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14. ABSTRACT Given a range of alternate futures for the Mediterranean Basin, what should be the optimal U. S. naval presence deployed to that region? How should the Combatant Commander (EUCOM) and his Naval Component Commander (COMUSNAVEUR) employ these forces to maximize both an effective shaping of the maritime area of operations, and effective response to instabilities and crises? The United States must continue to maintain a permanent United States Navy and Marine Corps presence in the Mediterranean Sea for two significant reasons: in order to continue to develop critical theater security cooperation and to give the Commander, European Command relevant flexible deterrent options that are properly positioned for crisis response. Furthermore, the United States will be unable to exercise sea control and effectively shape the Mediterranean maritime area of responsibility without permanent, forward naval presence. For the purposes of this paper, the term "naval forces" will be used in the broadest sense, to include United States Navy ships, United States Marine Corps expeditionary forces, and United States Coast Guard forces. Although many dynamic drivers will influence our future Mediterranean deployment strategy, this much is certain: we <i>must</i> continue to command the seas and airspace there, and we cannot do this without a permanent, visible, and powerful naval presence made up of either a Carrier Strike Group, an Expeditionary Strike Group, or other significant strike forces on the scene.					
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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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FUTURE NAVAL PRESENCE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN AND BLACK SEA
BASINS

by

Shawn W. Lobree
CDR, USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

18 May 2004

Faculty Advisor
Captain David A. Duffie, USN, JMO Dept

Abstract

FUTURE NAVAL PRESENCE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN & BLACK SEA BASINS

Given a range of alternate futures for the Mediterranean Basin, what should be the optimal U. S. naval presence deployed to that region? How should the Combatant Commander (EUCOM) and his Naval Component Commander (COMUSNAVEUR) employ these forces to maximize both an effective shaping of the maritime area of operations, and effective response to instabilities and crises?

The United States must continue to maintain a permanent United States Navy and Marine Corps presence in the Mediterranean Sea for two significant reasons: in order to continue to develop critical theater security cooperation and to give the Commander, European Command relevant flexible deterrent options that are properly positioned for crisis response. Furthermore, the United States will be unable to exercise sea control and effectively shape the Mediterranean maritime area of responsibility without permanent, forward naval presence. For the purposes of this paper, the term “naval forces” will be used in the broadest sense, to include United States Navy ships, United States Marine Corps expeditionary forces, and United States Coast Guard forces.

Although many dynamic drivers will influence our future Mediterranean deployment strategy, this much is certain: we *must* continue to command the seas and airspace there, and we cannot do this without a permanent, visible, and powerful naval presence made up of either a Carrier Strike Group, an Expeditionary Strike Group, or other significant strike forces on the scene.

Preface

During my 18 year naval career I have developed a unique perspective on the topic of Mediterranean naval presence, especially while serving on the staff of Commander, SIXTH FLEET from 1998 to 2000. As an exercise planner, I worked closely with both U.S. naval task forces and with foreign countries to plan exercises with numerous Mediterranean and Black Sea navies. As the Fleet Scheduler, I was directly responsible for developing and managing employment plans for naval forces deployed to the theater. I was also very fortunate to have made command ship port visits to nearly every coastal nation within the Mediterranean and Black Seas during this timeframe, and to have gained a great appreciation for the tremendous positive diplomatic and military impact that a command ship port visit makes. In many countries, a visit by the Sixth Fleet command ship is considered to be a national event! In addition to this two year tour, I have made five other deployments to the Mediterranean from 1988 to 2003.

Permission was obtained from Captain Peter M. Swartz, USN (Ret) of the Center for Naval Analyses for the use of his 6 May 2004 Naval War College briefing on USN deployment strategy options.

Introduction

The United States has deployed naval forces to the Mediterranean Sea for over 200 years in support of our national interests. In the earliest days this was to protect commerce and

merchant shipping; in modern times there have been a great variety of reasons for these deployments: the maintenance of security and the projection of national power are perhaps two of the most compelling ones.

Finding the right balance of U. S. naval forces for the Mediterranean has been an omnipresent challenge ever since the United States assumed de facto naval dominance of the Mediterranean Sea following World War II. Our forward deployed naval presence in this region is highly relevant to the ongoing Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and to stability in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and even to the Black Sea Basin states. The United States appears to be on the verge of significantly changing our naval deployment strategy to better respond to the current global environment, and there are a multitude of available options based upon our strategic priorities. These options can be tailored to meet both our short and long term objectives.

Thesis

The United States must continue to maintain a permanent United States Navy and Marine Corps presence in the Mediterranean Sea for two significant reasons: in order to continue to develop critical theater security cooperation and to give the Commander, European Command relevant flexible deterrent options that are positioned for crisis response. Furthermore, the United States will be unable to exercise sea control and effectively shape the Mediterranean maritime area of responsibility without permanent, visible, and powerful forward naval presence. For the purposes of this paper, the term “naval forces” will be used in the broadest sense, to include United States Navy ships, United States Marine Corps expeditionary forces, and United States Coast Guard forces.

Background

Historical naval presence and exercises in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins.

There were times in the 1960s and 1970s when the United States maintained three or even four Aircraft Carrier Battle Groups in the Mediterranean Sea, due to conflicts in the region and the ongoing at-sea Cold War.¹ In recent years U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean has been centered upon Carrier Strike Group (CSG) and Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) presence. While it has been planned to maintain this kind of presence on a permanent basis, real-world contingency operations have frequently impacted these presence plans, leaving less than continuous CSG and ESG presence there.

Currently, naval forces maintaining forward-deployed presence in the Mediterranean are organized into the following task forces:²

- CTF-60 CSG: CV(N) plus other combatants
- CTF-61 ESG: LHA/D, LPD, LSD plus other combatants
- CTF-62 ESG (MEU (SOC))
- CTF-63 Combat Logistics forces: 2 T-AOs, AOE, T-AFS, ARS
- CTF-64 Naval Special Warfare forces
- CTF-65 COMDESRON 60
- CTF-66 Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance forces
- CTF-67 Maritime Patrol forces: VP Squadron
- CTF-68 Special Mission forces
- CTF-69 Submarine forces: SSNs, AS

On occasion, other task forces or task groups have existed or were stood up for other purposes, including special deployments of mine countermeasure forces, United States Coast Guard cutters, Naval Special Warfare craft, etc. Task Forces 61 and 62 are stood up or down based upon whether or not the ESG is present in the Mediterranean.

In recent years the naval exercise plan for the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins has involved a rigorous schedule of regular naval exercises both with our friends and allies and with emerging Partnership for Peace (PFP) nations. While the United States will, on occasion, conduct a unilateral exercise in this region, the vast preponderance of exercises are bilateral or multilateral, and benefit not only U.S. training objectives, but also improved interoperability with allied naval forces. Planned exercises have ranged from a simple search and rescue exercises to diverse multilateral events which flex multiple mission areas and

involve complex fleet maneuvers. Historically, forces deployed for crisis response and presence reasons have also been employed for other purposes, and exercise employment has been important both to U.S. and Allied training objectives.

U. S. Coast Guard Mediterranean Operations

The U.S. Coast Guard has occasionally deployed a medium or high endurance cutter to the Mediterranean, either as a stand-alone deployment or as part of a CSG. These USCGC platforms have been very beneficial in helping smaller navies with port security improvement, law enforcement development, disaster response, and refinement of search and rescue capabilities. Many nations have navies which more closely resemble our Coast Guard, and the deployment of USCG forces allows us to tailor our theater security cooperation with these nations at the appropriate level. Admiral Thomas H. Collins, the USCG Commandant, recently articulated his vision of employing the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard in an integrated fashion with the world's navies and coast guards:

The world's oceans are global thoroughfares. A cooperative international approach involving partnerships of nations, navies, coast guards, law-enforcement agencies, and commercial shipping interests is essential – with all parties acting collaboratively to confront broadly defined threats to their common and interdependent maritime security.³

Recent major real-world operations in the Mediterranean Sea Basin, 1999-2004:

The year 1999 was dominated by the Kosovo conflict and Operation *Noble Anvil* (NATO's Operation *Allied Force*). At first, a carrier was not located in the Mediterranean and strike operations were initiated by the Destroyer Squadron commander and available strike platforms and land-based aircraft. A significant number of regularly-deployed and surged naval forces then arrived in theater to support combat operations, most notably land-based tactical aircraft and strike warfare ships. The Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable (MEU(SOC)) were employed as the first "boots on the ground" or initial entry force into the province of Kosovo to establish a

credible military presence and to help stabilize the situation until they were relieved by follow-on forces.

In 2002 SIXTHFLEET began Maritime Interception Operations (MIO) in the Mediterranean in support of Operation *Enduring Freedom* (OEF) efforts to interdict terrorism-associated shipping, while in 2003-4 SIXTHFLEET naval forces also played a significant role in support of Operation *Iraqi Freedom* (OIF), via CSG and ESG power projection from the Eastern Mediterranean: The CSG executed strike operations, and the MEU was inserted into Northern Iraq.

Future regional security needs in the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basins

Future Mediterranean naval force presence must be designed to give the combatant commander forces which further theater security cooperation (TSC)⁴ and also provide Flexible Deterrent Options (FDOs). While TSC is aimed at advancing U.S. security interests and building defense partnerships, military FDOs deal with force packages which permit “rapidly executable actions ... that seek to preempt, defuse, or deter a potential threat to U.S. interests.” In addition to military options, FDOs can also encompass economic, diplomatic, and informational options.⁵ Combined military-to-military exercises, training, experimentation, staff talks, humanitarian assistance and ship port visits can be blended into employment plans for the Mediterranean CSG/ESG to meet various future regional security needs.

The United States can continue to make a large impact on the GWOT and on global stability by deploying the proper balance of naval forces. While the GWOT has created new impacts on the employment of military forces, and new homeland security requirements have demanded unprecedented naval force (Coast Guard, Navy and Marine Corps) employment to protect the homeland ports, Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* have placed great demands on our regular and reserve naval forces. For OIF in 2003 the Navy and

Marine Corps “surged” an impressive force of seven aircraft carriers, nine amphibious assault ships, and Marine forces to meet the needs of the Central Command combatant commander. This combat surge was followed by the development of the “Fleet Response Plan” (FRP), an initiative to regroup returning naval forces and to redesign readiness plans to better support possible future surges.⁶

A review of a recent Secretary of Defense briefing on military priorities for 2004 shows two items of particular relevance to Mediterranean/Black Sea naval presence: “*New Concepts of Global Engagement*” and “*Reorganize DOD and the USG to deal with Pre-war opportunities and Post-war responsibilities.*” The Secretary’s guidance indicates revised global presence and security cooperation are important action items, along with a desire to *reduce response times* and expand the military’s capability to surge forces on short notice.⁷ Even though the GWOT remains the top priority, theater security cooperation can be designed to support the GWOT and can be continued and even expanded upon. If the United States will maintain forward deployed naval presence and continue to include an aggressive exercise and port visit schedule, then this will permit the continued leveraging of the nearly instantaneous crisis response Flexible Deterrent Options (FDOs) that Mediterranean Sea-deployed CSGs and ESGs bring to the strategic planning table.

The United States Navy and Marine Corps are now in the midst of revisiting the Global Naval Force Presence Policy (GNFPP) in order to prepare and position forces to be able to respond better to the needs of the GWOT. The new FRP has been crafted to incorporate a fundamental paradigm shift in force readiness and allows the Navy to maintain overseas presence that can be reinforced by several CSG/ESGs that are ready to “surge” or rapidly deploy when called upon. Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Vern Clark states that this will give us “presence with a purpose” and will permit the Navy and Marine Corps to occasionally surge two or three times the normal CSG/ESG overseas forces due to the marked improvement in readiness that the FRP brings us. An example of this was shown

recently when the USS BATAAN (LHD-5), which had returned in June, 2003 from nearly six months at sea from a “surge” deployment supporting OIF, was surged again in January, 2004 to steam back to the Arabian Gulf to support USMC OIF force rotations.⁸ The USN/USMC leadership is also considering innovative new ways of maintaining forward presence by using the “Sea Swap” plan which envisions keeping CSG/ESG ships deployed for a year at a time, instead of for the traditional six month deployment.⁹ One option to manage “Sea Swap” personnel tempo could be to man the ships with “Blue” and “Gold” crews that deploy to their forward ship for six months at a time, much in the way the strategic deterrence submarine force has rotated crews for some time. This can certainly work, but there will be greatly increased maintenance demands that will arise from steaming these ships overseas for longer durations. The U.S. Navy must take a hard look at this and plan for the increased maintenance impacts. There will very likely be a need to consider, as one of many options, reactivation of additional auxiliary ships such as destroyer tenders to meet these increased maintenance needs.

So what should our future Mediterranean naval force look like? It could be based upon *forward-based* forces, *forward-deployed* forces, and *cruising* and *sprinting* naval presence, as described by Admiral J. Paul Reason and others.¹⁰

From World War II to the present the United States Navy has practiced *forward deployment* of ships. The current deployment construct is the GNFPP-based rotation of CSGs and ESGs to overseas theaters in the Pacific, Central, and European Command areas of responsibility. Despite the surge and recovery of significant naval forces for OIF in 2003, a GNFPP-like rotation has resumed in 2004.

Our Mediterranean naval force presence of the last five years has been based upon all of these methodologies, with the exception of cruising.¹¹ Our current presence and task organization in the Mediterranean, tempered with the sprinting capability that the FRP enables, is appropriate to meet future national interests in this region, as long as either a

CSG, an ESG, or other significant strike forces are *forward-deployed* there at all times to respond to crises.

The concept of *cruising* involves sending a large number of ships out into the world's oceans in a single deployment to further our national interests. An example of this was the famous "Great White Fleet" of 16 battleships which cruised around the world to project emerging U. S. naval power in 1907-08.¹² President Theodore Roosevelt employed the fleet in this manner to send a message to the world that the United States Navy was now one of global reach. While not currently practiced, *cruising* may become a viable option in the future when significant numbers of new ships such as the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) and the future surface combatant (DD(X)) become operational.¹³

It is vital to continue to *forward-base* in-situ forces such as the tender and the SIXTHFLEET command ship in the Mediterranean. The heavily-tasked tender USS EMORY S LAND (AS-39) continues to service submarines, surface combatants, amphibious and other ships, and demand for this service will likely grow even greater in the future. In all of the major operations in the Mediterranean in the past five years, the SIXTHFLEET command ship (currently USS LASALLE (AGF-3)) was frequently on-scene and very active in operational level command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) operations. There are other good reasons to continue to maintain this command ship (a national asset), including the furthering of vital TSC initiatives and maintaining the prestige of the United States.

Sprinting has been the technique used to respond to unforeseen crises, and this method was used to surge the extra aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships needed for OIF in early 2003. The FRP will permit rapid deployment and sprinting (or surging) of additional CSG and ESG forces should the need arise.¹⁴

Counter Arguments

Many argue today that traditional security cooperation and port visits have become too difficult due to heightened threats and therefore detailed planning for them is impractical. On the contrary, we can prudently apply operational risk management (ORM) and continue thorough force protection planning to permit uninterrupted exercises and port visits in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. We are the world's superpower, and in order to protect our global interests and to maintain our national prestige, we must "carry on" and continue to steam to as many ports as possible wherever we have friends and allies. Also, since a part of the FRP and CNO Admiral Vern Clark's "presence with a purpose" vision means less predictability to future deployments, one intangible benefit of this plan will likely be an improved force-protection environment for deployed forces.

Still others will argue that the Commander, U.S. European Command has already executed his major contingency plans in the 1990s in the Balkans and that maintaining continuous naval presence in the Mediterranean Basin is an imprudent use of scarce resources. I would argue that stability in this theater will remain a vital interest to the United States in the future, especially because of instability in the Middle East and the importance of the Maghreb nations to the GWOT. We can do much more in the Mediterranean than mark time; we can contribute to even better theater security cooperation with our overseas naval presence. Continuous naval presence in the Mediterranean is vital; we must remain highly conspicuous there as we pursue the GWOT.

A reduction in traditional overseas CSG/ESG presence could be one outcome of the FRP and a revised deployment strategy, as we now have more fighting ships ready to surge at a moment's notice. Since the Navy can surge a CSG/ESG from the East coast to the Mediterranean in two weeks or less, some will argue that we can reduce our overseas naval presence now and realize significant savings in operational costs. These savings can then be reprogrammed into recapitalization of the fleet, which will best meet our long-term national interests. Although this sounds compelling in theory, we cannot afford to overlook our short-

term naval presence demands in the Mediterranean because we need to remain to control the seas there in order to continue to be able to make a difference in the region. In addition, we cannot reduce crisis response time by reducing our Mediterranean naval presence. We should not rely too heavily on “sprinting” or surging of forces to deal with crises, as we have learned many times over that only naval strike forces in-theater will be positioned to rapidly respond.

Conclusions

Strategic and operational naval commanders in Europe must continue to work closely with the State Department, U.S. Ambassadors, U.S. Defense Attache Offices, Offices of Defense Cooperation, the International Programs Office and other federal agencies to coordinate military theater security cooperation efforts such as exercises, staff talks and port visits with ongoing diplomatic initiatives. Uncoordinated military, diplomatic and interagency efforts can be counterproductive, while coordinated efforts can and will have a multiplicative, cooperative effect.

From the mid-1990s to the present the NAVEUR and SIXTHFLEET staffs exerted a tremendous effort to initiate and then further develop regular naval exercises with the “Partnership for Peace” nations along the Mediterranean and Black Sea littorals. This not only established and improved military interoperability with these emerging nations, but it also helped to establish their legitimacy as reliable defense partners and helped to culminate in admission to NATO for Romania and Bulgaria. This is just one example of how development of theater security cooperation with forward deployed naval forces arguably helped to make tangible improvements to European security.

As former Secretary of State George P. Schultz said,

We need to remind ourselves and our partners of the message carried on the Great Seal of our Republic. The central figure is an eagle holding in one talon an olive branch and in the other, thirteen arrows. As President Harry Truman insisted at the end of World War II, the eagle will always face the olive branch to show that the United States will always seek peace. But the eagle will forever hold on to the

arrows to show that, to be effective in seeking peace, you must have strength and the willingness to use it. Strength and diplomacy: they go together.¹⁵

With forward-deployed naval presence, the United States simultaneously benefits from both the olive branch and the arrow!

We must continue to maintain our forward-based and deployed naval forces, and in my opinion either a CSG, an ESG, or a surface action group must be maintained at all times in the Mediterranean to continue combined training, exercises, experimentation, military-to-military contacts and even humanitarian assistance with our friends and allies in this region (the olive branch). This force will also give the combatant commander a potent striking capability if needed (the arrow).

Looking forward to the next ten years, I would argue that Europe will probably continue to remain stable and that the Middle East will likely continue to remain volatile. Continued naval operations in the Black Sea with our new NATO allies, Bulgaria and Romania, and particularly with Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia will have a positive impact on strengthening our defense relationship with these three vitally important PFP nations.¹⁶ In the Middle East we must continue to maintain naval presence nearby and to conduct cooperative exercises with our friends there, as feasible, in order to further our national interests in Middle Eastern and Southwest Asian stability. In the Maghreb region Libya and Algeria are changing and evolving politically in a positive way, while U.S. relations with Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt will hopefully continue to be steadfast. National cooperation with the Maghreb nations should be strengthened, as these countries will continue to be important to U.S. foreign policy.¹⁷ If the United States can improve security cooperation with forward deployed forces to increase engagement with these Islamic nations, this will further our national interests in the GWOT. Put another way, we can use our “presence” forces to help to shape this region politically and militarily, to further our long-term objectives in the GWOT.

Until we can build a larger future fleet which increases overall numbers of ships by augmenting our legacy CSG and ESG force with LCS and DDX-type ships that are smaller, faster, more lethal, and designed to be networked together and operate with high endurance, then I would recommend we postpone any major redesign of our Mediterranean naval presence deployment plans. Our Navy’s “essential capabilities”¹⁸ will continue to be sea control, forward presence, and power projection, with forward naval presence facilitating the other two capabilities. As former CNO Admiral Jay Johnson put it:

U.S. military strategy is based on forward presence and power projection – maintaining a presence in key regions and, when necessary, deploying and sustaining sea, land, and air forces overseas. If we cannot command the seas and the airspace above them, we cannot project power to command or influence events ashore; we cannot deter; we cannot shape the security environment.¹⁹

Although many dynamic drivers will influence our future Mediterranean deployment strategy, this much is certain: we *must* continue to command the seas and airspace there, and we cannot do this without a permanent, visible, and powerful naval presence in the Mediterranean.

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Notes

¹ Lyle J. Goldstein and Yuri M. Zhukov, "A Tale of Two Fleets," Naval War College Review, Volume 57, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 41.

² U.S. Commander, SIXTH FLEET Task Organization, < <http://www.c6f.navy.mil/organization.htm> > [22 April 2004].

³ Thomas H. Collins, "Change and Continuity: The U.S. Coast Guard Today," Naval War College Review, Volume LVII, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 19.

⁴ Theater security cooperation was previously known as theater naval engagement.

⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Instructional Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan FY 1996, (Washington, DC: 1996) Figure C-3 (citation is to the reprint edition).

⁶ Walter T. Ham, "Presence With A Purpose: CNO Explains Fleet Response Plan," Navy Newsstand. 18 August 2003. http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=9060 [22 April 2004]. "Presence with a purpose" is enabled by the new FRP which will permit the Navy to surge two or three CSGs and/or ESGs overseas and provide focused presence. The vision could allow for a much greater theater security cooperation impact due to larger presence, but likely for a shorter duration than for the standard six month deployment.

⁷ Donald Rumsfeld to Ronald Route, 01 March 2004, "DOD Priorities for 2004," Washington, DC.

⁸ Scott Schonauer, "Deployment Plan Keeps Sailors Guessing," Stars and Stripes, 17 February 2004, p. 1.

⁹ James W. Crawley, "Navy Hopes Sea Swap Aids Ships' Patrol Time," San Diego Union-Tribune, 7 April 2002, <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20020407-9999_1m7seaswap.html> [22 April 2004].

¹⁰ J. Paul Reason and David G. Freyman, Sailing New Seas, The Newport Papers, no. 13 (Newport: Naval War College, March 1998), 19. The four methods of maintaining forward naval presence are: *forward Basing*, which involves operating forces overseas out of foreign bases, as is done now with the naval forces based in Italy and Japan; *forward deploying* naval forces overseas which operate for a specific duration (less than one year) and then return to U.S. homeports and bases; the authors envision that one day we will be able to "infest the oceans" with *cruising* naval forces which will be a large number of ships spread over the oceans in a broad network to counter threats and show the flag; *sprinting* forces move at high speed from U.S. bases to areas of crisis (also known as "surge" forces).

¹¹ Peter M. Swartz, "Analyzing U.S. Navy Deployment Strategy Options, 1775-2004," Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 6 May 2004.

¹² Mike McKinley, "The Cruise of the Great White Fleet," <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/gwf_cruise.htm> [09 May 2004].

¹³ Swartz Lecture.

¹⁴ Michael D. Malone, James M. Zortman and Samuel J. Paparo, "Naval Aviation Raises the Readiness Bar," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (February 2004).

¹⁵ George P. Shultz, "A Changed World," Lecture, Library of Congress, Washington, DC: 11 February 2004.

¹⁶ Naval operations in the Black Sea will be limited by the Montreux Convention of 1936. In general terms this limits the warship tonnage (of non-Black Sea nations) to no more than two modern U.S. warships and for a limited duration of three weeks.

¹⁷ U.S. Commander, Naval Forces Europe Theater Naval Engagement Plan, 1 January 2001.

¹⁸ Reason and Freyman, 17.

¹⁹ Reason and Freyman, 18.