

CHAPTER 4

NAVAL PRESENCES

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Superpowers

It has not been the Committee's intention in this Report to make more than a passing reference to the concept of a naval "balance of power", measured in terms of ship days, weighted ship days, firepower or port visits of all naval forces in the region. In the context of superpower naval roles in the Indian Ocean, the relative strength of the naval forces present defies measurement due to differences in naval tasks, ship displacements, weapon systems, logistic support and conflict-survival potential. In a less than illuminating reference to the measurement of naval power balances, the Soviet Navy's Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Gorshkov has said:

"Today, the criterion of comparability of naval capabilities is the relative strength of their combat might calculated by the method of mathematical analysis, by solving a system of multicritical problems for various variants of the situation and different combinations of heterogeneous forces and means".

To reiterate what is said elsewhere in this Report, the Committee has favoured the term "matching presence"¹ as a fitting description of superpower naval involvement in the Indian Ocean.

Having considered the general strategic situation, the recent history of each superpower's naval development and doctrine, the competing political ambitions and interests, it is necessary to examine the aims and consequences of their naval activities in the region. Soviet naval activity in the area had

1. See explanatory note on page viii.

its origins in oceanographic expeditions begun in 1955 and communications support for the space program with ships from the Black Sea fleet. After the Six Day war closed the Suez Canal in 1967, the Soviet Navy continued its research effort in the region. At about the same time, the decision had apparently been taken to maintain a low profile military presence, escalating as required when crises occurred. Reasons for the increased Soviet interest can be deduced from consideration of the overall roles assigned the Soviet and United States Navies by their respective Governments. The following factors appear to be the chief determinants of the Soviet Indian Ocean naval posture:

- Provide support for Soviet foreign policy objectives throughout the region and especially for diplomacy designed to reduce United States and Chinese influence while increasing the prestige of the Soviet Union;
- Counter the offensive capability of US naval vessels which may be deployed in the area, particularly missile-firing submarines;
- Ensure the security of Soviet sea lanes between its western and eastern ports;
- Provide training and testing of equipment in these waters and collect standard naval intelligence information;
- Research the fishing and seabed resource potential of the region and support the space program.

The emergence of the USSR from the position of a strong regional power to that of a global superpower carried with it an obvious impetus, if not actual requirement, for a more

comprehensive deployment of its military capability. Such conditions would appear to have prevailed in the decision to maintain a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean. The incentives for continued deployment appear to be twofold: firstly, the Soviet Union would wish to retain and consolidate gains made on the Indian subcontinent during the Bangladesh crisis, in which the Navy played some part. Secondly, the Navy would wish to discourage or at least be able to counter in a crisis situation, any possible future deployment of US strategic nuclear submarines (SSBNs). The northern Indian Ocean, particularly the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, provide potential launching areas for Polaris/Poseidon submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) - and as the Trident system is introduced virtually the entire Ocean will offer this potential. Though the presumption is considered reasonable, the threat remains hypothetical as there is no evidence of SSBNs having been deployed in the area. It has been suggested that Admiral Gorshkov used the threat of a US submarine presence in the Indian Ocean to justify initial Soviet deployments there, thus claiming larger naval budgets with which to enlarge the surface navy in order to reap the political benefits of a peacetime naval presence. This explanation is lent credence by the 1973 publication of the 'Gorshkov Papers' in which he refers at length to the diplomatic utility of naval power in peacetime.

A significant part of the evidence taken by the Committee gave precedence to the naval support of Soviet diplomatic initiatives as the reason for the increased naval presence. In line with apparent Soviet aims to extend its influence in Southern Asia, South East Asia, the Middle East and Africa, visits of naval vessels are used to exhibit the

military and industrial strength of the USSR. Such a role for the Navy in the Indian Ocean was not utilised until after the withdrawal of the Royal Navy from the region. Following the announcement in July 1967 of British intentions to withdraw all its forces east of Suez, a small 'flag showing' contingent of the Soviet Navy entered the Indian Ocean in March 1968 for a four month cruise. Comprising three combatants and two auxiliaries from the Pacific fleet at Vladivostok, the flotilla visited ports in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and the Yemens. Two further cruises of smaller scope were made later that year.

Since 1969, the Soviet Navy has maintained a permanent presence in the Ocean. In that year, ships from the Pacific and Black Sea fleets united for the first time to conduct joint manoeuvres in these waters and by the end of the year Soviet vessels had visited nearly twenty Indian Ocean ports. Since then the number of ships present has fluctuated considerably. At times of crisis, such as the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, the Yom Kippur war in 1973 and the 1974 Kuwait-Iraq border dispute, up to thirty ships have been on station with half that number being combatants. From the figures available (Appendix A) and excluding space-research, oceanographic and hydrographic vessels, in June 1976 there were sixteen Soviet ships on station including six combatants. The typical deployment in recent years has consisted of a guided-missile destroyer, two destroyer escorts, attack submarine, two minesweepers, intelligence collector, tank landing ship and support vessels including three oilers, support ship and barracks ship.

Against the need to preserve the 1971 gains on the subcontinent and to deter the United States from taking up the SSBN option, must be set a number of factors which act as disincentives to any further Soviet buildup in the Indian Ocean. Not least among these is the law of diminishing returns. For a relatively small effort in the area since 1967, the USSR has been handsomely rewarded. The naval presence was of considerable encouragement to India in its confrontation with Pakistan. Despite the fact that the United States deployed a large force in moral support of Pakistan - with the tacit approval of China, the common foe of India and the USSR - the US history of comparative disinterest in the region relative to the Soviet history of activity meant that the belated US effort was much less credible. The outcome of the affair, a severe weakening of the US-Chinese position on the subcontinent as India and Bangladesh at that time 'tilted' toward the Soviet Union, was such that little more could have been achieved by the USSR short of actually entering the conflict. It would appear therefore that little could be gained by the Soviet Union from the maintenance of a more substantial force in the region.

Additionally, should war break out between the super-powers any realistic scenario for naval warfare would concede greater importance to the North Sea/Baltic, Mediterranean, Atlantic and Pacific operations than to operations in the Indian Ocean. For the Soviet Union and the United States with its NATO allies, the crucial theatre is likely to be the waters around Europe. Moreover, naval contingents of both sides would be the hostages of fortune in combat operations in the Indian Ocean, unable to escape from the area without risking certain detection and remote from sources of logistic support.

In efforts to improve the cost-effectiveness of its Indian Ocean flotilla and the ability to sustain a larger force for certain periods through increased logistic support, the Soviet Union has established a naval support facility at the Somali port of Berbera on the Gulf of Aden. There, despite claims to the contrary by both the Somali and Soviet Governments, aerial photographic reconnaissance and a US Congressional inspection team invited by Somalia has confirmed that the Soviet Union has constructed a substantial facility which includes:

- Port facilities with associated berthing, warehouses and workshops;
- Shore barracks and a barracks ship, together capable of accommodating 1550 personnel;
- Long range, high frequency naval communications stations;
- Fuel storage, approximately 170,000 barrels;
- Airfield with runway of 4800 metres, capable of handling any aircraft in the Soviet inventory;
- Storage and handling facilities for SSN-2 Styx and SSN-3 Shaddock naval missiles.
(SSN-2 - maximum range 40 km;
SSN-3 - range 840 km - capable of delivering both conventional and nuclear warheads).

Recently, an 8000 tonne dry-dock was moved to Berbera. Capable of slipping any ship in the present Indian Ocean contingent, the new dock obviates the necessity for ships to return to home ports for routine maintenance. The Soviet Union is also developing facilities at two other Somali ports. At Kismayu on the south coast near the Kenyan border, naval

facilities including a fuel storage dump nominally for the use of Somali patrol boats have been constructed, as have an airfield, radar station and missile storage bunkers. Ammunition, missile and fuel storage facilities have also been established at Mogadishu.

The reopening of the Suez Canal enhanced the strategic importance of Berbera due to its proximity to the eastern exit of the Canal route to the Indian Ocean through the Bab-el-Mandeb Straits. In this regard, Soviet use of the former British naval base at Aden combined with facilities it has established on the island of Socotra give the Soviet Navy a commanding position over the sea routes between the Indian Ocean and Red Sea. This is seen as an important consideration in view of the reduction of Soviet influence in the area of the Suez Canal rendered by the Egyptian abrogation of its treaty with the USSR in March 1976.

As has been noted previously, the Soviet Government has denied the existence of its facilities in Somalia, or elsewhere in the Indian Ocean. L.I. Brezhnev in his Report to the XXVth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1976 has said:

"Of late, pronouncements have been proliferating in many countries against any of the powers setting up military bases in the region of the Indian Ocean. We are in sympathy with these pronouncements. The Soviet Union has never had, and has no intention now, of building military bases in the Indian Ocean. And we call on the United States to take the same stand".

From the evidence available, it would appear that the Soviet naval presence is unlikely to increase significantly unless new factors emerge. At present, there does not seem to be grounds for any unusual deployment, as opposed to logistical improvements such as those in Somalia, the existing level of effort having been effective in recent years in discharging the naval functions mentioned above. Developments having the potential to induce an expansion above present levels would include a political upheaval in one of the littoral states or confrontation between the states; new weapons technology increasing the survivability of the Soviet Indian Ocean contingent; or initiatives on the part of the United States which are judged to be prejudicial to Soviet interests.

Further justification of the Soviet naval presence is contained in its desire to ensure the security of the sea lanes between its western and eastern ports. The Arctic route to Vladivostok is open only for three months of the year. The Indian Ocean provides the only practical warm water route. In normal circumstances the Soviet Far East's trade with the rest of the Soviet Union is overwhelmingly dependent on rail, and the sea routes are of almost negligible importance. Only about one half of one percent of the traffic goes by sea, and some of that uses the Arctic route. Most of the trade of the Soviet Far East is with Central Asia and West Siberia, not the European USSR. However, the proportion of this internal trade carried by sea is likely to increase as traffic pressure on the railway increases. The section of the Trans-Siberian line west-bound between Novosibirsk and Omsk is considered the most heavily worked railway anywhere in the world, carrying a gross load of 8,000 tonnes an hour 24 hours a day.

A major problem with the Trans-Siberian railway, from the Soviet viewpoint, is its extreme vulnerability to Chinese interdiction at any of a number of points close to the Sino-Soviet border. A relief line several hundred miles further north (the Baikal-Amur main line) is under construction, but far from completion at this stage. On completion it will reduce the vulnerability, not eliminate it. In the event of a Sino-Soviet conflict, which may be prolonged through a mutual reluctance to resort to nuclear weapons, the sea routes between the European and Far Eastern USSR could become vital. The alternative sea route through the Panama Canal suffers from both excessive length compared with the Suez route and the need to depend on United States' goodwill in the use of the Canal which might not be forthcoming in the event of a Sino-Soviet crisis.

The Soviet merchant marine has expanded significantly in the last twenty years and continues to carry an increasing proportion of the expanding Soviet seaborne trade. Since 1955, the fleet has more than quadrupled in size, totalling over 14 million gross registered tonnes in 1970 and is expected to reach 20 million gross tonnes by 1980. In 1968 about half of all Soviet imports and exports were carried by sea and of these half were shipped in Soviet vessels.

In the evidence, reference is also made to the affinity and co-operation amongst the Soviet merchant, fishing and naval fleets. Different to Western maritime practice and due to the Soviet system of state ownership and centralised control, naval personnel may be transferred to the merchant and fishing fleets for tours of duty. Fishing boats frequently have as a secondary, or even primary, task the collection of

intelligence information. The Soviet Navy also plays an important part in oceanographic and space research as well as in investigations of fishing and seabed resource potentials. The Soviet Government has stressed the importance of this research and is apparently eager to ensure that the USSR is well able to exploit the maritime and seabed resources of the world's oceans.

Currently, the fishing industry in the Indian Ocean is not very significant by world standards providing less than 4% of the world total catch though this proportion may increase as the fishing potential of the region is more fully exploited in the future. The Soviet fishing fleet has operated in the area since 1964 though its catch represents less than 1% of the Soviet total. It appears that the USSR is more concerned to develop local fishing industries by providing vessels and shore facilities for processing rather than fishing entirely to satisfy its own domestic needs. In 1970 the Soviet Union entered an agreement with Mauritius which provides up to fifteen Soviet trawlers a year with docking rights and for aircraft landing rights to facilitate crew transfers for the fishing fleet. Vessels operating in the Indian Ocean are presently drawn from the Vladivostok fleet, the distances involved justifying the use of local facilities for crew replacements and repairs.

Stemming from the fact that the western Indian Ocean north of Madagascar lies on the polar orbit which passes over the Soviet Union's space control centre at Plesetsk, satellite tracking and space research vessels have operated in the area during space missions. Soviet naval vessels have conducted intensive atmospheric and meteorological research throughout

the region. Among other things, oceanographic research ships have gathered information about subsurface currents, changes in water density and salinity and temperature gradients which is valuable in allowing submarines to use 'blind zones' where techniques of sonar location are rendered inaccurate and ineffective. Soviet naval intelligence vessels have also operated in the region for the apparent purposes of collecting information on maritime activities and monitoring diplomatic and military communications systems.

The United States permanent naval force stationed in the Indian Ocean is small by comparison with its Soviet counterpart. Since 1948, the US naval presence, designated Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR), has consisted of three ships, a converted World War II seaplane tender as the command ship and two destroyer/frigates operating from Bahrain in the Persian Gulf under an agreement with the Government of Bahrain. The agreement provides the Bahrain Government with the option to terminate the lease of facilities by the United States at anytime by the issue of a year's notice. The option was exercised in October 1973 as an expression of opposition to US support for Israel during the Middle East war. The decision has since been postponed indefinitely, though future US tenure must be regarded as doubtful.

The United States has preferred to maintain the small MIDEASTFOR presence in the region and periodically demonstrate its naval power with a much larger force, particularly during local crises. The biggest US effort came during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war when a carrier task force from the Pacific fleet demonstrated in the Bay of Bengal, remaining there until January

1972. Another task force entered the Indian Ocean during the Yom Kippur war in 1973. Since then there have been intermittent visits to the area by US naval forces, the most recent being a carrier task force in support of Kenya in its contention with Uganda following the former's supporting role in the Israeli raid on Entebbe airport.

To improve the cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency of its periodic naval deployments to the region, the United States has established naval communications stations at Asmara in Ethiopia and at North West Cape in Western Australia. It is also in the process of developing a naval support facility on the island of Diego Garcia in the Chagos Archipelago capable of accommodating a carrier task force. In support of this development, the former US Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific, Admiral Gayler has said:

"Our strategy.....is not to maintain a large force in the Indian Ocean at all, but occasionally - once in a while go in there with a sizeable naval force in order to demonstrate that the Indian Ocean is no one's lake. And here is where the tiny atoll of Diego Garcia comes in. It's right in the middle, and an ideal place for communications and for observation, potentially a fleet anchorage, a storage place for oil, a few spare parts and a runway to support heavy logistic and patrol aircraft - nothing more. It's a big convenience and a cost avoidance, and it makes sense but it can in no way be considered to be a major operating base".

In the late 1950's, the United States and Australian Governments began negotiations on the proposed North West Cape communications station. After agreement was reached, construction

began in 1963 and the station was opened in 1967. Jointly operated by Australian and United States personnel, the station's function is defence communication and its very low frequency transceiver can communicate with submerged submarines. The communications station at Asmara is soon to be phased out, having been overtaken by recent technological developments and the construction of more modern communications equipment at Diego Garcia.

In December 1966, the United States and British Governments agreed that Diego Garcia in the British Indian Ocean Territory should be available for the defence purposes of both nations for an initial period of fifty years. In 1971, the United States constructed a limited communications facility on the island designed to replace the Asmara station. After a slow passage through both houses of Congress, approval was granted for substantial extensions to the facilities on the island, construction of which is still in progress. It is intended that on completion, Diego Garcia will have the following facilities:

- Dredged anchorage to accommodate a carrier task force;
- Pier and 180 metres of berthing;
- Fuel oil storage, 320,000 barrels;
- Ammunition storage;
- Workshops and general warehousing;
- Long range, high frequency communications station;
- Living quarters for 600 personnel;
- 4000 metre runway;
- Aviation fuel storage, 380,000 barrels;
- Aircraft hangers and servicing areas.

Concern has been expressed in some quarters, particularly by the littoral states supporting the Zone of Peace concept and more recently at the Fifth Non-Aligned Conference held at Colombo in August 1976, regarding the US development of Diego Garcia. At the same time, no criticism has been voiced by those states of the Soviet naval facilities in Somalia.

Mention has previously been made of a possible SSBN Indian Ocean deployment option open to the United States. Since North West Cape with its ability to communicate with submerged submarines opened, a number of technological advances have been translated into US strategic weaponry of extended range and hitting power. Chief among the effects of these advances in the present context is the greatly increased area of the Indian Ocean from which SLBMs can be launched against targets in the Soviet Union. Presently under development is the Trident submarine and missile system, which if fully deployed, could launch against the USSR even from San Diego harbour in California. When this system is introduced, the US strategic submarine force will acquire greatly increased flexibility of deployment and the evidence suggests that worldwide deployment cannot be ruled out as dispersal of the force would make the Soviet antisubmarine task much more onerous. The enhanced capability of the US strategic submarines in the 1980's make the Indian Ocean, and any facilities for submarines located around it, potentially more important. Equally, however, the extended range of the Trident missile system may make these facilities less relevant as the areas of potential deployment are increased.

Also important are considerations of the more conventional strategic and diplomatic factors involved in the

United States' growing interest in the Indian Ocean. The US would view with concern any development towards Soviet naval dominance in the area, and would act to counterbalance any such trend. Further, there is likely to be continuing efforts to overcome the difficulties which arose for the US during the Indo-Pakistan war. It is clearly unacceptable to a superpower whose conventional means of power-projection is seapower to have no efficient means of doing so in the Indian Ocean.

On the part of the United States there is also a long recognised requirement, as evidenced by the existence of MIDEASTFOR, to maintain surveillance of developments in the Gulf. At present, there can be only small cause for concern in the area as the dominant regional power, and one that is establishing significant military forces, is pro-Western Iran. Nevertheless, the sensitivity of the oil question requires that the US show a greater interest in that corner of the Indian Ocean than it has had to do in the past. As well as seeking to keep the SSBN deployment option open, it would appear that the United States also wishes to keep a conventional intervention option open. In such a potentially volatile situation, to expect that MIDEASTFOR at its present force level or intermittent visits by larger forces would be enough to achieve these objectives is unrealistic. Consequently, an increased level of US activity as seen in the Diego Garcia project and indications of more frequent naval visits is not surprising.

Further justification of the US presence and particularly the development of Diego Garcia stems from concern expressed in the United States regarding a future conflict in the Middle East. During the 1973 war, the US used an airfield

in the Portuguese Azores as a staging point for transport aircraft in the airlift of supplies to Israel. At that time, and under threat of Arab oil embargoes, all European governments that were approached, with the exception of Portugal, refused the use of facilities for this purpose. However, recent changes of government in Portugal raise doubts as to future US use of the Azores in the event of another Middle East war. In these circumstances, Diego Garcia may be the only airfield from which the United States would be able to provide logistic support to Israel.

This Report has attempted to show that both superpowers have what appears to each adequate justification to protect their interests in the Indian Ocean. Due to the implications for the future security of the region, the consequences of these interests must now be considered. A major part of this consideration depends upon each superpower's perception and interpretation of the other's motives and intentions. In many United States and pro-US justifications for the development of Diego Garcia, there was an implicit assumption that the reopening of the Suez Canal would induce the Soviet Union to substantially increase its Indian Ocean force because of the reduced logistic burden afforded by the shorter distance from Soviet Black Sea ports. To date this assumption has not been supported by the event, and the recent abrogation by Egypt of its treaty with the Soviet Union may have implications for future Soviet use of the Canal. Accordingly, it was held necessary that the US should increase its own capabilities in the area consistent with the worldwide power balance thesis. Hence the Diego Garcia proposal, which would make it possible for larger US contingents to operate in the Ocean for longer

periods. A suggested justification for SSBN deployment to the Ocean is that the preservation of this course may dissuade the Soviet Union from making strategic force deployments to other areas which the United States would regard as directly threatening its own security.

Similar consequences apply to Soviet perceptions of US intentions. The announcement of the Diego Garcia project prompted response from the Soviet Government that the United States was intent on supremacy in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet argument was that though the USSR had not escalated its forces the US move would necessarily require immediate counter measures. There is evidence of Soviet concern that the US is intent on basing a submarine tender at Diego Garcia to service patrolling SSBNs. Moreover, the USSR will certainly perceive the need to hold gains made on the Indian subcontinent in 1971, just as the United States wishes to confirm its role in the area. This clash of interests has been aptly described in the report of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, May 1974:

"The United States perceives that elements of its national interest are involved in the Indian Ocean area and, consequently, it feels justified in extending its base facilities in the area to defend those interests. On the other hand, the Indian Ocean area has security implications for the Soviet Union, as Soviet targets are within range of submarine ballistic missiles and carrier-borne aircraft launched from the Ocean".

The same Report speaks of a "potential arms race" between the superpowers in the area. However, factors limiting Soviet deployment levels have already been noted - particularly the low wartime survivability of Indian Ocean units - and

similar considerations apply to the United States. Unless the US perceived it necessary to mount a major military operation in the area, in circumstances such as threats to oil supplies, it is likely that it will be content to counter the Soviet presence. Reactions from many littoral states to current US moves have been so hostile that deploying forward more than the minimum force needed could work against, rather than for, US interests. For these reasons, if there is to be a so-called "arms race" it will be one with a comparatively low ceiling.

It would appear that though there are various incentives pushing both powers toward some form of Indian Ocean involvement, there are deterring factors noted above which should serve to restrict their capabilities in the region to moderate levels.

Other Nations

The navies of littoral states and other extra-regional powers also operate in the Indian Ocean, however, these are regarded as having little influence in the region other than in particular localised areas. A brief review of these navies follows:

United Kingdom - Since the cessation of the Beira patrol - in support of economic sanctions against Rhodesia - in June 1975 and the withdrawal of British Forces from Singapore, Britain does not maintain a permanent naval presence, although retains the British component of the communications facility at Diego Garcia and a survey ship operates in the Gulf. Responsibility for the former British base at Simonstown in South Africa was

passed to South Africa in 1955 under the Simonstown Agreement. In June 1975, Britain withdrew from the agreement which had given it continued access to the facilities at Simonstown. A Royal Navy task group including six combatants was deployed east of Suez in 1975 and operated in the Indian Ocean for several weeks.

France - The permanent French naval presence comprises a command-ship, a repair ship, 3 escort-frigates, 3 patrol vessels and 12 assorted landing vessels. This force is supplemented by groups of ships, normally two, on six-monthly deployments from France and currently includes 2 submarines. The French presence, whilst numerically the largest of the extra-regional states, is probably the least powerful of these, comprising as it does mainly minor surface combatants and auxiliaries.

South Africa - The combat strength of the South African Navy consists of 2 elderly British destroyers, 3 modern anti-submarine frigates, 3 older frigates and 3 new but small French submarines. Simonstown Naval Base is the main base for the South African Navy. Already capable of supporting a major naval force, the South African Government announced in 1975 a program of extensions to Simonstown which will treble the present size of the base and its facilities. The South African Defence Minister, Mr P.W. Botha, has said that South African naval facilities would be available to "every country in the free world which is willing to co-operate with South Africa". To date, none has made use of the facilities.

India - The Indian Navy has 90 vessels, mainly of British and Soviet origin. These include an aircraft carrier, 2 cruisers, 3 destroyers, 26 frigates, 8 submarines, 8 minesweepers and 25 patrol boats. Apart from the Royal Australian Navy, it is the only naval force in the region which has an aircraft carrier, although her carrier-borne aircraft are obsolescent. Although the Navy is primarily a defensive force, it has a modest offensive capability in its aircraft carrier and submarines. It is capable of conducting effective offensive operations, for a limited period, against any country in the northern Indian Ocean.

Pakistan - The Pakistani fleet comprises some 40 ageing ships which include 1 cruiser, 4 destroyers, 4 frigates, 3 submarines, 8 minesweepers and a number of patrol boats. The Navy is attempting to update its fleet but is having little success in acquiring the necessary funds.

Iran - The Imperial Iranian Navy has some 61 ships, all supplied from Western sources. Current strength includes 3 destroyers, 8 frigates, 25 patrol boats, 5 minesweepers and 14 recently acquired hovercraft. Iran has announced intentions to expand the Navy's area of operations to include the Arabian Sea, and has embarked on an ambitious equipment-purchase program for the Navy. However, the Iranian Navy is not expected to be a factor in naval competition in the Indian Ocean in the immediate future.

Saudi Arabia - The Saudi Navy is very small with only 3 fast patrol boats although 6 more are on order. Naval operations are confined mainly to coastal patrols in the Gulf.

Israel - The Israeli Navy has 78 vessels, including 5 submarines, 20 fast patrol boats equipped with surface-to-surface guided missiles, 10 landing craft and 43 smaller patrol boats. It deploys a number of guided missile patrol boats to the Red Sea.

Egypt - Egypt has more than 100 naval ships including 12 ex-Soviet submarines, 5 destroyers, 3 escorts, 13 missile-equipped fast patrol boats, 36 motor torpedo boats and has 3 hovercraft on order. It also deploys a number of destroyers, patrol boats and submarines to the Red Sea.

Iraq - The Iraqi Navy currently has 38 vessels; 3 submarine chasers, 8 modern Soviet-supplied fast patrol boats with Styx surface-to-surface missiles, 12 torpedo boats, 2 minesweepers and 3 patrol boats. The role of the Iraq Navy is restricted to coastal operations in the Gulf.

Indonesia - The Indonesian Navy has 108 ships including 3 submarines, 9 frigates, 20 coastal escorts, 9 Soviet missile-equipped fast patrol boats and 10 amphibious vessels. These vessels have been acquired from a variety of sources and many are approaching obsolescence. Indonesia has a limited capability for deployment into the Indian Ocean at any distance from its home waters.

Australia - The Royal Australian Navy has 40 ships including 4 submarines, 1 aircraft carrier, 6 destroyers, 6 frigates, 3 minesweepers and 12 patrol boats. The RAN has the capability to deploy to the Indian Ocean a naval task-group which could comprise an aircraft carrier, destroyers and frigates, submarines and supporting logistic units. Its capacity for Indian Ocean deployment will be enhanced by the development of the naval support facility at Cockburn Sound.

The naval forces of other countries in the region are relatively insignificant and generally comprise patrol boat forces for local operations only.