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The U.S. Navy has taken major steps in its force transformation process through the vision of Sea Power 21. In presenting this vision, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Vern Clark, challenges the men and women of the United States Naval Service to embrace innovative concepts and technologies. This paper will show how the United States Navy can capitalized on the vision of Sea Power 21 and the implementation of the Flight Response Plan (FRP) to drastically enhance the war planning and fighting capabilities of the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC).

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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, RI**

**SURGE READINESS: WHAT THE FLEET RESPONSE PLAN REALLY
MEANS TO A JOINT FORCE MARITIME COMPONENT COMMANDER**

By

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

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17 May 2005

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INTRODUCTION

The United States enters the 21st century as the principal world superpower with the most dominant military force in history. In order to maintain this status, however, it is crucial that United States military leaders continue to re-evaluate the capabilities of their forces in the face of an ever-evolving National Security Strategy and constantly adapting threat. Joint Vision 2020 calls for the United States Armed Forces to achieve full spectrum dominance, that is to say, dominance across the full spectrum of military operations – persuasive in peace, decisive in war, and preeminent in any form of conflict.¹ It goes on to say that full spectrum dominance is not achieved merely through a “steady infusion of new technology and modernization and replacement of equipment. Of greater importance is the development of doctrine, organizations, training and education, leaders, and people that effectively take advantage of the technology.”²

The U.S. Navy, for its part, has taken major steps in its force transformation process through the vision of Sea Power 21. In presenting this vision, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Vern Clark, challenges the men and women of the United States Naval Service to embrace innovative concepts and technologies and show how the “Navy and its partners will dominate the continuum of warfare from the maritime domain – deterring forward in peacetime, responding to crises, and fighting and winning wars.”³

This paper will show how the United States Navy can capitalize on the vision of Sea Power 21 and implementation of the Fleet Response Plan (FRP) to drastically enhance operational level war planning and fighting capabilities. While some progress has already been made toward this goal since the FRP’s inception in 2003, it is crucial that the U.S. Navy use the conceptual momentum created by this progress and bring to fruition the readiness

advantages and training opportunities that the Fleet Response Plan affords. The FRP, described in much greater detail later, defines the U.S. Navy's capability to deploy six Carrier Strike Groups within 30 days and an additional two strike groups within 90 days.

The concepts presented here will address two shortfalls that currently exist in the U.S. Navy's maritime execution. The first concept reflects the doctrinal shortfall existing at the operational planning and execution level with respect to employment of multiple strike groups under crisis/surge conditions. The second concept details how the U.S. Navy can create a "surge force classroom" by taking advantage of the excess training capacity naturally occurring as a result of the force overlaps inherent in the FRP. By following through with the concepts presented here, the U.S. Navy can better prepare the Joint or Combined Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC or CFMCC) for planning and execution of maritime operations at the Operational level.

SEA POWER 21 AND THE GLOBAL CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

To fully understand the combat potential available to a JFMCC, it is important to review the sweeping changes the U.S. Navy made in how it deploys its ships. In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, the Navy and the rest of the U.S. military was called to respond to a different kind of threat. Clearly, the Navy no longer faced a "blue water" adversary like that of the Cold War-era Soviet navy. On the contrary, the United States and its navy faced an emerging enemy that operated in remote areas of the world and was much more agile and elusive than the enemies faced in the past. The Navy, then, needed an adaptable, responsive, and continuously well-trained fleet to combat this evolving enemy. The U.S. Navy, under the innovative umbrella of Sea Power 21, was specifically tasked to "expand its striking power, achieve information dominance, and develop transformational

ways of fulfilling our enduring missions of sea control, power projection, strategic deterrence, strategic sealift, and forward presence.”⁴

The significant realignment of deploying forces that was implemented in bringing Sea Power 21 to reality was made possible because the ships of the U.S. Navy are some of the most technologically advanced war fighting platforms in the world. Because of their high price tags, however, and the fiscal constraints of all military services, the Navy was faced with responding simultaneously to multiple crises or in confronting a globally-based threat with a smaller number of ships. The Navy’s answer to both of these situations lay in its Global Concept of Operations.⁵

In the Global Concept of Operations, the U.S. Navy makes more efficient use of the technological advantages inherent in its warships and submarines by regrouping them into a greater number of smaller but equally-lethal strike groups: Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs), Expeditionary Strike Groups (ESGs), and Missile-defense Surface Action Groups (SAGs). This realignment more than doubles the traditional number of “battle groups” previously deployable, providing joint force commanders with combat capabilities that can be more easily tailored to meet their needs. Additionally, in the event of a major regional conflict, the smaller strike groups are capable of being brought together to form “Expeditionary Strike Forces – the “gold standard” of naval power.”⁶

The Carrier Strike Group was least affected under this new construct. Formerly known as a Carrier Battle Group, this grouping still boasts the aircraft carrier and its embarked air wing as the nucleus of its power projection capabilities. The CSG’s long range strike capabilities are further enhanced by its ships and submarines that are capable of

launching hundreds of Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles. Its additional war fighting capabilities include anti-air, anti-submarine, and information warfare.

The Expeditionary Strike Group underwent the most change. Formerly known as an Amphibious Ready Group, or ARG, the ESG's amphibious capabilities were augmented with the power projection and anti-submarine capabilities of several Tomahawk-capable surface ships and submarines. Tailored to operate in a lesser-threat environment, the ESG is a much more versatile and independent maritime force than that which previously existed with an ARG.

The last grouping, Surface Action Groups, provides a locally-stabilizing force to the Joint Force Commander. In addition to their ability to perform long range strike and anti-submarine warfare missions, these ships are also capable of protecting American and coalition forces ashore with their naval gunfire support and anti-ballistic missile technology.

JFMCC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

With the realigned combat capabilities of the fleet defined, it is essential to frame the JFMCC's challenges and operational responsibilities as they relate to both deliberate and crisis action planning, the later being the process most affected by surge force capability under the FRP. The fundamental challenges for the JFMCC in either planning process lay with balancing the classic operational factors of space, time, and force; however, these challenges are much more daunting under the FRP. This is because the JFMCC must conduct crisis planning and execute his mission with a maritime force structure that can double or triple in size within 30 days. These challenges will be discussed in the following paragraphs, but first it is important to identify the key players in the theatre of operations.

To begin, the term JFMCC will be used here, although it could be interchanged with CFMCC in the event that there is involvement by coalition maritime forces. To further clarify the reference to a JFMCC in these examples, it will be assumed that this term refers to a supported overseas numbered fleet commander such as COMSIXTHFLT, COMFIFTHFLT, or COMSEVENTHFLT. There could be circumstances where these proposals could apply to COMSECONDFLT or COMTHIRDFLT forces (e.g. Homeland Security), but for the purposes of this paper, it is assumed that the latter two forces are supporting forces. Additionally, this proposal could have application to a smaller Joint Task Force (JTF), but that may be a situation where a surge of naval forces is not required and thus may not have the same planning consideration applicability.

The JFMCC is the maritime warfighter of the Joint Force Commander (JFC) who exercises operational control over all military operations in a particular theatre of the world.⁷ There will be no attempt in this paper to revise the role of a JFMCC under joint force doctrine. In fact, significant progress is already being made in defining JFMCC responsibilities and planning considerations with the future release of Joint Pub 3-32, Command and Control for Joint Maritime Operations, some of which will be referenced here. The JFMCC reports directly to the JFC and advises the JFC on the proper employment and joint integration of maritime forces.⁸ He is predominantly focused on the operational level of war – linking the tactical employment of maritime forces to operational and strategic objectives.⁹ The JFMCC is but one of several functional component commanders who exercise tactical, if not operational, control over two or more military departments operating in the same domain, location, or medium. Additional organizational options available to a JFC include service components where the JFC may take advantage of a particular service's

capabilities in a specific area. For most major operations, it is usually advantageous for the JFC to organize forces with a combination of service and functional components.¹⁰ An example of a command organization using a combination of service and functional component commands is shown in Figure 3.

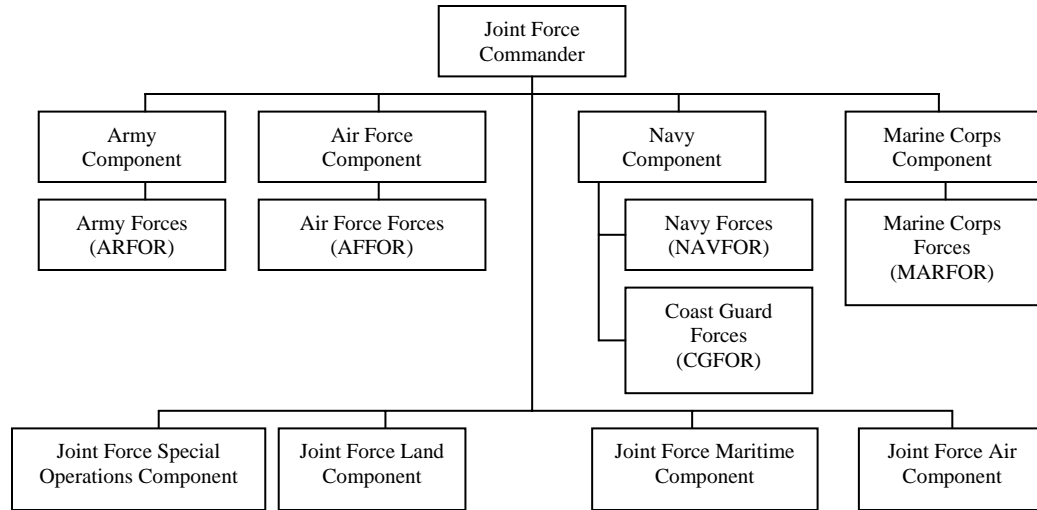


Figure 3. Possible Components in a Joint Force¹¹

The role of a JFMCC and his staff in planning routine maritime operations is described in great detail in the draft version of Joint Pub 3-32 and in the Naval Warfare and Development Command TACMEMO 3-32-03. The shortfall of these documents, however, is that they cannot address the myriad of factors that arise in the event a surge of naval forces is required. In this situation, the JFMCC, as a critical member of the crisis action planning process, must be able to quickly transition from a force manager back to a proactive operational planner with pertinent operational recommendations to the JFC which include:¹²

- (1) Force structure requirements and phasing
- (2) Integration and employment of joint or multinational maritime forces
- (3) JFMCC force scheme of maneuver
- (4) Priorities of effort for JFMCC forces, and
- (5) Designation of operational limitations

To successfully address all of the above issues and effectively employ his maritime forces, a JFMCC must have a firm understanding of the operational factors applicable to his situation.

OPERATIONAL FACTORS, FUNCTIONS, AND THE JFMCC

For a JFMCC, understanding how the operational factors of space, time, and force impact the crisis action planning process is essential to exploiting the combat potential the FRP offers. With the inception of the FRP, the central difficulty faced by a JFMCC in a crisis situation is how to properly balance these factors to effectively employ a rapidly converging maritime force. This role is substantially different from the “task management” nature of operations encountered during routine deployments where forward deployed forces operate throughout the AOR performing a wide variety of maritime tasks. Furthermore, understanding the interrelationships between the factors as they apply in a surge situation is just as important as the factors themselves. Two examples of these interrelationships are presented here to give an indication of the breadth and depth of the issues a JFMCC may face in his planning process and should provide some insight into why practical training is so important.

Space-Force. “No task is more difficult than correctly evaluating the capabilities of one’s forces, both before and during combat.”¹³ Without question, the relationship between space and force encompasses one of the most fundamental differences between normal and surge operations. Under normal force deployment conditions, a relatively small number of ships are responsible for a large number of tasks. A present day example of this diversification is illustrated by the taskings of the ships assigned to COMFIFTHFLT, who serves as the CFMCC for Commander, U.S. Central Command. In March 2005, there were a total of 30

U.S. and 12 coalition ships and 153 aircraft assigned under the CFMCC. The 30 U.S. ships included one CSG, one ESG and several U.S. Navy and Coast Guard patrol boats. Their missions included:¹⁴

- Maritime Security Operations
- Counter Terrorism
- Visit, Board, Search and Seizure
- Oil Platform Defense
- Counter Smuggling
- Close Air Support / Strike Warfare
- Airborne Command and Control
- Electronic Attack
- Special Operations / Unconventional Warfare
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal
- Information Operations
- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
- Search and Rescue
- Fleet and Expeditionary Logistics Support
- Force Protection
- Regional Engagement / Security Cooperation

As evidenced by the above list, a JFMCC's responsibilities under non-crisis conditions can almost be categorized as managerial. Not only were the missions diverse, they also took place over an extremely large area of responsibility. Even worse, performing these functions over long periods of time could result in the atrophy of the operational planning skills of even the best JFMCC staff. In a crisis/surge situation, this method of operations would be completely unacceptable. One of the JFMCC's primary goals in this situation would be the consolidation of forward deployed forces and the preservation of the synergistic maritime war fighting capabilities of the arriving strike groups or SAGs. Instead of a few ships patrolling relatively small areas or defined sectors, the JFMCC may have 40-50 combatants with which to obtain and maintain sea control of large expanses of ocean or along a country's entire coastline.

Space-Time and Force-Time. "The factor of time is the most critical and precious factor in the conduct of warfare. It is one of those rare commodities that once lost cannot be recovered."¹⁵ With the FRP, the U.S. Navy is capable of sending up to six strike groups to a

region within 30 days. For a newly-designated JFMCC, the interrelationship between space, time, and force impacts surging forces in two distinctly different but related ways than in what he would routinely deal with as a fleet commander in normal operations.

Whereas a fleet commander normally has the luxury of a forward deployed force readily available to respond to an initial crisis, he may not have the combat power available to conduct sustained operations over the course of several weeks or months. The enabling force in that situation would most likely require the fleet commander to transition quickly to a JFMCC role where he would have the capability of employing a large maritime force, but he would then be responsible for coordinating and synchronizing the combat power that maritime force brings to bear over the course of 30 days or more.

In contrast to the coordination difficulties presented by a rapidly convergent maritime force, a fleet commander transitioning to the role of a JFMCC is afforded some benefits. With the limited maritime force normally available to a fleet commander, it may be nearly impossible to execute the movement, maneuver, fires, and logistics required to achieve the objective. Those difficulties are substantially reduced in the presence of a large surge force. A large force is capable of constant presence, reducing the time required to execute assigned missions or to react to emerging threats. Some of the logistical difficulties are reduced as well, not only because the forces arriving in theatre have the greater self-sustainment capacity. Although the sheer volume of logistic support would increase, the difficulty of planning for constantly shifting lines of communication would decrease because forces would not require constant movement to accomplish their missions.

Handling the variables presented by the operational factors is just the tip of the iceberg for a potential JFMCC in a crisis situation. To successfully achieve any objective, the

JFMCC must be able to organize the operational functions to support the imminent arrival of surge forces, and that organization takes practice. Key practical considerations for the JFMCC involve command and control, movement and maneuver, and joint fires coordination. Each function will have its own unique characteristics depending on the particular crisis scenario and the surge forces assigned. Regardless of the scenario, however, current or potential JFMCCs and their staffs are currently ill-equipped for success in the event a surge of forces is required. The solution to this problem lies in training, and the best way to train for surge is to take advantage of the nature and design of the FRP itself.

SEA POWER 21 AND THE FLEET RESPONSE PLAN

Despite the numerical and technological advantages produced by restructuring ship groupings, the Navy must still strike a balance between constantly deploying its forces, providing quality of service to its people, and satisfying the requirements set forth in the National Defense Strategy. The strategy in 2004 used a 10-30-30 metric to quantify military response in a particular region. Under the 10-30-30 metric, defense planners were to have the capability of responding to a crisis by closing forces within ten days, defeating an adversary within 30 days, and redeploying the force for additional action within another 30 days.¹⁶

The latest National Defense Strategy released in March 2005 by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld placed a slightly different set of metrics on the military's crisis response. In place of timeframes and regionalized response, this defense strategy emphasizes a more global-oriented posture stressing deterrence and multi-theatre engagement capability. Specifically, in addition to defending the homeland, U.S. military forces are tasked with being able to (1) operate in and from four forward regions, (2) swiftly defeat adversaries in

two overlapping campaigns, (3) win decisively in a single operation, and (4) conduct a limited number of lesser contingencies.¹⁷

For the U.S. Navy, the challenge was a formidable one. How could the Navy capitalize on the capabilities realized by its force realignment and still be able to provide a powerful, yet unpredictable, combat force that could satisfy the evolving requirements laid out in the National Defense Strategy? As previously discussed, having more, albeit smaller, strike groups available under the Global Concept of Operations was one vital part of the answer to this requirement, but merely providing additional assets presented a “paper tiger” approach if the forces being deployed were not fully trained or combat capable. The second part of the Navy’s solution to this requirement was the Fleet Response Plan.

The Fleet Response Plan combines the Global Concept of Operations force structure with a radically different training cycle that provides United States security planners with a more lethal and quick-reacting naval force than previously existed under the previous battle group structure. At the core of this capability is the Navy’s capacity to conduct large scale surge operations, providing six carrier strike groups in less than 30 days to support contingency operations and two more strike groups within three months to reinforce or rotate with other forces.¹⁸ Just as important, the FRP provides a framework by which ship deployment patterns are much less predictable than was possible under the legacy training and deployment cycle. The end product is a naval force where a higher percentage of its units maintain a consistently higher level of combat readiness over a longer period of time.

So, what does this new Fleet Response Plan really mean for regional combatant commanders as they are faced with the threats previously mentioned? What is the connection between the potential for greater combat power and being able to efficiently

synchronize that power into the unity of effort required at the joint force commander level? The answer lies in using forces already in trained to vault the benefits of the current process to a new level with a more advanced set of training objectives.

CAPITALIZING ON THE FLEET RESPONSE PLAN

The ability to deploy six CSGs within 30 days and two more CSGs within 90 days looks good on paper, but the real transformation lies in the capabilities of the training process itself. Moreover, the effects of the FRP go well beyond the ships and aircraft that comprise a carrier strike group. Every ship, submarine, and squadron benefits from the training efficiencies realized in the FRP cycle. More efficient training generally results in consistently higher levels of combat readiness with a smaller training price tag. Higher levels of combat readiness across the fleet subsequently means that there is little difference between the combat capabilities of forward deployed and surge capable forces, giving the joint force or maritime component commander the greatest number of options for maritime combat power.

Just as important as promoting the training advantage attainable through the FRP is the recognition of the limits of these proposals. Taking advantage of FRP-generated training opportunities is a means to more effective, synchronized operations in the future; however, there are very real constraints to the U.S. Navy's ability to continuously deploy forces at a level like that of Operation Iraqi Freedom. A key precept to the full implementation of "presence with a purpose" is that essential naval forces might not always be deployed or underway, meaning a "surge" of forces would be required to handle a developing world crisis. The very concept of "presence with a purpose", as coined by Admiral Clark, was to employ "carrier strike groups in support of well defined missions vice deploying only for the

sake of deploying.”¹⁹ Ironically, this “surge” readiness creates the reason why the Navy must take the next logical step in training potential joint force and maritime component staff members to plan for and use their surge forces efficiently. The implementation of the FRP and its sweeping conceptual changes opens the door for invaluable integrated training opportunities.

THE COMBAT READINESS REVOLUTION

In its design, the Fleet Response Plan was intended to provide flexible, meaningful, maritime combat power in a shorter amount of time while at the same time preserving the Navy’s long-term ability to reconstitute, recapitalize, and modernize. For the plan to be fully accepted by top naval leadership, however, meant a significant paradigm shift in how the Navy historically prepared for deployment. The most significant casualties of this mindset shift were the readiness metrics used to determine suitability for deployment and the length of the training cycle itself.

Combat readiness in the U.S. Navy is a capabilities-based metric which is quantified in terms of “C-ratings”. Navy Mission Essential Task Lists (NMETLs), unique for each type of unit, are used to provide a consistent baseline for training progression during a workup cycle. Greatly simplified, C-Ratings are determined as follows:

<u>C-Rating</u>	<u>Percentage of NMETL Capability</u>
C-1	85% or above
C-2	70 – 84%
C-3	55 – 69%
C-4	Below 55%

Historically a unit was required to attain a rating of C-1 to be considered “deployable”. Analysis of the readiness system showed, however, that the training cost per unit of readiness began to rise exponentially as a unit approached 80% - or a high C-2. That is to say, the last 15-20% of combat readiness cost nearly as much as the first 80%. As in every service, there are significant fiscal constraints that make readiness accounts a zero-sum game; therefore, funding the training and readiness accounts for units of a typical CSG to reach a C-1 level prior to a deployment meant significantly reducing training funds to a CSG that had just completed a deployment. Thus, it was only a matter of weeks before the units of the returning CSG dropped to C-3 or below, virtually branding those units as “unsuitable” for further combat employment until completing the next set of workups 18 months later.

The solution to this cyclical readiness problem began with a major concession by Navy leadership that a unit was deployable at a C-2 readiness level. Without dismissing the importance of the C-1 rating, Navy leadership recognized that at a C-2 readiness level, a deploying unit’s war fighting capabilities were still far superior to any current threat. To maintain the standards of training excellence, the C-1 rating was preserved to acknowledge desired readiness goals for future operations, if required.

The second part of the paradigm shift, the length of the training cycle, followed logically from the first. If a unit could be funded at a lower level to maintain a C-2 combat readiness level and still be considered deployable, those funds saved could then be used to sustain the training requirements of units returning from a deployment, maintaining them at a C-2 level as well. The cyclical curve of readiness would still exist, but the magnitude of the fluctuations would be much less dramatic. As a result, with more units at a C-2 level or above, there would be a higher number of units capable of being deployed.

A graphical representation of the new FRP training cycle is illustrated in Figure 1. This figure reflects the decrease in the magnitude of the combat readiness variations and the significant increase in time for what is now referred to as the “deployability window”. Instead of a six month deployment and then 18 months between deployments, there is now a fifteen month deployability window and a 27-30 month cycle encompassing what is now called the Fleet Readiness Training Program (FRTP). Also, since deployment times remain unpredictable, funding and readiness are referenced to a “Reset” point which is designated at the Type Commander level with guidance from higher echelon commanders. The obvious cost benefit of this training method is that naval units across the fleet are on average able to maintain higher level of combat readiness for a longer period of time; thus providing a more potent and flexible force to the nation.

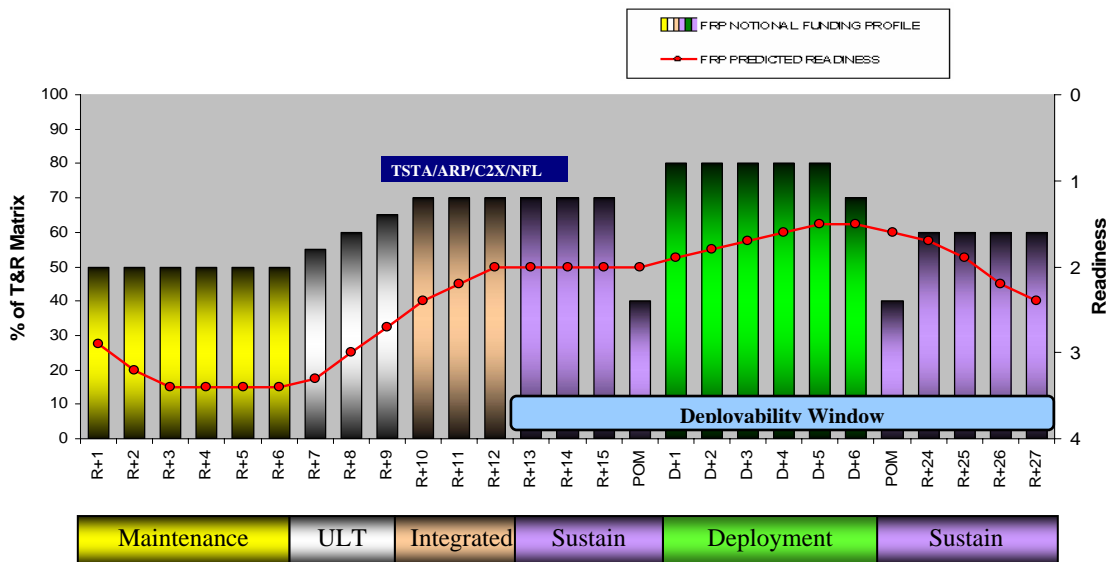


Figure 2. Combat Readiness during the Fleet Readiness Training Program (Post-FRP)²⁰

FRP AND TRAINING THE JFMCC

The increased size of the deployability window is the engine which makes this training proposal under the FRP viable. Having more ships, submarines, and squadrons

capable of deploying gives the Navy an advantage on two fronts. Most obvious is the capability to execute a Six Plus Two surge as demonstrated by the Summer Pulse '04 exercise in which seven aircraft carrier strike groups were deployed within 30 days.²¹ Less obvious, but equally important, is the readiness overlap which naturally occurs between strike groups.

In examining the deployability window, it becomes apparent that there are three main groups present – one preparing for deployment, one on deployment, and one in the post-deployment sustainment phase. This overlap is always present under the FRTP, which means there are usually two groups not deployed, but combat ready, that are capable of practicing multi-strike group operations. It is incumbent on U.S. Navy leadership to take advantage of these training opportunities in several ways.

First, by giving broader training oversight to the organizations currently responsible for fleet training, Carrier Strike Force (Training), Atlantic and Carrier Strike Force (Training), Pacific, standardized multi-strike group JFMCC training can be established for flag level commanders and their staffs. Second, promote JFMCC training at the warfare commander level through constant exposure to the joint operations afforded by the combat ready force overlap. Third, engage functional combatant commands like Joint Forces Command and Special Operations command in every aspect of multiple strike group practice operations to foster improved communication and enhance overall training. Last, keep Second and Third Fleet staffs engaged. As supporting fleet commands, it is incumbent on them to be thoroughly familiar with the magnitude of operations taking place at the operational side of a surge deployment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The training opportunities presented here are essential to the successful employment of U.S. Navy forces for the foreseeable future. From the vision of Sea Power 21 to the implementation of the Fleet Response Plan, the U.S. Navy is poised to make great strides in the execution of its war fighting capabilities. Unfortunately, JFMCC training and employment doctrine has yet to catch up to the strides made in other areas of combat readiness. The capability to surge Navy forces has never been better, but the forward deployed fleet commanders and their staffs are not trained well enough in multiple strike group operations to conduct effective operational planning in a crisis situation. Naval leadership now has a chance to reap substantial war fighting benefits by offering potential fleet commanders and their staffs a chance to get practical, real-time JFMCC training in the execution of multiple strike group operations without waiting for a regional crisis to develop.

To achieve these goals, the U.S. Navy will need to continue to break the stovepipes of responsibility and standard molds of training inherent to all military organizations. First, baseline JFMCC doctrine must be expanded so that, at a minimum, it encompasses the subtle nuances of managing the operational factors and functions involved with properly employing a rapidly converging maritime force. By exercising the training and operational staffs located at the fleet technical warfare training centers, Carrier Strike Force Training organizations, and functional combatant commands, an expanded JFMCC employment doctrine can be developed and practiced. There has never been a better opportunity for the Navy to practice advanced joint maritime warfare. The next step in capitalizing on this potential rests with Navy leadership. It is crucial that they do so in order to maintain the full spectrum dominance of the United States military for years to come.

NOTES

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⁶Ibid., 11.

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