

## Global Fleet Stations Concept

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### Purpose

This paper defines and promotes the Global Fleet Stations (GFS) concept. GFS's are an innovative use of American Seapower and will serve as regional centerpieces for implementing U.S. foreign policy and national military strategy.<sup>1</sup> Naval Component and Fleet Commanders have identified the need for the GFS concept when planning and conducting security cooperation and capacity-building operations independent of traditional Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Group deployments.

### Background

The broader concept of Global Maritime Partnerships (GMP)<sup>2</sup> seeks opportunities to assist partner nations in using the sea for lawful purposes and legitimate commerce, while limiting its use by those who threaten national, regional, or global security. GMP unites both public and private sector maritime entities in a partnership resulting in a collaborative international approach to maritime security. GFS provides a means of achieving many of the GMP objectives. It facilitates partnerships by creating opportunities for the U.S. Navy to provide persistent proactive shaping operations throughout the world not consistent with the primary mission of traditional deployment of Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups (CSG/ESG). GFS facilitates enduring partnerships that encourage maritime safety and security within a regional area of interest. Stationed for an extended period within a region, GFS provides a sea-base that promotes good will, meets the emerging needs of partners, improves regional response, and provides assurance of U.S. commitment.

### Discussion

#### What is a GFS?

A Global Fleet Station provides a highly visible, positively engaged, reassuring and persistent sea base from which to interact with the global maritime community of nations. It focuses primarily on shaping operations consistent with Building Partner Capacity (BPC), Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) plans, and Maritime Security leading to better governance.

A GFS will include at least one vessel<sup>3</sup> capable of serving as the main logistics and command and control center, and may include smaller vessels and helicopters for ship-to-shore transfers and other operations. Non-traditional vessels, such as hospital ships for humanitarian assistance (HA) missions can be employed as part of GFS in order to enhance the building of strong partnerships.

Each GFS will provide *tailored* and *adaptive* capability packages. Composition of a GFS package depends on Combatant Commander TSC and BPC requirements, the operating environment, and needs of the partner nations. Each GFS will be a unique combination of

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<sup>1</sup> Naval Operational Concept, 2006

<sup>2</sup> [Global Maritime Partnerships \(GMP\) Concept Paper, July 2007](#)

<sup>3</sup> (e.g., LPD, LSD, HSV, LCS, or MSC). Size and ship type matter and depend on the engagement partners and desired effects.

## Trust cannot be surged, caring builds trust, trust enables partnerships, strong partnerships increase maritime security

participants and mission sets depending on the desired effects and the host nations. As such, each GFS might carry detachments of Seabees, salvage divers, civil affairs units, explosive ordnance disposal teams, security forces, expeditionary medical, dental, engineering, mobile training teams, and logistics teams. In addition, each GFS could integrate partners from other services, other nations, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to enable a variety of diverse training and support missions. Coalition capabilities may be ideally suited to augment GFS mission packages to fill gaps in available U.S. forces and deliver timely needed effects within a region.

GFS offers a means to increase regional maritime security through cooperative efforts. From its sea base, each GFS could conduct humanitarian outreach, military/maritime training ashore and afloat, maritime civil affairs activities, counter piracy and counter terrorist training, shaping and stability operations, and information sharing. These activities all contribute to the development of maritime capabilities and increased capacities to ensure safe, well-governed global maritime commons. GFS achieves its goals of building partner capability and capacity through persistent goodwill presence while imposing a minimal footprint ashore.

A critical component to shaping and stability operations inherent in GFS is a *cultural awareness* that can only be gained through persistent interaction with partner nation navies, native maritime security forces, and populations. Each interaction should employ tailored activities selected with the goals of strengthening partnerships, building partner capabilities, and establishing favorable security conditions. Sufficient cultural and language expertise organic to the GFS is critical to providing effective interaction with local populations throughout the region.

### **What are some enablers of GFS?**

The recently established Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) is a key enabler of the GFS concept. NECC brings together under a single command the existing forces and capabilities of the Seabees, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support, the Maritime Expeditionary Security Force, and Mobile Diving and Salvage. It has also developed new Navy capabilities such as Riverine, Maritime Civil Affairs, Security Training, and criminal intervention; all key elements of a full-spectrum engagement capability. The introduction of the new Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program further expands the Navy's enablers and capability to engage more effectively around the world in a culturally informed and meaningful manner. In addition, the State Department new Surge POLAD program can enhance participation and build awareness that can augment GFS interagency support.

By leveraging the synergies inherent in the NECC, FAO program, and currently available fleet deployment platforms and capabilities, the Navy has the means to construct a powerful GFS capability. Additionally, the USMC has designated a new Marine Security Assistance Team (MSAT) drawn from the SPMAGTF (Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force) which can provide many capabilities which could be integrated as part of a GFS effort. These combined Naval capabilities will further be enhanced by promoting and leveraging interagency, NGO, and Joint participation where these organizations can contribute to the overall goal of building regional partnerships. Leveraging existing Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to manage bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation as well as International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds and other similar programs, GFS serves as the model for coordination with local government agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

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## **Where are some potential GFS locations?**

The GFS concept is based on the establishment of a network of sea-based Fleet Stations worldwide, each one servicing specific regions where the economic and national interests of a globalizing world of nation-states converge. Locations for the initial sea-based Global Fleet Stations, based on fleet demand and input, includes SE Asia; Oceania; East and West Africa; the Arabian Gulf; and, South and Central America.

## **Current GFS efforts and the way ahead**

The Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Corps and State Department are currently supporting two GFS Pilot deployments, one for SOUTHCOM in the Caribbean and Central America (HSV-2 SWIFT) and planning another for EUCOM in the Gulf of Guinea. Both “GFS pilots” include NGOs and interagency representatives. NECC provides the core element of the SOUTHCOM GFS pilot, leveraging the broad range of expeditionary expertise available in that community. To measure the effectiveness of each GFS pilot, the Center for Naval Analyses is augmenting COCOM and NECC assessments during and after each mission to determine how the U.S. is perceived, its ability to have a positive impact in the region, and to establish the revisit rate for specific partners within the region—all geared toward assurance and enduring partnerships. Once the SOUTHCOM pilot is completed, NWDC will draw on the lessons learned to produce a GFS Concept of Operations which Fleet Staffs can use to maximize the impact of GFS Operations. Additionally, although not specifically labeled as GFS deployments, USNS COMFORT is conducting a HA/goodwill deployment in SOUTHCOM, and USS PELELIU is conducting a similar deployment in PACOM. All of these operations are showing real/tangible returns on investment, with both the U.S. and host countries benefiting from the engagements.

## **Conclusion**

This Global Fleet Stations concept is a persistent sea-base that responds to COCOM demands for capabilities that support the President’s National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS). GFS is also a vital element in forging relationships within the larger Global Maritime Partnership Strategy. It provides a flexible and adaptable force package, providing a more responsive and persistent forward presence in order to perform Phase 0 and shaping and stability operations and missions in direct support of the Global War On Terror. Finally, the GFS concept provides a low-investment/high-yield sea-based option for achieving national objectives as well as relieving some of the stress on traditional CSG/ESG training and deployment cycles. As a result, GFS is ideally suited to leverage relationships of opportunity and to expand capabilities required for Global Maritime Partnerships.