

Critical Support for Sea Power

By PHILIP L. DUNMIRE, Navy League National President

The Navy League since its inception in 1902 has been the standard-bearer for strong U.S. sea services, warning that significant reductions in personnel and assets in the aftermath of conflict actually put the nation at great risk.

“As to dollars and dreadnoughts, a Navy cannot be improvised overnight, nor in a month or a year.”

This statement is as true today as when it appeared in an editorial in the November issue of *Seapower* in 1920.

As the deficit-reduction debate continues in Washington, once again it is the Navy League’s challenge to make sure that this nation retains the ability to respond to future crises and conflicts.

In the January 1947 issue of *Seapower*, then-Navy Secretary James Forrestal wrote that sea power “is the power to deny the vital necessities of war to any nation.” It “is the power to overwhelm.” It is “versatility and adaptability.”

Our Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine in the past year displayed such sea power, deploying with and supporting ground forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, responding to disasters, intervening in civil war, deterring pirates and promoting engagement.

The sustained forward presence of the U.S. sea services will continue to be necessary for timely crisis response and to deter aggression, strengthen partnerships and alliances, and keep vital sea lanes open for global trade.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert, in his guidance to the fleet, said the Navy will be guided by three tenets: “warfighting first” will be at the core of efforts to improve capabilities, develop people and structure Navy organizations; “operate forward” in the global maritime crossroads; and “be ready” to face any challenge.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James F. Amos aims to provide the best trained and equipped Marines to the fight, “rebalance the Corps and posture it for the future,” educate Marines to succeed in distributed operations and complex environments, and “keep faith with our Marines, our Sailors and our families.”

Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Robert J. Papp Jr.’s priorities are to “sustain mission excellence, recapitalize and build capacity, enhance crisis response and management, and prepare for the future.”

The choices facing lawmakers in Washington are difficult, and our service leaders are looking for ways to meet their priorities under additional fiscal constraints, while being good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Adm. Greenert, in his guidance, said, “We must be ready and willing to make analytically sound, hard choices in the months and years ahead. Further, we must also look for innovative ways of maintaining our forward deployed and ready posture, while seeking efficiencies and reducing costs when we can.”

The Navy League’s support here is critical – on both the national level and in our communities. We must stand behind our troops and their families wherever they may be stationed. It is our responsibility to articulate to our elected officials and the public what a strong Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine –

and the industrial base that supports them — mean to our national security and economic prosperity.

This publication — *Seapower's* 2012 Almanac — is an important tool in our ongoing effort to educate and advocate on behalf of the men and women who serve this great nation. It offers information on the organizational structures of the sea services, fleet facts and details about the armament, equipment and technology they use to prosecute their missions and maintain freedom of navigation around the world. Another educational tool is the Navy League Maritime Policy Statement, which outlines the threats our maritime forces face and what they need to rise to any challenge.

I urge you to use these tools when taking the sea services' message to your elected officials. Fewer than 25 percent of those sitting in Congress today have served in the military, which makes our mission of communicating the needs of our maritime forces especially critical.

Every Member Get a Member ... Involved!