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Decision On Isle Navy Carrier Due In '05

By Gregg K. Kakesako

The civilian head of the Navy says a decision on basing a nuclear aircraft carrier at Pearl Harbor might not be made until spring, possibly after the next round of base closures.

Congress approved the defense authorization bill over the weekend, which allows the Pentagon to close more military bases.

A House-Senate conference committee on the defense bill agreed to let the base closings proceed. President Bush had threatened to veto the defense bill if it delayed base closings. In May the Pentagon will submit to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission and Congress a list of bases it has selected for closure or realignment.

During a one-day stop here, Navy Secretary Gordon England said a decision on whether to relocate a carrier at Pearl Harbor is "a work in progress."

Asked when to expect such a decision, England said "sometime late spring or summer of next year."

Both retiring Adm. Thomas Fargo, Pacific Forces commander, and Adm. Walter Doran, who leads the Pacific Fleet, have endorsed basing a carrier in Hawaii rather than Guam.

U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye and Gov. Linda Lingle said the former Barbers Point Naval Air Station, which closed in 1999, could house the

jets and the 2,500 aviators and air crews that are needed to support a carrier.

Last October, the Navy began a \$1.8 million internal study on what additional improvements would be needed to home-port a carrier with 3,000 sailors and an air wing with nearly six dozen aircraft.

Yesterday, a Pacific Fleet spokesman said that study could be completed late this year.

England also said it is his understanding that Fargo will continue indefinitely as head of the Pacific Command after Air Force Gen. Gregory Martin, under congressional pressure, withdrew his name as Fargo's successor last week.

Inouye has advocated that Fargo's successor be an admiral since the command is "traditionally the domain of the Navy."

Although England said the boss of the Pacific Command heads all military services, he acknowledged it has been headed by an admiral for a long time.

"We've been comfortable with it," England said. "There have been a lot of relationships, so I can certainly understand the senator's view on the matter, but it's really the decision of the secretary of defense."

Fargo had planned to retire in January and join Hawaiian Electric Industries as a board member. The Chamber Commerce of Hawaii still plans to honor him at a Nov. 3 reception at the Hilton Hawaiian Village.

Pacific Carrier Base Still On Table

By William Cole

Navy Secretary Gordon England yesterday said there is a "strong desire" to base an aircraft carrier in the Pacific, and Hawai'i and Guam continue to be the only locations looked at, but no decision has been made.

England told reporters following a breakfast with Navy League representatives that if a carrier is based in the Pacific, a decision would have to be made on where to station the carrier and the air wing as well.

The Navy secretary planned to visit Hawai'i Marines before heading to Guam to participate in the commissioning of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Sequoia.

The Navy is doing a \$1.8 million study on the feasibility of basing a carrier in Hawai'i. No such study was done for Guam.

U.S. Sen. Dan Inouye, D-Hawai'i, told The Advertiser in August the Navy was considering distributing a carrier air wing of 70 to 80 aircraft among three military bases on O'ahu and one on Kaua'i.

Infrastructure for the aircraft and jet noise are concerns, and spreading out the aircraft would reduce the impact. The bases include the former Barbers Point, the Marine Corps base at Kane'ohe Bay, Wheeler Army Airfield and Barking Sands.

If the decision is made to base one of the nation's 12 carriers in Hawai'i, it wouldn't arrive for at least five years, Inouye said.

Politicians from Hawai'i and Guam have been actively seeking a carrier.

In San Diego, home port of three carriers, the Regional Chamber of Commerce last year figured each carrier has an annual \$270 million economic benefit, including \$111 million in payroll spent locally and \$40 million in maintenance contracts.

The carrier Kitty Hawk, based out of Yokosuka, Japan, is the only permanently forward-deployed carrier in the Pacific. The growing prominence of the region, and concerns over North Korea and China-Taiwan relations, has military planners seeking a second carrier presence.

Guam is 3,300 miles west of Hawai'i and several days sailing time closer to Asia, but falls short on infrastructure and "quality of life" issues.

Guam's congressional delegate, Madeleine Bordallo, who was traveling back to the territory, yesterday said Guam continues to lobby for a carrier.

"Our location is very important. That's how we feel," she said.

Navy officials said a decision could be announced after May, when the Pentagon is scheduled to proceed with a new round of Base Realignment and Closures and recommend which bases to be shuttered.

England said there is a "stable environment" at Pearl Harbor and he sees no downsizing. The shipyard is the state's biggest industrial employer, with 4,400 workers.

"We have a great workforce who do a lot of maintenance, a lot of our overhaul," England said. "I certainly can't see any dramatic contraction. On the other hand, the Navy's not going to have a larger number of ships in terms of total numbers. Maybe some, but certainly not a dramatic increase."

The Navy is downsizing by 8,000 sailors this fiscal year. Commanders have called for up to 375 ships to meet present needs, while the Navy has 291 warships.

England said he hasn't had any discussion with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld since Air Force Gen. Gregory Martin last week withdrew as the nominee to lead Pacific Command based at Camp Smith.

Inouye previously had said the Pacific Command, led by admirals since 1947, is a "water command" and should continue to be led by an admiral. England said with so many joint service efforts, "a lot of different people could have this command."

"On the other hand, it's been a Navy command for a long time," England said. "We're comfortable."

Adm. Walter Doran, the four-star commander of Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, has been mentioned as a possible candidate. Pacific Fleet yesterday had no comment.

Signs Of Progress Amid Turmoil In Iraq

By Scott Peterson

BAGHDAD – The deadly attack Thursday on the well-guarded Green Zone here may mark the launch of a new insurgent offensive during the holy month of Ramadan, which began Thursday night.

Two explosions in the central Baghdad zone - the seat of Iraq's interim government and US and British Embassies - left five dead.

But despite continued insecurity, the steady US military pressure against insurgents, coupled with efforts of the Iraqi interim government to negotiate, may be gaining at least some degree of traction.

Among the signs of progress in the conflict:

*Fighters loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr this week turned over many heavy weapons for cash as part of an agreement to stop fighting, and bring more aid and government control to impoverished Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad.

*Rocky negotiations had continued in the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah, west of Baghdad, spurred by almost nightly US air raids.

But interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi issued a threat Wednesday of a "major offensive" if the city does not hand over Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the militant leader whose Towhid and Jihad group claims numerous atrocities. The move caused the suspension Thursday of negotiations.

This saber-rattling comes amid reports that weeks of steady US airstrikes are causing a rift between the Iraqi resistance and Mr. Zarqawi's extremist foreign fighters in Fallujah.

Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the most revered cleric among Iraq's majority Shiite Muslims, called Wednesday for all Shiites to register to vote in elections slated for next January - a qualified endorsement for an event that many analysts say will be crucial to calming Iraq.

"There are some positive signs now, but whether this turns into a good future for Iraq ... depends on the election, and whether broad sectors of society feel represented," says Juan Cole, an Iraq expert at the University of Michigan.

"The problem is that as long as the guerrillas exist, as long as people [in Fallujah] aren't turning them in, the most you can hope for is a temporary cease-fire," he says. Violence "can always start back up very easily."

October changes

Analysts say attitudes became more cooperative after Oct. 1, when US and Iraqi forces moved into the insurgent-controlled city of Samarra, then started cutting militant "rat lines" into Baghdad and stepping up ground operations in Ramadi.

Iraqi and US officials say they have begun a series of offensives across the Sunni Triangle aimed at rooting out insurgents before the vote. At least eight Iraqis were reported killed during clashes in Ramadi Thursday. Fallujah has been softened with airpower and talks.

Yet few are using the word "optimism." Rumors spread Thursday in Baghdad of a new Ramadan offensive, using car bombs and targeting foreigners. Last year, the holy month witnessed a surge of attacks. And each strand of progress is beset with potential pitfalls - from Sadr City, where \$400,000 was spent in the first two days of the weapons buyback, to Fallujah.

"In Sadr City, I would not underestimate the power of the greenback," says a Western diplomat. A \$500 million aid package is part of the bargain. "But there's going to come a time when someone will say: 'You did not do what you said you'd do.'"

"Resorting to force alone is not a solution, and Allawi, as well as some Americans, is heeding this argument," says Ghassan Atiyyah, head of the Iraq Foundation for Development and Democracy. "The problem with [cleric] Sadr is different from Fallujah. It is a revolt of the downtrodden and poor."

Cash for arms "will not be enough," he says. "But if [authorities] put their money where their mouth is, and start projects and give people work, then they could really win them over."

Simmering Fallujah

But while the Shiite revolt may be on hold - though US officials say they are unimpressed with the number of weapons handed in -

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Fallujah simmers along. Talks are so uncertain that Mr. Allawi warned: "If Zarqawi and his group are not handed over to us, we are ready for major operations in Fallujah." That threat came as a surprise to Fallujah negotiator Hatem Maddab, who told Al Jazeera television that he has seen no proof of Zarqawi's presence in the rebel-held city.

"Zarqawi is like the weapons of mass destruction that America invaded Iraq for," said Mr. Maddab. "We hear about that name [Zarqawi], but he is not here. More than 20 or 30 homes have been bombarded because of this Zarqawi ... but only women, children, and the elderly have been affected."

That violence has helped divide the foreign fighters of Zarqawi - who the US says is the Al Qaeda leader in Iraq - and the more typical anti-US resistance.

Fallujah residents "are definitely fed up with it, and think: 'Are we ever going to get a real life back?'" says the diplomat. "They realize - and it's taken them a long time - that these [extremists] are going to be against any government in Iraq, elected or not.

"Allawi is not gung-ho [for a military solution], but this just can't go on forever," he adds. "And it's clear that much of the terrorism emanates from Fallujah."

Indeed, when marines cordoned off the city for several weeks last April, a US military intelligence officer noted at the time, not a single car bomb went off in Baghdad. Marine commanders decided not to invade Fallujah then, concerned about the likely scale of US and civilian deaths.

"With Fallujah, it's not a question of hunger - they want a share of power," says Atiyyah. "Now force is being used, but there is a deep-seated anger. This needs a political solution. Allawi is willing. The question is: How much are the Americans willing to help him?"

Even if a peaceful solution is struck, it is not clear if Fallujans can expel the militants, who are reported to have worn out their welcome in the city, and even been killed in local disputes.

Arab extremists of the Salafi school, the same adhered to by Al Qaeda militants, claim that Iraqis not willing to carry arms are infidels. They "are the crux of our ailment. Most of them are Saudis, Syrians," according to a commander of native insurgents, identified as Abu Barra, who was quoted by The Washington Post. "It is the Zarqawis and his Salafi group who are going to lead Fallujah, Samarra, Baqubah, Mosul, and even some parts of Baghdad to disaster and death."

Some of the issues could have been solved more easily last year if Iraqis had had more say in ruling the country, says Michigan's Cole. National elections were postponed. Municipal elections in Najaf were cancelled.

"The process that's going on now is the kind of compromise that could have been made all along, if the Americans hadn't been such control freaks," says Cole. "[They] talked a good game, with regard to democracy ... but the Americans kept trying to jury-rig things, to make sure their guys got in."

Chemicals Sickened '91 Gulf War Veterans, Latest Study Finds

By Scott Shane

WASHINGTON - A federal panel of medical experts studying illnesses among veterans of the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf has broken with several earlier studies and concluded that many suffer from neurological damage caused by exposure to toxic chemicals, rejecting past findings that the ailments resulted mostly from wartime stress.

Citing new scientific research on the effects of exposure to low levels of neurotoxins, the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses concludes in its draft report that "a substantial proportion of Gulf War veterans are ill with multisymptom conditions not explained by wartime stress or psychiatric illness."

It says a growing body of research suggests that many veterans' symptoms have a neurological cause and that there is a "probable link" to exposure to neurotoxins.

The report says possible sources include sarin, a nerve gas, from an Iraqi weapons depot blown up by American forces in 1991; a drug, pyridostigmine bromide, given to troops to protect against nerve gas; and pesticides used to protect soldiers in the region.

Dr. Joyce C. Lashof, the chairwoman of a presidential advisory group that reported in 1996 that there was no causal link between toxic exposure and the veterans' symptoms, said Thursday that she had not seen the new report. But Dr. Lashof said she was open to changing her views if the findings were based on solid new research and not advocacy by veterans' groups.

"We certainly weren't sure that our report was the definitive answer," Dr. Lashof, professor emerita of public health at the University of California at Berkeley, said. "It was based on the best evidence available at the time."

All the chemicals cited in the new study belong to a group called acetylcholinesterase inhibitors, which can cause a range of symptoms including pain, fatigue, diarrhea and cognitive impairment. Committee members said there

might be minor changes in the report, a draft copy of which was obtained by The New York Times, but that the basic scientific findings would not change.

The committee says a search for medical treatments tailored to the new findings are "urgently needed" and recommends \$60 million in federal funds for new research over the next four years. It says an estimated 100,000 Gulf War veterans, or about one in seven, suffer war-related health problems.

The report also says that understanding illnesses from the war will be critical in planning future military deployments and measures to improve domestic security. It calls for a reassessment of the use of pyridostigmine bromide.

Though some conclusions are hedged in careful language in the 135-page draft report, committee members said in interviews that they were consciously departing from the past scientific consensus and taking a strong stand on a politically and scientifically volatile subject.

"I would absolutely say it's a break from previous panels," said Dr. Beatrice A. Golomb, an associate professor of medicine at the University of California at San Diego, a member of the panel and its scientific director for much of its existence. "It reflects a different body of evidence, because more studies have come out. No one had gone to the scientific evidence on acetylcholinesterase inhibitors."

The new report, prepared for the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, draws conclusions that are essentially the opposite of those of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, led by Dr. Lashof. That group reported to President Bill Clinton in 1996 that "current scientific evidence does not support a causal link" between the veterans' symptoms and chemical exposures in the Persian Gulf.

Instead, the earlier group said, stress "is likely to be an important contributing factor to the broad range of physical and psychological illnesses currently being reported by gulf war veterans."

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Another panel of scientists convened in 1998 by the Institute of Medicine, a unit of the National Academies that focuses on health and medical advice, has produced a series of reports that generally point away from neurotoxin exposure as a likely cause of the veterans' illnesses.

Some 697,000 American troops were sent to the Persian Gulf at the end of 1990 to drive the Iraqi forces of President Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. Though the military campaign was swift and successful, 13 years after the war ended many veterans still complain of persistent fatigue, headaches, joint pain, numbness, diarrhea and other health problems.

Among dozens of studies cited by the new report is a 1998 survey that looked at about 2,000 Kansas veterans, 1,548 of whom served in the gulf. It found that more than 30 percent of the gulf veterans report three or more such symptoms. The presence of multiple symptoms, their persistence for many years and the dominance of muscular and skeletal complaints all distinguish the ailments of gulf war veterans from the ailments of veterans of other wars, Dr. Golomb said.

The Pentagon admitted in 1997 that as many as 100,000 American service members might have been exposed to nerve gas when American combat engineers blew up the Kamisiyah ammunition depot in southern Iraq in March 1991, shortly after the war.

The new panel was appointed in 2002 by Anthony J. Principi, the veterans affairs secretary, in accordance with a law passed in 1998 but never acted on by the Clinton administration. Of the 11 members 7 are scientists and 4 are veterans, including the chairman, James Binns, a Vietnam veteran and former Pentagon official. Eight other scientists worked as advisers to the panel.

Committee members said release of the report, which was described in the Oct. 1 issue of Science magazine, had been set for earlier this month but was postponed because of scheduling problems.

Through a spokeswoman, Mr. Principi, who was in Michigan Thursday for the groundbreaking of a new veterans cemetery, praised the committee's work.

"I'm looking forward to studying the committee's report and working with them to

ensure adequate research funding to find answers to these perplexing medical issues," he said. He said the department was already providing disability benefits for some veterans who have developed amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease, based on studies finding that the veterans have nearly double the risk of the disease as veterans who did not go to the Persian Gulf do.

According to his spokeswoman, Cynthia Church, Mr. Principi, a combat-decorated Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, took a particular interest in the research of Dr. Robert W. Haley, whom he appointed to the panel. Dr. Haley, chief of epidemiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, has written a series of studies of the possible effects of neurotoxins on gulf war veterans, including some financed by the Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot.

Dr. Haley acknowledged that his work, which has been championed by some veterans and members of Congress, has been viewed skeptically by some scientists. He said the current committee's findings represent a "revolutionary change" from the past, when what he called "radically conservative" scientists dismissed the neurotoxin thesis.

"I think this committee has honestly weighed all the evidence," he said. "Although it's not proven, the preponderance of the evidence supports a new explanation - brain cell damage, nervous system damage caused by chemical exposures."

Jim Reichert, a 41-year-old industrial equipment mechanic who lives in Columbia, Ill., said he was heartened to hear of the committee's conclusions.

Mr. Reichert said he had served as a Blackhawk helicopter crewman in the war. After his six months in the gulf region, he developed strange symptoms which have never gone away, he said. Fatigue forced him to give up hunting and fishing, he loses control of his hand muscles and drops tools on the job, and he suffers from chronic diarrhea and a recurring, blistering skin condition.

"If it was stress alone, it wouldn't have lasted this long," Mr. Reichert said. Referring to himself and other ailing veterans, he said: "We're not crazy. If I'm a little nuts, it's because I've been sick so long."

U.S.-Financed News Channel Asserts Independence

By Ellen McCarthy

When a U.S. military helicopter swooped into Baghdad and began spraying bullets into a crowd of civilians believed to be looting an Army armored vehicle, most Arab news channels aired a video of the scene that captured the last words of a journalist killed in the attack.

"Please help me. I am dying," pleaded the reporter, Mazin Tumaisi. His network, al-Arabiya, showed the footage again and again, as did al-Jazeera.

Alhurra TV, however, deemed the video too disturbing to air. The story could be told without such graphic images, news directors for the new U.S. government-funded network concluded.

Editors at U.S. news channels routinely decide that some images are too graphic to air. But to critics and competitors of Alhurra, its decision was evidence that the young network airs U.S. propaganda. "It is very questionable for them not to show it," said Hafez al-Mirazi, Washington bureau chief of al-Jazeera, the Arabic news channel based in Qatar.

Alhurra, a network with 150 reporters based in Springfield, is the U.S. government's largest and most expensive effort to sway foreign opinion over the airwaves since the creation of Voice of America in 1942.

The 24-hour channel, which started operating in February, airs two daily hour-long newscasts, and sports, cooking, fashion, technology and entertainment programs, including a version of "Inside the Actors Studio" dubbed in Arabic. It also carries political talk shows and magazine-type news programs, including one about the U.S. presidential election.

Its programs are produced in a two-story building that once housed local NewsChannel 8. It is staffed by a handful of journalists recruited from Arabic stations and newspapers and dozens of employees scurrying around in jeans and running shoes or kitten heels. A mixture of Arabic and English fills the newsroom as journalists answer phones and click away on their computers.

Congress last year approved \$62 million to pay for Alhurra's first year. In November 2003, Congress committed \$40 million more to launch a sister station in April aimed solely at Iraq. The operation is overseen by the Broadcasting Board of Governors, an independent federal agency that is also in charge of Voice of America. The U.S. government launched

Alhurra after deciding that existing Arab news channels displayed anti-American bias. The aim is to promote a more positive U.S. image to Arabs.

Khalid Disher, 24, who owns a shop in the Mansoor neighborhood of Baghdad, likes Alhurra. "Their news covers everything, the good news and the bad ones. They cover all of Iraq. As a new channel, it is a very good start."

Others are suspicious. "I know that this channel is funded by the U.S. Congress," said Atheer Abdul-Sattar, 24, who owns a sports-equipment store in Mansoor. "The Americans want their interests to be achieved. They will direct the kind of shows or ideas they want the Iraqis to believe."

Mouafac Harb, Alhurra's news director, bristles at that notion. "We're state-funded, but not state-run," Harb said. "I don't recall getting a phone call from someone trying to steer the news. Ever."

Alhurra may have a problem standing out in a crowded field. Middle East viewers generally get about 120 satellite-television channels, including al-Jazeera, Dubai-based al-Arabiya, London-based Arabic News Network and state-run operations.

William A. Rugh, a former ambassador to United Arab Emirates and Yemen who wrote a book on Arabic media, said Alhurra has "been a big waste of money" so far, in part because it must compete in a saturated field of Arabic networks.

The moving force behind the birth of Alhurra, which means "the Free One" in Arabic, was Norman Pattiz, the California radio executive who created Westwood One Inc., the nation's largest radio network. Pattiz was appointed in November 2000 by President Bill Clinton to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees federally funded international media efforts such as the Voice of America and Radio and TV Marti, which is aimed at Cuba. Pattiz quickly focused his attention on the Middle East, and, he said, he soon concluded that newscasts on Middle East stations often offered "incitements of violence, hate-speak and disinformation."

In 2002, the broadcasting board launched Radio Sawa, a radio station that mixes American and Arabic pop music with five hours of daily news programming. Meanwhile, Pattiz, armed with a video of scenes of Arab citizens stomping on American flags and burning an image of President Bush, lobbied Congress to fund a TV station.

"These are the kinds of visions of America that people in the Middle East see every day," Pattiz said,

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recalling his sales pitch.

Pattiz helped hire Harb as news director of Radio Sawa. Harb, a Lebanon-born U.S. citizen, attended George Washington University and had been working as the Washington bureau chief of the Arabic-language newspaper Al Hayat. After Congress approved funding for Alhurra, which had strong backing from the Bush administration, Harb became Alhurra's news director as well.

Alhurra and Alhurra Iraq are owned by a nonprofit corporation, the Middle East Television Network Inc., which was set up as a holding company for the Arabic television stations.

Harb said editorial decisions rest with him, but that he reports to the Broadcasting Board of Governors and Bert Kleinman, president of the Middle East Television Network, which oversees the station's finances. Alhurra does not air commercials or generate any revenue and thus is dependent on the U.S. government for its money.

Alhurra spent \$20 million to buy broadcast equipment and technology and to renovate the studio. The rest of the money went for operating costs and salaries, which network representatives say are in line with the U.S. government's pay scale. Next year's budget for the one radio and two television stations is expected to total \$52 million.

Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (Del.), the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wants to expand the effort. He has introduced a bill calling for similar broadcasts in Farsi, Kurdish and Uzbek, among other languages. The expansion would require \$222 million in start-up funding, plus a \$345 million annual budget on top of Voice of America's budget of \$570 million for 2005.

Eighty of Alhurra's 150 journalists moved here from Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries. Fifty remained abroad to work in the network's bureaus in Amman, Baghdad, Beirut and Dubai.

Harb said most of the journalists were initially skeptical but agreed to join for the opportunity to try something new.

"Journalism is difficult in Lebanon. It's difficult to say everything you want to say," said Larissa Aoun, who previously worked for a state-run station in Beirut. "I was really looking for an opportunity where I could be more open."

Alhurra had a bumpy start. When the channel was launched in February, government officials in some countries condemned it. A cleric in Saudi Arabia issued a fatwa, or religious decree, against watching the channel, writing in Al Hayat that Alhurra was staffed by "agents in the pay of America."

In Alhurra's first days, there were many technical problems. And when President Bush appeared on the station to discuss the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, he ended the interview by telling Harb he'd done a "good job," prompting more questions about the station's independence.

Harb said he wishes that Bush had not made that comment, but that he also believes the incident was misconstrued. "I don't believe I was soft on the president," he said.

In March, when Israeli missiles killed Hamas leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin as he emerged from a prayer session, most Arab news channels switched immediately to the story. Alhurra stuck with its regular program, a cooking show.

Detractors pounced on that. "Whatever the reason, Al-Hurra's not pursuing the story in real time will be interpreted by many Arabs as politically motivated," wrote an opinion editor at the Daily Star newspaper in Beirut.

Harb agreed that it was a mistake. "This happened very early in the life of Alhurra. . . . When they assassinated the next leader of Hamas, we were more ready to give more comprehensive coverage by then," he said.

Harb does not, however, think that Alhurra was wrong when it decided not to show the video of the dying al-Arabiya journalist.

In U.S. media, "the idea of publishing graphic images is shied away from, frowned upon universally," said Keith Woods, who teaches journalism at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Fla. "Everybody has a sense of a line that you don't cross without good reason."

Imad Musa, 34, was working in al-Jazeera's Washington bureau before he joined Alhurra as a producer. Musa, an American who is the son of Palestinian immigrants, liked the idea of shaping a new channel. He said he received assurances of journalistic freedom before taking the job and has not felt pressure to slant a story.

There are, he acknowledged, differences between the policies of his current and former employer. Alhurra's reporters are told not to refer to the U.S. presence in Iraq as an occupation. Those who set off explosive devices attached to their bodies are called suicide bombers, not martyrs.

And in Iraq, Alhurra reporters "focus on more human-interest and positive stories. For instance, 'electricity has arrived in this neighborhood,' not 'this neighborhood still doesn't have electricity'," Musa said.

Musa also has to deal with the fact that some Arab politicians refuse to appear on his channels or are criticized for appearing. One member of the Jordanian parliament who agreed to be on Alhurra in

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August was criticized for appearing opposite an Israeli.

Overall, however, Musa said news judgment at Alhurra is not very different from that of al-Jazeera. Last month, on the day Musa was being interviewed, al-Jazeera began its 5 p.m. newscast with video of violence in Najaf that was almost identical to the scene Musa picked to lead his program.

The Alhurra program's two anchors were positioned in front of a blue map of the Middle East in the Springfield studio. During that day's broadcast, one of al-Jazeera's female anchors wore a head scarf. Alhurra's anchors were dressed in modern business attire. Both stations used a classical form of Arabic in presenting the news. But unlike al-Jazeera, Alhurra didn't sign off with the traditional Islamic greeting assalamu alaikum, or "peace be upon you."

Alhurra is transmitted to the Middle East on two satellites, Nilesat and Arabsat. Viewers in Iraq can also get the network over broadcast television. The network is available to 70 million satellite television viewers in 22 countries. There are few reliable statistics on how many people watch it regularly. One survey conducted for the network by ACNielsen found that 29 percent of Jordanians and 24 percent of Saudi Arabians with satellite-TV receivers tuned in during a seven-day period in July and August. But a Zogby poll of six Middle East countries done in May for the University of Maryland found that Alhurra barely registered as a primary source of news.

"There is a psychological barrier, and this . . . affects people's perceptions in dealing with things coming from across the Atlantic," said Badran A. Badran, a professor of media and communications at Zayed University in Dubai. "The U.S. is viewed in a negative light."

Some Middle East experts assert that the very assumption under which Alhurra was created -- that existing Arab news stations contribute to disdain for the United States -- is flawed. "The managers of Alhurra have stigmatized the competition and stereotyped it as being totally anti-American, and that's simply not true," said Rugh, the former ambassador.

Rather than compete in an already crowded field, Rugh said U.S. policymakers should appear more on al-Jazeera and other widely watched

channels. More than 400 Voice of America staff members signed a petition sent to Congress in July charging that Alhurra and Sawa were draining VOA's budgets and not being held to the same editorial standards.

A draft of a report by the State Department's inspector general, obtained by The Washington Post, said Radio Sawa is failing to meet its mandate to promote pro-American attitudes because it is preoccupied with building an audience through music -- an assertion disputed by the Broadcasting Board of Governors. The State Department said it is revising the report.

Some legislators have said that if Alhurra is not promoting U.S. views, the government should not be funding it. "Do not tell us it's not propaganda, because if it's not propaganda, then I think . . . we will have to look at what it is we are doing," Rep. José E. Serrano (D-N.Y.) said at a hearing in April.

Harb countered that fair news is what will promote democracy. "Our track record will speak for itself," he said.

The Source for News

More than 120 channels are available to most satellite-television viewers in the Middle East. Alhurra barely registered as a primary source of news; 2.3 percent said it was a second source.

Top Six International News Channels Watched by Arab Viewers*

1. Al-Jazeera, Qatar (51.7 percent)
2. Al-Arabiya, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (8.4 percent)
3. Abu Dhabi TV, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (7.6 percent)
4. CNN, Atlanta (6.4 percent)**
5. MBC, London (5.3 percent)
6. Lebanese Broadcasting Corp., Beirut (4.6 percent)

*Surveys conflict on the popularity of each channel, although al-Jazeera generally ranks atop any list. These are the results of a May 2004 survey of 3,400 people in the Middle East, conducted by Zogby International, a Utica, N.Y., polling company, and commissioned by the University of Maryland, asking viewers what channel was their primary source of news. It is frequently cited because it did not use statistics provided by the channels.

**All except CNN are Arabic-language stations.

Federal Money For Navy Landing Field Cut By Two-Thirds

By The Associated Press

NEW BERN, N.C. -- A proposed Navy landing field in eastern North Carolina has lost two-thirds of the federal money set aside for the project, a move that forces the military to return to Congress if it eventually wins approval for the project.

U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C., who represents the area where Navy wants to build the practice landing field asked congressional negotiators two weeks ago to eliminate the money for the field while lawsuits seeking to stop the project are settled.

The final budget approved by Congress contains \$30 million of the \$95.7 million for acquisition and construction contained in the Senate version of the bill. Originally, the House version contained no money for the project.

The House approved the measure Friday and the House passed it Monday. It now awaits the president's signature.

Butterfield, who was elected to fill out the term of former Rep. Frank Ballance and is now running for a full term, had argued no money should be allocated for the field since the courts may need several years to resolve lawsuits filed

by officials of Washington and Beaufort counties and environmental groups.

"This is certainly good news for Washington and Beaufort counties and allows more scrutiny during the appropriations process," Butterfield said in a press release. "We still have an uphill battle, but this is a step forward."

The Navy wants to buy about 30,000 acres for the \$186 million project. The field would have an 8,000-foot runway that would be used by Navy and Marine fighter jets based in North Carolina and Virginia to simulate landings on aircraft carriers.

The Navy prefers the site because it is located between Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia and Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in Havelock, where the squadrons would be based.

The proposed site is also about five miles from the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, home to more than 100,000 wintering waterfowl. Bird-strike experts say the waterfowl pose a serious hazard to pilots and expensive fighter jets nearly half the year.

In April, a federal judge halted preparations for the project while the lawsuits are considered.

The Pentagon's Environmental Battle

Cleanup Fights Stall New Uses For Old Bases

Redeveloping A Military Site Can Revitalize A Community — But Not If The Site Is Polluted

By Peter Eisler

Second of two parts

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Taking in the million-dollar views of San Francisco Bay from the old Alameda Naval Air Station, it's easy to see why this city staked its future on redeveloping the abandoned base. Its thousands of feet of coastline are prime real estate in one of the nation's most expensive and congested markets.

But looking inland at a maze of empty airplane hangars and rusting warehouses, the promise fades.

The air station accounts for a third of the city's area. By now, more than a decade after the base's closure was announced, the site was supposed to be the thriving heart of a revitalized community, full of new homes, shopping areas, boat slips, and a luxury hotel and golf course. Instead, the redevelopment of the base is mired in a massive environmental cleanup. Groundwater is contaminated with solvents and other chemicals used in aircraft maintenance. The soil is fouled by dumped munitions and fuel spills.

“Every time you turn a spade of dirt, you're likely to find (more pollution) that will drive your cost to clean higher,” says David Brandt, Alameda's assistant city attorney.

Alameda is among dozens of cities and towns nationwide where lingering pollution has upset plans to redevelop closed military bases, a USA TODAY investigation finds.

The environmental problems are crushing many communities' best hopes for recovering from the economic blow of losing bases shuttered by the Defense Department in the past 15 years. And they're hindering the Pentagon's efforts to save billions of dollars by getting unused land off its property rolls.

As the Pentagon prepares to close dozens more bases in 2005 — the first round of closures in a decade — Defense officials are working with Congress to change the rules so

communities shoulder more of the responsibility for cleanups.

Defense officials have long argued that the opportunity for redevelopment makes up for the job losses and other financial hits inflicted when a base is closed. But that potential is getting harder — and more expensive — to realize.

In the next round of base closings, new laws and policies allow the armed services to more easily transfer land to communities or private developers before it's cleaned. State and local officials say the changes leave communities with less leverage to force the services to address pollution problems that are discovered years later.

Pentagon officials are looking to control their restoration costs for closed bases, which have grown by billions of dollars as new problems with water and soil contamination have emerged.

Defense officials “are very concerned about these environmental costs,” says George Schlossberg, a lawyer who served as the Pentagon's chief counsel on base closure and property disposal in the Reagan and first Bush administrations.

“When we began the base closure process in 1987 and '88, we never knew how high the environmental costs were going to be,” says Schlossberg, now counsel for the National Association of Installation Developers, which represents cities and towns dealing with abandoned military land. “The costs are better defined now, ... and that's the number one impediment to getting properties conveyed to communities.”

But communities are paying a price for the Pentagon's efforts to cut environmental cleanup costs at abandoned bases. Among USA TODAY's findings:

Contamination is delaying redevelopment of closed bases.

Nearly 10 years after the first four rounds of base closings ended, 60,000 acres of military

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property abandoned in that process still is owned by the Defense Department. Environmental problems have delayed the transfer of 80% of that land, Pentagon records show.

The Pentagon is cutting cleanup funds for closed bases.

Funding for cleanup at closed military bases fell 57% from 2001 to 2004, despite big increases in total defense spending. That has forced communities and managers of military cleanups to stretch restoration schedules.

New policies aim to reduce military cleanup obligations.

The services have gotten more leeway to sell closed bases to communities or developers before they are cleaned. By aiming to transfer abandoned installations in “as-is” condition, the Pentagon hopes to give local officials or private buyers more responsibility for overseeing restoration work.

State and local officials are wary of the changes.

The military “never has done a very good job of identifying the environmental issues (at closed bases), and that's the show-stopper,” says Barry Steinberg, a former Army environmental lawyer now representing communities fighting base closures. “It's like going to someone with a paper bag and asking, ‘Do you want to buy what's in this bag?’ The first question is, ‘What's in the bag?’ And that's the question the military has been unable to answer again and again.”

Through 2001, the Pentagon had saved \$17 billion from the 97 base closures completed since it began systematically shutting down excess installations in 1988, records show. And officials hope the recent changes in base-closure laws and policies will save more money.

Congress has scrapped a longtime requirement that abandoned military bases be transferred to communities at little or no cost to soften the economic blow of the closures. Under the Pentagon's plan to sell more properties “as-is,” the services would disclose known pollution problems and remain financially liable for contamination, but the new owners would clean it up.

Pentagon officials say that under those conditions, local officials are less likely to consider impractical development, such as putting homes on land that requires extensive

and costly cleanup. Once a redevelopment plan is in place, the services can write the buyer a check for the expected cleanup costs — or cut the base's price accordingly — and transfer the property with an agreement that the new owner will restore it.

Communities will get quicker “economic development, (and) property moves onto their tax rolls sooner,” says Raymond DuBois, deputy undersecretary of Defense for installations and environment.

“When all the interests in a local community think they can get something for free, they tend to bicker,” DuBois says. If a site is auctioned, communities often work with commercial developers to focus quickly on realistic redevelopment plans, he adds.

The new approach also will save tax dollars because local officials and private developers can manage cleanups more efficiently, Pentagon officials say. And those savings, coupled with proceeds from the sale of closed bases, will help offset the cuts in military cleanup budgets.

Local officials like the idea of getting the property quickly, but they worry about what happens if unforeseen pollution problems arise later. Though the services remain liable, redevelopment can be delayed for years if they dispute local cleanup demands. And once the services have gotten a property off their rolls, there's little incentive for them to heed a community's call for more cleanup work.

That problem has come up in several communities that have taken custody of military property before it is cleaned.

The services “move pathetically slowly” to address pollution on land they no longer own, says Dan Miller, Colorado's assistant attorney general for environmental matters. “Developers and communities have to clean up with their own money and hope to get it back.”

In 1997, Colorado sued the Air Force to get it to accept state standards for clearing unexploded ordnance at the old Lowry Bombing Range, which sits in one of Denver's fastest-growing suburbs. Today, new homes and a high school are in sight of areas still littered with unexploded ordnance. Based on a state settlement with the Air Force, military engineers are working with the developers' contractors to remove bombs and other old munitions. But

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Miller says the military “hasn't come close” to meeting the settlement's cleanup schedule.

Congress was poised to allow the military even more leeway to avoid costly cleanups by giving the Pentagon the option of declaring a closed base “inactive” and retaining custody. The legislation initially was approved, but state and local officials complained that it would allow the services to close a contaminated base and walk away, leaving the property unavailable for redevelopment. In one of its final acts before recessing last week, Congress scrapped the law.

The controversy over cleanup costs at closed bases is expected to continue as newly recognized pollution problems add billions of dollars to the military's liabilities at abandoned installations.

The most daunting is contamination from munitions. Ordnance that failed to explode in military exercises is the big concern, not only because it can blow up if disturbed, but also because it can leak toxins into soil and water.

More than 15 million acres of military land is thought to be polluted with used or dumped munitions, according to a study by the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress. The costs of cleaning up that contamination, spread across nearly 1,400 sites, are estimated at \$8 billion to \$35 million.

Based on the Pentagon's current spending for cleaning up ordnance — about \$200 million a year — it could take a century to deal with contamination from munitions, according to federal studies. Last year, a Pentagon task force

recommended doubling the budget for cleaning up munitions. It warned that the Pentagon will face more conflicts with local regulators and “lose control of its own destiny” if it doesn't move more quickly.

Alameda's stalled efforts to redevelop the old naval air station offer a stark lesson in the ways that environmental problems can derail a community's plans to turn a closed base into an economic asset.

In the years since the installation closed, new pollution problems have cropped up repeatedly. Investigations have found previously unknown ammunition dumps, soil contamination from long-ago fuel spills and underground pools of industrial solvents. Each new discovery has thrown the city into new disputes with the Navy.

Alameda officials estimate that it will cost \$450 million to sufficiently clean the air station, and they want a check from the Navy before taking custody of most of the land. The Navy, which is legally liable for the contamination, says \$180 million worth of restoration is adequate.

The impasse has frozen a deal to transfer the property. And Alameda's grand plans for redeveloping the site remain little more than a hopeful vision.

“We need to have (properties) cleaned sufficiently, and that's where the tension occurs between the local community and the federal government,” Alameda City Manager Jim Flint says. “We just have different standards for what is sufficiently clean.”

Military Also Cutting Back On Flu Shots

By Erin Schultz

The U.S. military lost more than two-thirds of its flu vaccine last week when a major supplier was shut down, leaving flu shots for only deployed troops and some high-risk service members here in the United States, according to the Department of Defense.

The severe shortage of vaccine has also affected civilian hospitals and medical centers across the country.

Flu shots have been mandatory for all military troops in the past. But because of the shortage, about 1.5 million healthy, non-deployed troops probably won't get the vaccine this year, Defense Department spokesman James Turner said Thursday.

Retirees, family members and others who rely on military health care will get flu shots only if they fall into high-risk groups, he said.

The Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton, which serves the base's Marines and their families as well as thousands of retirees, has not received any flu vaccine and is awaiting orders from the Pentagon on how to administer its shots, said hospital spokesman Douglas Allen.

"My guess is if you're not deploying and you're healthy, you're probably not going to get a shot this year," Allen said Thursday afternoon.

The military ordered 3.7 million doses of the vaccine this year, including 2.4 million from Chiron Corp., a California pharmaceutical company that was ordered to shut down production of the vaccine last week after contamination was discovered at its plant in Liverpool, England.

The shutdown took Chiron vaccine off the market, slashing U.S. flu vaccine supplies in half and leaving dozens of local hospitals without enough shots. Local and national health officials said only high-risk patients -- pregnant women, young children, seniors and people with health problems -- will be able to get vaccinated this year.

Chiron's shutdown left the military with 1.3 million doses of the vaccine from a different supplier -- about 900,000 fewer shots than it needs to cover its 2.2 million deployed troops and high-risk patients, according to the Defense Department.

The department is negotiating a deal with Aventis Pasteur, the only company providing usable shots in the United States, to provide enough vaccine to cover that shortfall, Turner said.

On Camp Pendleton, the hospital has received a number of phone calls from troops and their families about flu shots, Allen said. The hospital expects to have more information about the availability of shots in the next few days, he said.

"As always, people are concerned about how much we're going to get, and whether we'll get it soon enough, and who will be getting the shots," he said.

"So far what we know is that there's a shortage, and it will affect us," he said. "There should be enough for our high-risk patients and the people who treat them."

LCS To Play Major Role As Unmanned Vehicles Tackle Mined Waters

By Dave Ahearn

The Navy aims to remove all personnel from mine-hunting operations in enemy waters, deciding instead to have unmanned platforms perform those dangerous missions, a key Navy officer said.

"In the next three or four years, there will be a fundamental change," Rear Adm. William Landay, program executive officer for littoral and mine warfare, told defense journalists in a briefing at the Washington Navy Yard.

"We want to get everybody out of the minefield," he explained.

That will involve, in part, deploying unmanned platforms from the new-concept Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), a small but fast and agile coastal fighter. In separate efforts, Lockheed Martin Corp. and General Dynamics Corp. are producing markedly different versions of the LCS.

Lockheed is about to build a steel, single-hulled vessel, while General Dynamics is working on plans for a larger triple-hulled aluminum craft.

They will share common mission modules, which can be on-loaded before each mission to give the LCS the capabilities it requires to tackle that work. The modules system means that a relatively small ship such as the LCS can possess capabilities normally seen only on a much larger craft.

The three main missions would be defeating enemy underwater mines, destroying enemy submarines, and protecting Navy ships from attacks by tiny swarm boats piloted by terrorists.

Landay said the Navy at present isn't planning any strategy that would confer all three main mission capabilities on an LCS at a single time.

So swapping modules still would be needed.

Lockheed and General Dynamics will have to accommodate a common set of mission modules. Each firm won't be permitted, say, to have a separate, custom module for its own LCS version, he said.

And primacy will be given to functionality of the modules and their ability to perform missions for the Navy, he said. Littoral Combat "Ships support the program," not vice versa, he said. In the LCS program, the ships are merely "trucks" that transport the modules that actually offer war-fighting capabilities, he said.

Mission modules commonality is a must, he added, with the Navy demanding that there be but one set of modules able to be on- and off-loaded with ease from either the Lockheed or GD LCSs. "We're going to have one set," he said.

And the two defense contractors knew that early in the acquisition cycle, he said. "We gave them a pretty tight spec to begin with," as to how the modules would have to interface with the ships, the electrical power and other needs of the modules, and more, he said.

Module Swaps At Sea

But there is room for discussion in a three-way exchange involving Lockheed, GD and the Navy. "They've got some great ideas," on points that the Navy may not have considered fully, Landay said.

That doesn't rule out differences in the ships. For example, where the Navy requires that the modules be in containers capable of being handled by standard container-cargo equipment such as cranes on docks, Lockheed chose to move modules below decks suspended from an overhead track system, rather than with tracks in the decks.

Experience will tell whether one system or the other is preferable, once the Flight 0 Lockheed and GD versions of the LCS are built and operational.

While LCSs at first will swap mission modules in port, eventually the Navy would like swap modules at sea, even in something rough such as sea state 3. "It's clearly a capability we'd all like to have," he said.

The Lockheed LCS will have different ways of on- and off-loading modules and small craft such as rigid-hull inflatable boats (RIBs), including a waterline port in the side of the hull, while also having a stern entry. GD says it will

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be able to on- and -off load boats and modules at a stern ramp, and at an entry on the starboard side.

Landay said that in high sea states, it can be difficult to on- and off-load in a side entry, whereas a stern transfer point is easier. "Recovery of boats alongside is difficult in [high] sea states," he said.

Two smaller vessels, the HSV Swift, and the X-Craft, will be used to test LCS concepts even before the LCSs are built and put to sea, he said.

Dipping Sonar

In anti-submarine warfare, Landay said the LCS will play a key role, serving as a control base for various platforms, including helicopters.

While the Fire Scout by Northrop Grumman Corp. may be too small a platform, with too limited a payload capacity, to accommodate a dipping sonar, Landay said a larger UAV rotorcraft might work.

Lockheed Martin Corp., in a briefing for journalists at Owego, N.Y., earlier this week, described a larger rotorcraft unmanned aerial vehicle. "It certainly could" be considered by the Navy for an anti-submarine warfare role using a dipping sonar, Landay said. "We intend to continue to spiral those capabilities," so that whatever mission modules and manned and unmanned platforms that may operate off the LCSs when they first are launched may evolve or be replaced with superior systems over time, he said.

As more advanced systems appear, the Navy must consider "integrating that into the mission package," Landay said. "No question that we would."

That said, however, he noted that at some point the Navy must decide on some initial systems to move forward with construction of the Flight 0 LCSs.

But the LCS program will include an annual "spiraling" review, to determine whether there are emergent technologies or systems that should be integrated into production of LCSs, he said.

Landay also said he would like to see more uniform unmanned systems, rather than the great variety in size and shapes of systems currently used. For example, it would be useful to have a 21-inch diameter unmanned

underwater vehicle that could be both launched and recovered in torpedo tubes of a submarine that's underway undersea.

Only if a contractor has a system that "knocks my socks off" would he consider procuring an asset with a non-standardized size and shape, he said.

Smaller Contractors

Landay said he wants to stress that in leading the LCS and other littoral warfare programs, that smaller defense firms will have an opportunity to contribute solutions to the program, rather than limiting those chances to Lockheed, GD and other large firms.

Landay said the Navy will hold an industry day Nov. 3 to gain input from, and provide information to, firms interested in the program.

While there must be a role for large systems integration companies in the LCS program, there also should be a role for non-integration firms, he said.

Homeland Security

While Landay said the LCS is a Navy vessel that isn't designed as a homeland security asset, it could fill that role in some instances.

For example, he said, the LCS easily could play a key role if terrorists mined New York harbor.

The LCS has a key role against terrorist attacks aimed at Navy fleet ships, such as if attackers piloted large numbers of small boats at high speed, heading toward a carrier group, he indicated.

That said, the Navy must perfect its abilities to perceive and counter close-in threats, according to Landay. For example, the Navy may be able to detect an attacking cruise missile 100 miles distant from Navy ships, but may not be able to detect and counter, quickly, an attack by boats close to the fleet. "We are very good at finding things at long distances," he said.

What also would be useful would be systems to detect explosives, chemicals or other threats remotely, he said.

Tactics, too, can be useful, such as providing unmistakable warnings to approaching small vessels, ordering them to veer away from Navy ships. If the warnings go unheeded, then a commander can order action against the small boats with greater confidence, Landay noted.

Shipboard Protection Systems Start Deployment In 2005

By Lisa Troshinsky

The U.S. Navy intends to release a request for proposals (RFP) by the end of the year to procure Shipboard Protection Systems to allow Navy vessels to identify, warn and attack potential surface threats, Rear Adm. William Landay, program executive officer for Navy Littoral and Mine Warfare, told reporters Oct. 14.

The Shipboard Protection Systems are scheduled to begin deployment in 2005, Landay said.

"We're working on an accelerated timeline. There is an obvious fleet requirement to get this capability out there," Capt. Paul Cruze, program manager for anti-terrorism and force protection, Navy Littoral Mine Warfare, told The DAILY.

The fiscal 2005 defense budget includes \$13.7 million for procurement, installation and deployment of installation kits and \$2.9 million for research, development, testing and evaluation, a Naval Sea Systems Command spokesman told The DAILY.

The program is projected for all ship classes, depending on funding, Cruze said.

"We can find things at long distances, and we're OK on initial detection and engaging hard kill capabilities," Landay said. "But we need to work on determining intent. What kind of craft is it? Is someone on it? If so, what is he doing? For this, using nonlethal means is critical."

Cruze said, "ideally, we will give each Navy ship its own system that will integrate shipboard radar, electro/optical infrared sensors, nonlethal warning devices - like acoustic hailing and warning munitions like flash bangs to get the person's attention and warn them off - and searchlights to look out farther and let the person know he's been identified. Eventually, we would integrate a remotely operated stabilized small arms mount."

Current ship self-protection consists of crew patrolling, binoculars, radar, hailing bullhorns and bridge-to-bridge radios, the latter only if the potential threat has that capability.

The technologies that would go into the new shipboard system are not new. The challenge is to integrate them into one system, Cruze said.

Pentagon Officials Review Joint Strike Fighter Program

By Rebecca Christie

WASHINGTON -- Pentagon officials met Thursday to review the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program, an ambitious international project that has been set back by concerns about airplane weight.

The program went before the Defense Acquisition Board for a two-hour status review, a Defense Department spokeswoman said. Results are expected in coming weeks.

The U.S. counts eight countries as partners in the \$244 billion program, the biggest military program ever. Thousands of airplanes will eventually be built, at a cost of \$40 million to \$50 million each.

Lockheed Martin Corp. (LMT) is the prime contractor, leading a development team that includes many other well-known defense companies. The plane's first flights are expected in 2006. Three versions of the airplane are in the works: one for conventional runways, one for

aircraft carriers, and one for short takeoffs and vertical landings.

Weight problems on the plane's nonconventional models led to program delays and restructuring. Pentagon and Lockheed Martin officials say they've made significant strides toward overcoming these hurdles.

"The program is less than three years into a 12-year development program. The team has made significant progress, and important milestones have been achieved this year," Lockheed Martin spokesman Thomas Jurkowsky said.

Joint Strike Fighter program spokeswoman Kathy Crawford said officials have held a number of meetings leading up to the Defense Acquisition Board review. She said the program now is entering a new phase, as manufacturing gets under way for many of the plane's central components.

S.D. Might Be Home To Swedish Sub

Navy Looking For Extra-Quiet Vessel

By James W. Crawley

Sometime next year, San Diego may become a far-flung submarine base for ... Sweden?

The U.S. Navy, searching for an ultra-quiet sub for anti-submarine warfare training, has asked the Swedish government to send one for an extended deployment that could last several years.

"The Swedish navy is considering the U.S. Navy's request for a submarine asset," said spokeswoman Lt. Pauline Pimentel. "Both navies are looking forward to a decision in the upcoming months."

If approved, the Swedes would deploy a Gotland-class submarine and its crew of 23 to San Diego.

The newly created Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Command, based here, would use the foreign sub to train warships and sonar crews to locate and track non-nuclear submarines used by many nations.

The Navy is trying to improve its anti-submarine tactics because many naval planners anticipate future battles will be in shallow, constricted off-shore littoral waters where small, quiet submarines might lurk.

The U.S. Navy's ability to locate enemy submarines has atrophied since the Cold War ended, said A.D. Baker, a noted international naval expert.

"We've badly neglected (anti-submarine warfare)," he said.

And, Baker added, the newest non-nuclear submarines being built are very difficult to locate under the best of conditions.

The Swedish sub uses an innovative air-independent propulsion system. Unlike conventional diesel-electric submarines used by many navies, the Gotland sub can operate for weeks without surfacing or sticking a snorkel above the sea surface for air.

That need for air to operate diesel generators that recharge the batteries used to operate a sub's electric motors is the Achilles' heel for most conventional subs.

While it doesn't have the range or endurance of an American nuclear-powered submarine, the Swedish sub is extremely quiet. The Sterling engine onboard produces about the same amount of noise as

a kitchen blender. That noise is further muffled by sound insulation.

One submarine expert said the Swedish sub is so quiet that U.S. sonar may have trouble locating it.

"It's a very good submarine," said Baker. "Unless we enhance the (Gotland's) acoustic signature, we won't find it."

During sonar training with other navies' diesel submarines, a noisemaker or pinger is often installed to increase the sub's noise level so that U.S. warships and submarines can find the quieter vessels, Baker said.

"We're never going to know it's there . . . without popping on a little noisemaker," Baker said.

The 195-foot-long submarine would be carried here piggyback aboard a heavy-lift ship. The U.S. Navy would pay for transportation and the sub's operating expenses while here, one Navy official said.

No cost estimates were available from Pentagon officials, who spoke mostly on background because the deal has not been finalized.

The Navy currently has only one non-nuclear submarine, the Dolphin.

The diesel sub, which is used for research and development, is based at the Submarine Base at Point Loma. The 35-year-old Dolphin was severely damaged in May 2002 when it nearly sank in rough seas off San Diego during a torpedo testing exercise.

Forty-three sailors and civilians abandoned ship and were rescued by a nearby research vessel and a Coast Guard helicopter.

Because of its short endurance and age, Navy officials said, the Dolphin would not be a realistic substitute for modern subs.

Using a Swedish submarine for extensive training would be a first for the U.S. Navy and would showcase an alternative to traditional American naval culture.

While the U.S. submarine force is all-male, several Swedish subs have female personnel, Baker said. While women have been crew members on U.S. surface ships for a decade, federal law bans them from serving on submarine crews.

"The Americans are going to die because of the women on board," Baker quipped.

New Navy Destroyer Arrives At Its Home Port, Naval Station Everett

By Rachel Tuinstra

EVERETT — Andrew Hailey decided it was time to talk to a recruiter after hearing the Navy was naming a ship for his late great-grandfather, Vice Adm. Charles "Swede" Momsen.

"I joined the Navy hoping to get on this ship," said Hailey, a petty officer aboard the USS Momsen. "I guess it was kind of a springboard for me to enlist."

The Momsen, with the great-grandson of its namesake aboard, pulled into Naval Station Everett yesterday to end a maiden voyage that began more than two months ago in Maine, where the ship was built. While en route, the warship stopped in Panama City, Fla., where a commissioning ceremony was held in late August between hurricanes Charley and Frances.

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, which cost an estimated \$970 million, is the newest in the Navy's fleet.

It also becomes the latest warship to be home ported at the Everett base, which yesterday threw a welcoming party that included the naval station's top brass and about 300 family and friends of crew members. Many of the families had been separated up to a year and a half while the ship was being built, said Capt. Eddie Gardiner, commanding officer for the naval station.

Momsen's arrival comes during a busy week at the naval station. The USS Shoup, also a guided-missile destroyer, left yesterday morning for deployment. The aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln is scheduled to leave today on a four-month deployment, its first overseas voyage since returning in May 2003 from one of the longest deployments of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier since the Vietnam War era.

Amid the tearful reunions yesterday Peter Munger stated the obvious: Reunions are much better than farewells.

Munger, 26, held a bouquet of pink flowers in one hand and hoisted his 2½-year-old-son, Aedan, onto his shoulders so the boy could watch as the Momsen pulled into port. Aboard was Petty Officer Tiffany Munger, 26, whose shore duty includes the job of Aedan's mommy.

"Yeah, I'm a Navy wife," Peter Munger joked. "She's had shore command up until now.

This is the first time we've been separated through the Navy."

Minutes later Tiffany Munger climbed off the ship and embraced her son and husband.

"It's wonderful to be home," she said. "I like the new ship. It's challenging. We're all brand new and everyone is learning how to do their jobs and run the ship."

Cmdr. Edward Kenyon, who is the ship's captain, said the crew will spend the next few months training and testing the ship. The ship boasts some of the Navy's newest technology, including a remote mine-hunting system.

"It is a challenge with a new ship and crew." Kenyon said. "About 70 percent of the crew has never been to sea before. They did fabulous. They achieved everything I had hoped for."

About 30 of the ship's 320 crew members were previously stationed at Naval Station Everett, and requested assignment aboard the Momsen so they could return to the area, said Lt. Charles Grayson.

For Hailey, the trip has been about fulfilling a family legacy. He and his siblings grew up hearing stories about their great-grandfather's military exploits.

Momsen, considered to be the father of the Navy's diving program, invented an underwater escape device that helped save 33 men from the USS Squalus, a submarine that in 1939 sank off the coast of New Hampshire. He died in 1967.

"Our grandmother always said that [our great-grandfather] wanted everyone to make their own path," Hailey said.

But there was always a strong pull toward military service in his family, since both of his grandfathers and father served the Navy. Hailey's sister, Sharon Hailey, and brother, Brian Hailey, also took part in the Momsen's maiden voyage. They came aboard as part of the "Tiger Cruise," a Navy program that allows friends and family to spend several days on a ship.

"It was a great experience," Brian Hailey said. "Now I know what life was like for my great-grandfather. I know where he was coming from."

Stealing From Soldiers

After Serving, Some In The Military Come Home To Find Their Savings Gone

By J.D. Heyman and Richard Jerome.
Michaele Ballard in Fayetteville, Robert Schlesinger in Washington, D.C., and Maureen Harrington in San Diego

Sgt. Tarick Fuller thought joining the military would help him achieve the American dream. A month after 9/11, the Jamaican immigrant enlisted in the Army, serving as a supply clerk first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq. He sent his \$1,800 monthly pay back to Fort Bragg, N.C., where he hoped to buy a home and start a family with his wife, Cassandra, 20, now 4½ months pregnant. "My savings," says Fuller, 23, "were supposed to buy nice things for my family."

Instead, they have evaporated. While in Afghanistan in March 2002, Fuller received letters from a bank where he did not have an account, saying that he had bounced checks. Fuller had his mother contact his credit union and learned that a man carrying military identification with Fuller's name on it had withdrawn almost all of his money. By the time police caught the culprit-Army Spc. Troy Billups, a soldier in the same unit who was discharged after Fuller was deployed-he had used Fuller's Social Security number to set up four checking accounts, obtain a driver's license and spend nearly \$20,000 of Fuller's money on a car, groceries, cell phones-even a \$3,700 Valentine's Day spree.

Convicted in February 2003, Billups, 27, was recently released after serving 19 months on a work farm for fraud. But Fuller is still grappling with unpaid bills and a credit report in shambles. "He took almost all of my savings," says Fuller. "I was frustrated, sad and depressed."

He is far from alone. Identity theft stealing Social Security numbers, credit card details and other personal data is one of the fastest growing crimes in the U.S., affecting as many as 10 million Americans a year. And soldiers are especially vulnerable. The reasons, according to experts, are simple: GIs' Social Security numbers are printed on their military

ID cards-and form the "serial number" they regularly recite along with name and rank; they spend long periods overseas or moving between states, often switching banks; and many are young and inexperienced at handling money. "Military personnel are prime targets," says Edmund Mierzwinsky of the U.S. Public Interest Research Group. "They aren't going to be focused on their finances. They may not even be getting their mail."

The Pentagon keeps no statistics on identity theft, but anecdotal stories indicate the problem has mushroomed since 9/11, says Capt. Brian K. Keller, a JAG Marine officer in Virginia: "With the deployment of large numbers of our military, the opportunities have certainly increased, and criminals have taken the opportunity."

In December 2002, burglars broke into a Phoenix health care company and took the medical records of 500,000 troops and their families. None have surfaced yet, but authorities fear they will be used to create false IDs. In another case, Maria Ramirez, a clerk aboard the USS Nimitz during Operation Iraqi Freedom, was sentenced last month to five years in prison for allegedly funneling personal data of fellow sailors to a San Diego ID theft ring that stole thousands of dollars from more than 400 victims. And Curtis L. Phillips, a sailor formerly on the aircraft carrier George Washington, is now facing a military hearing, charged with using the ship's computer to obtain the personal identification of 20 officers. He allegedly sent them back to a U.S.-based ID theft ring, which used account information to make purchases in excess of \$100,000.

Authorities in several states have reported that thieves posing as officials have contacted military families to get personal information. "A lot of our families received phone calls from people saying their soldier had been wounded or killed," says a spokeswoman for the Arkansas National Guard. "[The scam] seems to come in waves."

But most ID thefts are smaller-scale con

jobs. In Fuller's case, for example, Billups "asked me to cash a check for him and put my Social Security number on it for identification," he says. "That was my downfall." Billups later told police he had chosen Fuller because he was about to be posted overseas for six months. In that time, says Det. Glenn Johnson of the Fayetteville, NC., police, "he took that guy to the cleaners."

The Pentagon has begun educating troops about the problem and in February stopped printing Social Security numbers on military paychecks. Last December Congress also passed the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act,

which allows service members to put a special fraud warning on their accounts when they are shipped overseas.

For Fuller those measures arrived too late. Backed up by his credit union and the Army, he has cleared much of his financial record, but his savings were gone for good, and Billups wrote so many bad checks in his name that some still surface on credit reports. While Fuller was serving in Iraq earlier this year, his wife was turned down for a home loan because of those black marks. "I can't believe I defended freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq," he says, "for this:'

Study Points To Power Of Military To Keep Region Humming

By Tom Shean

Hampton Roads continues to prosper from the outpouring of defense dollars, but the region's economy remains vulnerable to a slump if the spending subsides, an Old Dominion University economist cautioned Thursday.

"Tourism and the port have been doing well, but what has pushed us ahead is defense activity," said James V. Koch, president emeritus of Old Dominion and editor of the university's annual State of the Region report.

Between 2000 and 2003, the volume of defense spending in the region for goods and services jumped 50 percent, due partly to additional contracts for consulting and other professional services, the report says. Meanwhile, the region gained 2,600 active-duty personnel at a time when military pay and benefits have been increasing.

Old Dominion's 2004 report on Hampton Roads includes an assessment of the region's economic expansion, the results of a poll of residents' perceptions of schools, law enforcement and other services, and a study of the role of black legislators from Hampton Roads.

With the sustained surge in military spending, the output of goods and services from Hampton Roads this year will likely rise a robust 4.7 percent, which would be the strongest increase in gross regional product since 1987, according to Old Dominion's economic forecasters. However, the report also noted that the region's economy has become more dependent on military spending since 2000.

"It remains the case that the region's economic welfare – and the standard of living of its residents – is tightly tied to the Department of Defense," according to the report, which relies on research by ODU faculty members.

If military spending in Hampton Roads subsides, retailers, restaurants, recreation businesses and real estate companies will quickly feel the effects. In time, "less competition for workers likely would reduce wage increases throughout the region," the report says. "Finally, government tax collections

would lag, and the fiscal stress on several cities in the region would be exacerbated."

Koch, who served as Old Dominion's president from 1990 to 2001, also expressed concern about the slower growth of labor-force productivity in Hampton Roads when compared with the national growth rate. Productivity measures the amount of output for a given amount of labor or investment.

Partly because manufacturing accounts for a smaller part of the region's economy than it does elsewhere, Hampton Roads escaped the job losses that battered more industrial parts of the country, Koch said. Nationwide, the number of civilian jobs fell 1.4 percent between 2000 and 2003, while the number in Hampton Roads climbed 4 percent.

However, the growth in worker productivity in Hampton Roads during this period failed to keep pace with labor productivity gains for the country, he said.

"Incomes follow productivity, and jobs follow productivity," Koch said. "If our productivity rates don't rise, we are going to be in trouble."

Old Dominion began compiling its annual State of the Region study five years ago, in response to concerns that many economic and social issues had to be examined from a regional perspective, Koch said. The university's intent for the report, he said, has been to prompt greater discussion about topics affecting Hampton Roads, such as the efficiency of consolidating municipal services, the contributions of military retirees to the region, and the economics of having a major-league sports franchise.

Old Dominion's latest report includes a new quality-of-life index and opinions from 1,189 residents about the level of services they receive.

In response to the question, "What do you think is the biggest problem facing your city today?" slightly more than 20 percent told the university's Social Science Research Institute that it is traffic. Another 16 percent replied that

MORE

it is crime, and 8.9 percent said it is population growth.

The report's quality-of-life index took into account a dozen factors, including the cost of living, employment opportunities, medical care and cultural activities, in Hampton Roads cities and counties. Mathews County ranked the highest in residents' satisfaction and other factors with a score of 60.6 out of 100.

Among cities and counties in South Hampton Roads, Virginia Beach was the highest with a score of 55.16. Portsmouth was the lowest at 50.29.

One of the six sections of the ODU report asked whether the pending deregulation of

electricity in Virginia would have an effect on Hampton Roads. The pace of deregulation has been stalled by an unwillingness of new competitors to enter Virginia, where electricity rates have been lower than the rates in many states.

"If you're going to deregulate, you should have more sources of supply, and we haven't seen new sources of supply," Koch said. Meanwhile, troublesome experiences in some states, including California, have made Virginia's legislators wary about deregulating electricity, he said.

Shifting Rivals

Navy's Main Foe Is Army, But Beating Notre Dame May Be More Important

By Michael Bradley

You can't blame Navy fullback Kyle Eckel for saying the Midshipmen's game Saturday with Notre Dame is more important to the players than the annual intraservice bloodletting with Army.

OK, Paul Johnson can blame him, but he's Navy's coach, and he doesn't want to get called by "5,000 admirals" who take offense to Eckel's assertion that the Irish is a more important foe than the Black Knights, even if the Army mule just won its first game since the days of Blanchard and Davis.

"We don't end the fight song with 'Beat Notre Dame,' and it doesn't say 'Beat Notre Dame' on our weights," Johnson says, more than a little miffed.

In the big picture of Navy football, of course Army is the main rival, largely because the Knights also consider the Middies rivals, too, while ND thinks of Navy as, well, a speed bump. That's what happens when you beat a team 40 times in a row. The Irish are too busy with Southern California, Michigan, Purdue and qualifying for the Cialis Bowl to care that much about the school in Annapolis.

So maybe Eckel was experiencing a senior moment. This is his fourth year at Navy, and folks tend to get a little comfortable when they're at the top of the service academy food chain and no longer memorizing the entire New York Times for some power-hungry upperclassman. But he does have a point, as sacrilegious as it may seem.

Eckel didn't come to Navy to play Army or Air Force. He wasn't even considering the military life until a Midshipmen assistant showed up at his suburban Philadelphia house and told him the Mids play Notre Dame every season. Eckel's response was something along the lines of, "Where do I sign, coach?" Let's face it, there isn't much call in the upper echelons of the 1-A world for 5-11 fullbacks who run 4.75 40s. So, when somebody's dangling the chance to play the Fighting Irish -- "the most storied program in the country," according to Johnson -- you grab it.

"It's extremely important," Eckel says.

It's also extremely lopsided -- in fact, the most lopsided rivalry in history. ND's 40-game winning streak is even longer than Oklahoma's dominance of Texas, for cryin' out loud. Talk about Daddies. The last time the Mids won, back in '63, Alabama was a national powerhouse.

Not that Eckel or his teammates spend too much time thinking about the Big 4-0. They

have been around for just three of the losses -- at most -- and only one of those, in Aught-One, was an Irish blowout. Navy had the darn thing won in 2002, but Notre Dame staged one of its annoying comebacks to win. And last year, well, let's just say Father Murphy couldn't find his penalty flag on that clipping penalty late in the 27-24 ND victory in South Bend, when the Irish won on a last-second field goal.

But enough about all that. Since the pads started popping in earnest back in August, the Navy brass has been hoping that this would be The Year. And it could be. The Mids are 5-0, and even if that spotless mark hasn't come at the expense of a murderer's row (or even a petty thieves' row), any time you beat Air Force in Colorado Springs, you're doing something.

In his third season at Navy, Johnson, who served as the Mids' offensive coordinator in '95 and '96 when they really had his option attack crackling, has taken the program back to the postseason and has it on the precipice of a huge accomplishment.

"I've told the players that this is a chance for them to play on national TV against one of the most storied programs," Johnson says. "I want them to play like their hair was on fire."

Eckel sure will, if his coach ever lets him stop running gassers for that Notre-Dame-more-than-Army crack. Eckel may go just 5-11, but he uses every ounce of his 240-pound frame to wreak havoc on the interior of any defensive front, no matter how big it is. Watching Eckel run recalls great fullbacks of yore. He's a modern-day Zonk, crashing through tacklers with brick-hard forearms and somebody's blood on his jersey. The Navy attack puts huge pressure on a defense's perimeter and then jams Eckel up the gizzard, Nagurski-style. It's a beautiful thing, especially in a college football world where good, old-fashioned ground-game carnage is so often ignored.

But will repeated doses of Eckel be enough to prevent Loss No. 41? Using the "never pick the team that keeps losing and losing" Texas big-game theory, it should be impossible to predict the Mids to beat Notre Dame. But all great philosophies have corollaries. So here goes: Navy beats the Fighting Irish, because for the first time since '63, the Mids have the better team. And when Navy does win, get ready for one helluva celebration.

Almost as big as the one that comes when they beat Army. Almost, Kyle, almost.



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Navy Base Welcomes Public To Air Show *Station Plays Host To Metro Community*

By Paul Purpura

Navy Capt. A.J. Rizzo touts the N'Awlins Air Show as the Belle Chasse air station's one opportunity each year to open its gates to the community.

"I tell people, 'This is your air show. We may be hosting, but it is your air show,'" said Rizzo, who became commander of the Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base in July.

Marking his first time as show host, Rizzo will open the air station gates Oct. 23-24 for the 2004 N'Awlins Air Show, with the Navy's flight demonstration team, the Blue Angels, capping off two days of performances by military and civilian aerobatic acts.

"It's a credit to New Orleans that they come here every other year," Rizzo said of the Blue Angels, a Navy-Marine Corps team that flies the F/A-18 Hornet in about 70 shows annually.

The Blue Angels' C-130 Hercules transport airplane, known as Fat Albert, is expected to demonstrate its jet-assisted takeoff, or JATO, at least once during the weekend, air station spokesman Petty Officer 1st Class Jay Cope said.

During JATO, the crew sets off solid-fuel rockets attached to the fuselage, allowing the fat-bodied Hercules to climb at a 45-degree angle to 1,500 feet in 14 seconds. The rockets are used to help military transport aircraft get airborne on short airfields.

Other highlights of the air show will be performances by the Air Force's Heritage Flight Team in an F-15 Eagle, an F-16 Falcon, an A-10 Thunderbolt and a Korean War-era F-86 Sabre,

flown by retired Navy Capt. Dale "Snort" Snodgrass, who also will perform separately from the team. The modern Air Force jets will perform individually, too, according to the show schedule.

A Navy F-14 Tomcat fighter jet is scheduled to take to the sky in the midst of the "Wall of Fire" display, in which air station ordnance personnel set off explosions on the airfield to simulate a strafing run by the aircraft.

New Orleans native Frank Ryder is among the civilian aerobatic acts that have been lined up. On the ground, the Air Force Reserve's "Above and Beyond" jet car returns to the N'Awlins Air Show.

About 22 military and civilian aircraft will be on display, including jets and helicopters belonging to units based at the air station, Cope said. Army, Marine Corps and Coast Guard ground vehicles and a boat will also be displayed.

Last year, about 75,000 people attended the N'Awlins Air Show, which featured the Air Force's demonstration team, the Thunderbirds. The last time the Blue Angels performed here was 2002, when persistent rainfall was blamed for the low attendance of 35,000 spectators.

Rizzo said he hopes the weather holds out for this year's show.

"We're really looking forward to inviting people on the base," Rizzo said Thursday. "This community has always come out in force. Hopefully it will be a good one again. . . . People are going to see about as good an air show as you could possibly put together."