it is militarily positive, may influence Norwegian political interests negatively and therefor could hinder U.S.-Norwegian relations.

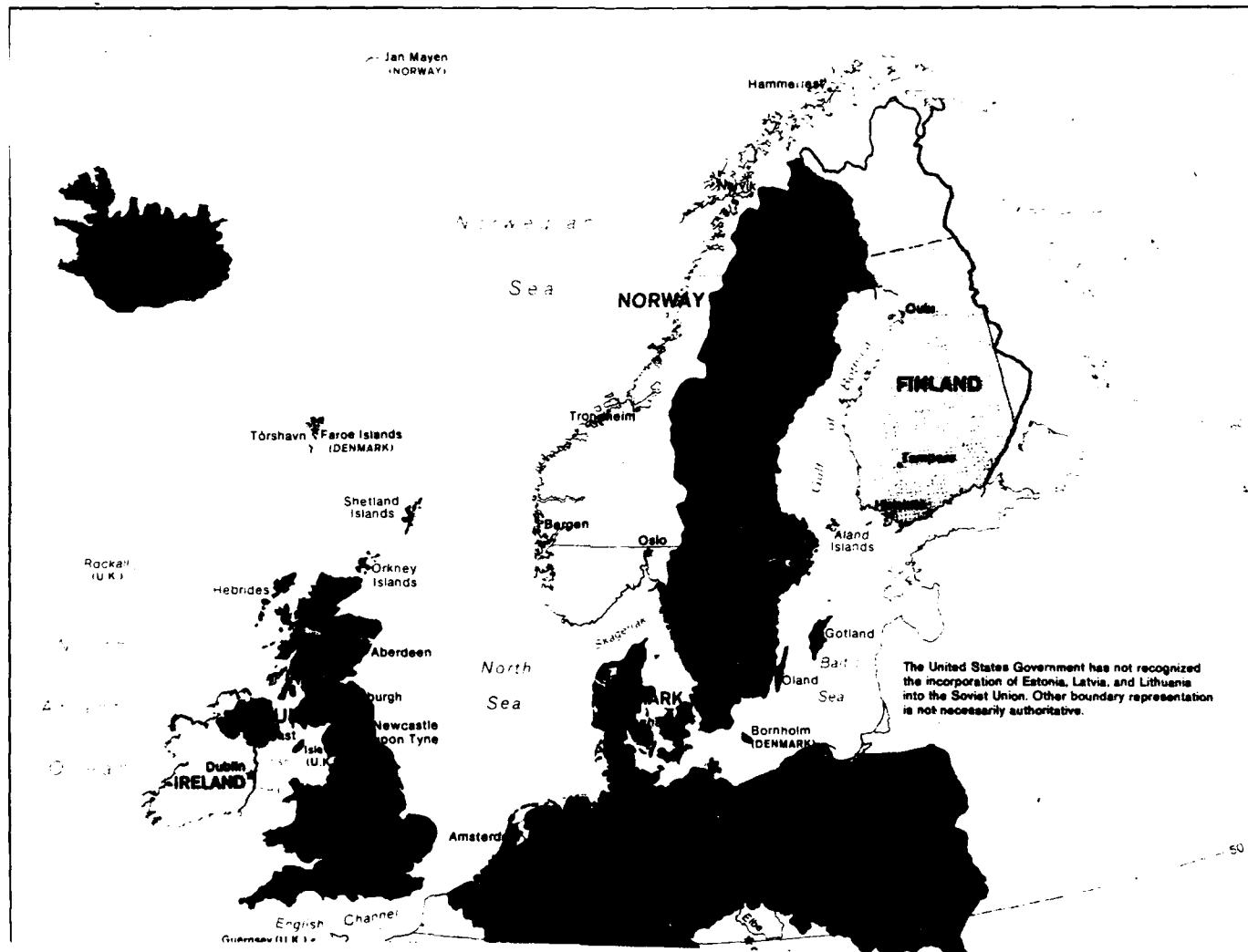


FIGURE 1

CHAPTER II

THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The Nordic Area which encompasses Sweden, Norway, Denmark (with Greenland), Iceland and Finland is a large area with an extremely small population. If one disregards Greenland, the world's largest island, the Nordic area is still larger than Great Britain, France, West Germany, Portugal and the BENELUX countries combined. But its population, at 22.5 million, is only one-tenth that of those countries.¹ Although all the countries are highly developed and the huge area possesses many natural resources, this does not explain the strategic importance of the region.

The geostrategic importance of the Nordic Countries stems from their position between the Soviet Union and the Atlantic Ocean. From the Nordic area one can control the Baltic approaches and the sea lanes to the Kola Peninsula. The Soviet Northern Fleet with its bases on Kola is the only Soviet fleet with a relatively unimpeded access to the Atlantic. The Baltic fleet, the other major Soviet fleet in the Nordic area, must pass through the Baltic approaches and the North Sea to get out to open ocean. Even if the approach to the Baltic is narrowed in between Swedish and Danish territories and the sea lanes to the Kola base must pass through the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap (GIUK Gap), Norwegian territory (with 2125 mile coast and countless fjords) plays the most significant strategic role.²

SECURITY POLITICS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

All Nordic countries espouse political values oriented towards the rest of Western Europe and North America. They also share a common appreciation of

the strategic importance of the area and spoken or unspoken fears about Soviet military power and a possible Soviet military threat to the Nordic area. For a variety of historical, geopolitical and strategic reasons they have chosen different roads to security. However, in charting their course they have taken into account the impact of their choices and dispositions on each other. Over time their chosen policies have crystallized into a coherent pattern of mutual consideration and restraint.

The term "Nordic Balance" has often been used to depict the pattern. The term is in some sense misleading; no balance has been established among the Nordic states, since they are not poised against one another. The Nordic pattern of mutual consideration and restraint applies most particularly to the military penetration of the Nordic area by outside powers. The overall common objective of their policies is to preserve stability in the region.³

Iceland has no army at all, but relies on the American Icelandic Defense Force for its own protection. All the other four countries have compulsory military service. Norway and Denmark are founding members of NATO, but neither permits the stationing of nuclear weapons or foreign troops on its soil in peacetime. The only exception is Greenland, where an agreement between the United States and Denmark enables the United States to station small conventional forces. Sweden pursues a policy of nonalignment in peacetime and armed neutrality in wartime. Finland is also nonaligned, but has, as a part of the peace agreement after the Second World War, entered a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance with the Soviet Union and agreed to limit the seize and quality of its defense. Both Sweden and Finland are non-nuclear nations and all Nordic countries ban the production, storage and use of chemical weapons. A common guideline in all Nordic foreign policies is to maintain the equilibrium and low level of tension in the area.⁴

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NORWEGIAN TERRITORY

Norway is a long, narrow and mountainous country bordering in the northeast on the Soviet Union with a 81 mile border, to the east on Finland and Sweden with 430 and 972 mile borders respectively. It covers an area about the size of Denmark, West Germany and the BENELUX countries combined. The population, however, is only slightly over four million. Furthermore, both the inhabitants and the resources are unevenly distributed. The three northern most counties: Nordland, Troms, and Finnmark (covering one-third of the territory) have only one tenth of the population. Accordingly, North Norway is militarily and in every other respect dependent on South Norway as a reinforcement area.

Only one main road and a single track railroad connect South Norway with North Norway. This makes the lines of communication extremely vulnerable and dependent on secure sea lanes.

The terrain is so rugged that in many places it forces mechanized formations to move on or close to the roads and to operate mostly from a single column.

Fjords are numerous and cut deep into the landmass. They are deep, sheltered from the open sea by numerous islands, and are flanked by high mountains. This makes low altitude air strikes difficult and stand off attacks with blue water cruise missiles almost impossible. Differences in temperature and salt density make underwater operations in the fjords very difficult. The height differences and the steep mountain sides generate reflexes when hit by electromagnetic energy. The terrain, therefore, also gives concealment against electromagnetic surveillance systems. Consequently, the fjords give excellent cover to naval forces.⁵

Along the coast are several military airfields which would have decisive influence on naval operations in Skagerak, the North Sea, the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea.

The coast in general is rugged and presents few landing sites for amphibious forces. However, amphibious landings are possible with detailed knowledge of local conditions.

The climate is exceptionally mild along the coast which assures ice free conditions in the fjords during the winter. On land the winter climate is harsh and calls for winter equipment and winter trained troops.

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CHAPTER III
THE DEFENSE OF NORWAY

NORWEGIAN DEFENSE AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

The Defense

It may be assumed that, if war breaks out between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, North Norway would be in the center of gravity of a naval confrontation in this theater of operations. The possession of the five military airfields in the north: Banak, Andoya, Bardufoss, Evenes and Bodo would play a dominant role and the fjords would offer natural cover and concealment to naval forces. South Norway plays, at least initially, an important part in giving depth and support to forward defense of the Baltic exits and Schleswig-Holstein.

The initial battle in the Baltic would be fought by Danish and German forces, both to prevent the Soviet Baltic Fleet from breaking out into open waters and to protect the northern flank of the Central Region. Sweden's defense is considered strong enough to protect her neutrality.¹ The Defense of Norway is organized accordingly, with its main effort in the north. Finland's political situation makes it less certain that she would be able to protect her neutrality under all circumstances. The organization of the defense in North Norway takes this into consideration.

The Norwegian forces in the area are two garrison battalion groups in Finnmark reinforced through mobilization to a total strength equivalent to two small brigades. They are concentrated along the border with the Soviet Union and around Banak airfield. In Troms the standing force in peacetime is Brigade North; it is reinforced by two brigades mobilized locally in Troms and Nordland and three brigades transferred from South Norway. One of them has its heavy equipment prestocked in the north.

Commander North Norway (COMMON) has a joint HQ in Bodo. Under him, Commander Land North Norway (COMLANDNON) will direct the operations from a forward tactical HQ in Troms through the Mobile Div. 6 HQ, and through a Defense District HQ.

Naval forces in the area are 15 coastal batteries concentrated along the coast from Lyngen Fjord to Ofoten Fjord. The forts are equipped with modern 120 mm automatic guns, with modern fire control systems and are manned with a cadre in peacetime. The guns cover controlled mine fields and cooperate with naval forces, mainly fast gun/missile boats or torpedo/missile boats.

The air force operates five major airfields: Banak, Andoya, Bardufoss, Evenes and Bodo. (see Map, Figure 2).

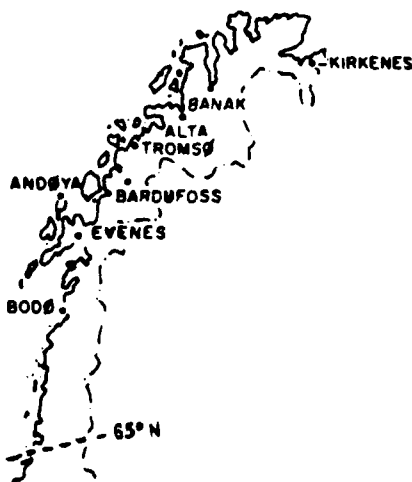


FIGURE 2

The airfields, except Banak, are defended by Improved HAWK and 40 mm guns and have hardening for protection of base installations and aircraft. Banak is only protected by army air defense means and will be demolished by it's defenders if threatened. Two Norwegian squadrons operate from Bodo with F16 fighter aircraft and they can be reinforced by two more squadrons from South

Norway. Another squadron with P-3 Orion anti-submarine patrol aircraft operates from Andoya.²

Allied Reinforcements

Very few allied reinforcements are actually earmarked for Norway. Allied Command Europe (ACE) Mobile Force Force (AMF), 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), and UK/NL Amphibious Force are all exercising regularly in North Norway and have equipment suitable for operations in the area. But only UK/NL AF and 4th MEB have some of the heavy equipment stocked in Norway and have their first priority task there.³ NATO has in addition made a principal decision to establish a new NATO Composite Force (NCF) to be earmarked for North Norway. This force will consist of one Canadian battalion group, one West German as well as one U.S. artillery battalion.⁴ SACEUR's primary reserve for the Northern Region, the United States 9th Infantry Division, is not specifically trained or equipped for mountain and winter warfare. The major parts of 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), another important contingent of the strategic reserve to ACE, are in the same situation.

Future earmarked air-reinforcements will most probably be two U.S. squadrons as compensation for forces pulled back by Canada during the reorganization of the Canadian commitment to Europe.⁵ In addition it is natural to base the discussion on deployment of forces with first priority to the area. In that case 4 MEB will arrive with another 4 squadrons. In addition 8 U.S. and UK squadrons will arrive to different air bases all over Norway as part of SACEUR's Rapid Reinforcement Plan (RRP). These squadrons may only be partially available for the air battle in the north.

While national mobilization and reinforcement of North Norway may be completed within two days to one week, the other reinforcements will need from one week to twenty days before they are available.⁶

Considering the Threat

The Soviet North Western Theater of Military Operations (NWTVD) has twelve Motorized Rifle Divisions at its disposal. Normally seven are considered to be available for operations against North Norway. In addition, this TVD has one Airborne Division with one air assault brigade. The land force is expected to be organized into combined arms armies and the full mobilization and concentration of this force will take at least one week.

The Northern Fleet has one Naval Infantry Brigade which may spearhead an amphibious landing. With the naval and the merchant shipping available in the Murmansk area an amphibious landing of at least one division is possible. The Northern Fleet has 40 submarines with ballistic missiles, 29 submarines with cruise missiles and 93 other attack submarines, 86 major surface vessels (one of them the carrier Kiev with very limited capabilities), and about 100 bombers and fighter bombers.

On the Kola Peninsula there are 16 military airfields which are utilized less than 50 percent in peacetime. They can consequently operate twice as many aircraft as the 150 fighter bombers, 300 fighters, and 200 other aircraft stationed there.⁷

Summing up, the ground forces balance significantly favors the Soviets on the Northern Flank. However, the terrain hinders an effective tactical exploitation of the advantage. If time can be gained to mobilize and organize the defense, then the defender stands a good chance of success. In the long run, sustainment will be the main problem. In a battle of attrition the superior strength of the Soviet forces may give them a decisive advantage.

Also the air balance in the region favors the Soviets. Initially, with only Norwegian national air resources, the situation may be critical. Given a forward allied naval deployment, that could change; allied forces could also gain a slight advantage in naval surface and subsurface capabilities.⁸

SOVIET OPERATIONS AGAINST NORTH NORWAY

Soviet naval exercises in waters off the Norwegian coast have increased over a 10-15 year period; especially in the last few years they have been widened both in scope and complexity.⁹ These exercises indicate that the Soviet strategic objectives in NWTVD may be to:

- o Keep retaliatory capacity intact through defense of ballistic missile submarines.
- o Gain air superiority and sea control to support offensive operations against NATO SLOCs.

Both objectives can only be gained through winning the air battle over the Northern Region and the Norwegian Sea. In both cases air bases on land and at sea are, at least initially, the center of gravity in this theater. The main threat against a Soviet air offensive will in the beginning come from the airfields in North Norway. Without offensive carriers of their own the same airfields also represent (together with Keflarvik on Iceland) the only possibility of extending the range of all Soviet air assets out to the GIUK Gap. Consequently, the objective of a NWTVD land operation would be the airfields in North Norway at least as far south as Bodo.

An occupation of Norwegian territory would also make it possible for the Northern Fleet to disperse its forces out of the very narrow area around Murmansk and take advantage of the cover and concealment in the fjords.

The most likely Soviet attack on North Norway could be a combined operation emphasizing maximum surprise and using air landings, amphibious landings and attacks over land. The air landings together with Spetsnaz strikes and air strikes could be aimed at seizing or destroying command, control, and surveillance installations. Air landings and an amphibious landing could be launched to disrupt the mobilization and organization of the defense and even to take airfields intact. This initial attack would likely be followed by onslaughts by one army through Finnmark and one army through Finland. If this Soviet attack should succeed in occupying some or all the Norwegian airfields and make the Soviets able to use them for their own purposes, an allied naval offensive north of the GIUK Gap would be nearly impossible or at least a much more risky and lengthy affair. Soviet sea control north of the GIUK Gap would also severely threaten both allied reinforcements to Norway and the SLOC between South and North Norway. This could eventually make the defense of Norway impossible. A Soviet conquest of Norway would be a serious threat to the Central Region both directly, and indirectly through a threat against the Atlantic SLOC.

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8. Soviet Military Power 88, MOD 1988, p. 108.
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CHAPTER IV

THE UNITED STATES MARITIME STRATEGY

The United States Maritime Strategy has a global perspective. It could be triggered by:

Recognition that a specific international situation has the potential to grow to a global superpower confrontation. Such a confrontation may come because an extra-European crisis escalated or because of problems in Europe.¹

The primary goal is to confront the Soviet Union with the prospect of not being able to finish a short conflict of their own choosing but being faced with a prolonged global conflict. The strategy consist of three phases:

- o Deterrence or the transition to war.
- o Seizing the initiative.
- o Carrying the fight to the enemy.

An inherent part of the first phase is an:

Aggressive forward movement of anti-submarine warfare forces, both submarines and maritime patrol aircraft-and-early embarkation of marine amphibious forces-matched with forward movement of maritime preposition ship squadrons toward most likely areas of employment.²

The second and third phase both are aimed at destroying Soviet naval capacities in detail:

We must defeat Soviet maritime strength in all its dimensions, including base support. As the battle groups move forward, we will wage an aggressive campaign against all Soviet submarines, including ballistic missile submarines.³

This U.S. Maritime Strategy marks a fundamental change from the earlier U.S. and NATO Strategy in the Northern Atlantic and the Norwegian Sea. While the prior strategy was defensive in nature and concentrated around barrier operations in the GIUK Gap, the present strategy emphasizes offensive operations in and north of the Norwegian Sea. It is underlined that this does

not mean a "Charge of The Light Brigade" style attack on the Kola Peninsula, but it does mean offensive operations with carrier battle groups as far north as the Lofoten Islands in North Norway and attack submarines farther north.⁴ The presence of U.S. carrier groups in this area has increased from zero in the seventies to an average of four days per year in the eighties and is still increasing somewhat.⁵

Open ocean operations this close to the bases of the Northern Fleet must in wartime expect to be met by massed Soviet submarine, air, and surface ship attacks. Most military critics of the new strategy have pointed out the great risk involved in executing such operations with only a marginal allied force advantage. In the Soviet attacks, cruise missiles and submarine delivered torpedoes are predicated to be the dominating weapons. The logical tactical countermeasure is to exploit the protection in the fjords.

If the naval exercises conducted by U.S. and NATO forces since 1981 indicate intended operations, then the new strategy seems to imply such fjord operations with carrier battle groups. From their fjord positions, the carriers can project air power at least as far north as to the choke point between North Cape and the Polar Ice and even further if the air battle can be won. From the same positions the different blue water resources can be integrated with surveillance systems including Norwegian land based sea and air defense radars, land based P3 Orion, underwater sensor systems with land bases in North Norway, with coastal defenses and land based air. These added resources will further reduce the risk of the forward maritime strategy.

The forward deployment of major allied naval forces will effectively secure the SLOC between South and North Norway and improve the chances of allied reinforcements reaching Norway.

At this stage of the discussion the interdependence between the battle of North Norway and the United States Maritime Strategy becomes obvious. To carry out an offensive against the Northern Fleet with an acceptable level of risk the naval forces should have access to the Norwegian Fjords in Troms and Nordland and be integrated with land based resources in the same area. To achieve this the area must be effectively defended. However, the naval resources in themselves are decisive to gain an acceptable balance of forces for the defense and in gaining an operational cohesion in the defense of Norway as a whole. This situation of mutual dependence is perhaps the most obvious military consequence of the Forward Maritime Strategy to U.S.-Norwegian relations. Based on the rhetoric, the strategy could be perceived as aggressive. If this is the case in reality, will be discussed later.

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CHAPTER V

THE NORWEGIAN SECURITY CALCULUS

GENERAL

In relation to the Soviet Union, the Norwegian posture reflects a trade off between considerations of deterrence and reassurance. Deterrence depends primarily on making credible the proposition that an attack on Norway will be met with an effective national resistance and will not be confined to a fight with Norway alone. Reassurance is made up of a series of unilateral confidence building measures designed to communicate peaceful intentions and avoid challenging vital Soviet security interest during peacetime. The policy of not permitting the stationing of foreign troops in peacetime, the rejection of stockpiling and deployment of nuclear and chemical weapons, as well as the imposition of geographical, quantitative, and qualitative constraints on peacetime allied military activities in Norway constitute the main elements of restraints.¹ These constraints take into account Norwegian interests, but have also been developed in the light of the position of the other Nordic countries.

THE BASE POLICY

The base policy was established even before the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. It must be understood both on the background of five years of German occupation and as a part of the policy of reassurance. The base policy states that the Norwegian Government will not enter into any agreement with another state which involves an obligation by Norway to open bases for the military forces of foreign powers as long as Norway is not subject to attack or threat of attack.

The explicit reservation that the prohibition on the stationing of foreign troops in Norway only applies to time of peace has made it necessary to implement a series of measures which allow the policy to be reversed in time of crisis or war. Realizing the impact this policy could have on timely reinforcements from allied nations, Norway has negotiated agreements of prestocking both of heavy equipment and supplies. Both the United States MEB and NATO RRP are covered by such agreements. There is also arrangements to support carrier aircraft in wartime if they are forced to operate from Norwegian land bases (INVICTUS).²

THE NUCLEAR POLICY

The nuclear policy was defined towards the end of the 1950s. In the Parliamentary Address in 1961 it was stated that "nuclear weapons will not be stationed in Norwegian territory." The policy also implies that Norwegian weapon systems will not be certified for nuclear warheads and that Norwegian forces will not be trained in the use of nuclear weapons. However, Norway has made no reservations concerning the validity of NATO's nuclear strategy also for the defense of Norway, and is covered by this strategy. The policy on ships visiting Norwegian ports is connected to the nuclear policy. Norway assumes that foreign warships do not carry nuclear weapons on board when calling at Norwegian ports. The Norwegian authorities expect both allies and other nuclear powers to respect this assumption.³

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

These weapons are subject to restrictions similar to those which apply to nuclear weapons. Norway also opposes any step which would undermine the

prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and advocates a formal agreement prohibiting the development, production and storage of such weapons.⁴

THE PRACTICE AS REGARD TO MILITARY EXERCISES

Norway follows the confidence-building practice that no allied exercises shall take place in the county of Finnmark. Allied aircraft are not permitted to fly in Norwegian air space east of longitude 24 east (East of North Cape), and allied naval vessels are not permitted to deploy in Norwegian territorial waters east of the same longitude. Prior notification shall be given of all military exercises in Norway involving more than 10,000 men, in accordance with the procedures agreed under the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.⁵

NORWAY AND NAVAL OPERATIONS

The Norwegian attitude towards a more offensive maritime strategy is marked by two partially contradicting concerns. To counter the increased Soviet emphasis on forward deployment, Norway has a clear interest in U.S. naval presence in the Norwegian Sea. On the other hand, it is also in Norwegian interest to protect the state of low tension in the area and prevent a development that could lead to increased superpower competition in the northern waters. The Norwegian Defense Minister, Johan J. Holst, presents the political point of view like this:

The northern waters must not be viewed as a "Mare Sovieticum" as a result of American absence and Soviet presence. Regular allied naval presence contributes to the credibility of the NATO guarantee of the security of Norway. In order to maintain surveillance of the Soviet ballistic missile submarines that threaten the North American Continent, and in order to be able to fight them if necessary, the United States exhibits a growing interest in naval presence in the Norwegian Sea.

Norway's interests are not served by the Norwegian Sea becoming a new area for expanded and intensified competition between the superpowers. Other naval powers should be present in these waters as well, for instance through operations by NATO's Standing Naval Force Atlantic. To guarantee security and stability in the northwestern corner of Europe, and preserve the state of low tension in the area, it is important to Norway that allied naval forces are present in the Norwegian Sea with reasonable regularity, but without indicating any wish for permanent presence. This would at any rate be an unrealistic proposition. It cannot be up to Norway to decide what other nations should do or not do in international waters. But since Norway is directly affected by all naval activity in the Norwegian Sea, she must give clear expression to her interests. From a Norwegian point of view the pattern of allied naval presence in northern waters should be consistent with maintenance of a continued state of low tension in the northern areas. Consequently, care should be taken to avoid offensive accentuation and signals.⁶

Hence, it is in Norway's interest that U.S. naval forces operate in the Norwegian Sea around North Norway. The presence should be supplied with naval forces from other NATO countries to avoid the impression of a one-sided superpower engagement close to vital Soviet areas or a bilateral arrangement of Norwegian security. It should be limited in time and scope to demonstrate ability to intervene, but simultaneously support the level of low tension in the area. As long as Norwegian territory is involved the operations should signal defensive intentions and deterrence based on conventional weapons capabilities. These operations can only be given base support of material and supplies administered by Norway in peacetime.

ENDNOTES

1. Norway and Developments on NATO's Northern Flank, Address by the Norwegian Minister of Defense, J. J. Holst, Norwegian MOD Information, No. 11/88, p. 56.

2. Norwegian Defense, Facts and Figures, Norwegian MOD, Oslo 1988, p. 49.
3. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
4. Ibid., p. 50.
5. Ibid., p. 50.
6. Norway in the Pattern of European Security, Address by the Norwegian Minister of Defense J. J. Holst in Wissenschaftszentrum Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 29 May 1987, reprint distributed by FO P&I, Oslo, pp. 20-22.

CHAPTER VI

U.S. MARITIME STRATEGY'S INFLUENCE ON

U.S.-NORWEGIAN RELATIONS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A MORE AGGRESSIVE PATTERN OF OPERATIONS

In his description of the new U.S. Naval Strategy, Admiral James D. Watkins emphasizes both offensive action, and the aggressive attitude needed to put the strategy into action (see Chapter IV, Page 15). If one should judge from this rhetoric alone, the operations are or are going to be aggressive. However, both the actual operations in the area and the perception of these operations by the parties concerned have to be taken into consideration.

The operational pattern of U.S. naval forces in the Norwegian Sea has changed. The presence of U.S. carrier battle groups as far north as Lofoten in Norway has increased; but, still only consist of four exercise days a year and the exercises take place well south of the area considered sensitive as a part of the Norwegian policy of reassurance. From a Norwegian point of view the United States naval operations - far from being threatening - are a welcomed counterbalance to the more and more offensive exercise patterns of the Soviet Northern Fleet.

In an interview with the Norwegian newspaper, Aftenposten, on 30 December 1988, Soviet General Gelij Batenin described NATO's naval exercises as nonaggressive, nonthreatening routine exercises.¹

In sum, the new maritime strategy has changed the operational pattern of U.S. naval forces in the Norwegian Sea. Contrary to fears expressed by critics of this strategy, the perception of the littoral states in the area

where the operations take place is that they are positive or at least not aggressive or threatening.

A CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCENARIO

Given the obvious military interdependence between the United States Maritime Strategy and the defense of Norway on one side and the Norwegian political goal of low tension on the other, there are several potential areas of conflict. The most serious may be handling horizontal escalation in a crisis. Admiral Watkins underlines an early maritime reaction to crisis "that may come because an extra-European crisis escalated" to bring naval forces in position to "deter the Soviet's battle of the first salvo."² This can be understood as a desire, in an event of crisis somewhere in the world, to move forward in the Norwegian Sea. This attitude is on obvious collision course with Norwegian policy of reassurance and low level of tension in a front line area to the Soviet Union. Norway also runs a risk of being involved in a superpower confrontation that may have nothing to do with her vital interests.

Even if a crisis is ignited in Europe and Norwegian survival interests are involved, automatic support to crisis management with U.S. naval forces in Norway is not guaranteed. The Norwegian policy of prudence indicates that she may show restraint rather than rashness with demonstrations of force in the actual area.

A unilateral U.S. course of action in both these cases is, of course, possible. The principle of freedom of the seas, which Norway supports, enables naval forces to operate unimpeded in international waters. But, an independent U.S. action in time of crisis could not only be politically unfortunate, in this particular area, it also would increase the operational risk of the naval forces. Accordingly, for strategic, operational and

political reasons naval forces would have limitations as an instrument of crisis management in the Norwegian Sea.

A WAR-FIGHTING SCENARIO

The Norwegian standing forces make an unopposed occupation of the airfields in North Norway impossible. In the first days of a war the main problem will be to prevent the Soviet air and sea landings from disrupting the defense before it is ready. An important presupposition for such landings will be suppression of the Norwegian Air Force and that massed Soviet air forces will be launched against Norway to achieve it. If the critical balance of forces and the importance of this battle to the naval strategy is taken into consideration, immediate support to North Norway by naval air is essential. To be able to give such support with no or very little warning time, U.S. naval air should be based as close as possible to the operation area on a permanent basis. This could be done from a carrier group operating permanently in the North Atlantic, from U.S. bases on Iceland and Greenland or through a combination of these. A permanent carrier group in the North Atlantic would reduce the sailing time to the operation area, which from U.S. is about one week; and would enable the group to intercept an amphibious landing not only with air power, but with the full force of all its naval assets.³

This, at first glance, logical and desirable military solution, has its obvious political drawbacks. A permanent or even more frequent presence of U.S. naval forces in the Norwegian Sea is politically undesirable from a Norwegian point of view. Obviously Norway cannot dictate what the United States can or shall do in international waters. However, on the background of the tactical importance of Norwegian territory, solutions without Norwegian

participation would involve a great risk. An acceptable solution, both operationally and politically could be stationing of U.S. air assets on land bases as far forward as possible, in combination with forward operations of European allied naval forces. Naval forces based in North Sea countries would have a substantially shorter reaction time than U.S. forces.

Back to the war scenario. Even if the battle in the air and at sea is turned in favor of the allies, the situation on the ground could deteriorate with time if further reinforcements cannot be brought in. National forces are likely to be engaged in South Norway together with ACE reserves in Denmark and Germany where the battle of the Baltic Approaches is critical to the Central Front and therefore of primary importance to SACEUR. If possible, other reserves must be found for North Norway.

To secure the defense of the critical airfields at this late stage, offensive operations may be necessary in a counter offensive with fresh forces. The decisive force multiplier in this offensive would be use of the sea and the terrain in flanking operations. Suitable forces for this purpose would be amphibious forces with mountain and winter training like 4th MEB and UK/NL Amphibious Force or Light Divisions if they have some of the same equipment, training, and experience. Such reinforcements may be decisive to the accomplishment of the naval strategy and would couple U.S. and Norwegian interests even more tightly together. Since, in this case, we are talking about reinforcements after outbreak of war, the political problems would not be significant.

CONCLUSION

The United States Forward Maritime Strategy has changed the pattern of U.S. naval operations in the Norwegian Sea. Carrier battle groups are

operating closer to Soviet home waters today than under the former U.S. and NATO strategy. However, neither the Soviet Union nor Norway perceive these operations as aggressive or threatening. Norway welcomes the United States naval presence as a prudent countermove to increased Soviet exercising along her coast. The presupposition for this view is that U.S. operations are conducted in accordance with the political realities of the area.

Both the military situation and the political realities of the area present challenges to U.S. military strategic planners when called to further develop both national and allied strategies. Of decisive importance is the interdependence between U.S. naval operations and the defense of North Norway. Norwegian territory is important to the United States because the protection in the fjords and the integration with Norwegian defense assets would reduce the risk of her offensive operations close to the Soviet base on Kola. The United States naval forces would have a positive influence on the balance of power and effectively protect the sea flank of the Norwegian defense. On land, the balance of power favors the Soviet Union and could give them an advantage in a protracted war. To counter this possibility, the United States may have to invest more resources in the land battle. The political situation in the area may reduce the freedom of action with naval forces as an instrument in crisis management. It may also reduce the reaction time at the outbreak of hostilities. Allied naval forces used in combination with U.S. naval air assets forward deployed to land bases could substantially improve the ability to react.

ENDNOTES

1. Samstyre Mellom Nabostater, Jacob Borresen, Forsvarets Forum, No. 1/89, pp. 28-29.

2. The Maritime Strategy, Admiral James D. Watkins, U.S. Naval Institute, 1886, p. 9.

3. Ibid., p. 10.

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4. Forsvarets Forum. No. 1/89, Oslo 1989.
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8. Holst, J. J. Norway and Strategic Developments on NATO's Northern Flank. Address by the Norwegian Minister of Defense, MOD Information 11/88, Oslo 1988.
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10. Norwegian Ministry of Defense. Norwegian Defense Facts and Figures, Oslo 1988.
11. U.S. Naval Institute. The Maritime Strategy. Annapolis, 1986.
12. Thompson, Wayne C. Western Europe, 1988. The World Today Series. Sky Corporation, Washington, D. C., 1988.