# Navy Secretary Says Maritime Logistical Force is Inadequate to Support the New National Defense Strategy

The Navy's current and planned maritime logistical force "is inadequate" to support the new National Defense Strategy and major military operations against China or Russia, and failure to correct that deficiency "could cause the United States to lose a war," an in-depth study by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment warned May 16.

Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer praised the CSBA study and declare: "We really have to get after it."

Addressing the CSBA forum that released the study, Spencer said:
"It is key that we focus on this now. Over the past two decades, our naval logistical enterprises have performed admirably in an environment of truly expanded responsibility and resources that were constrained. But the world has changed. The National Defense Strategy (NDS) recognized that and we have to stay ahead of it."

The 120-page CSBA report said that although the NDS said "resilient and agile logistics" was one of the eight capabilities that had to be strengthened to prepare for the return to great power competition, the

Navy's latest 30-year shipbuilding plan reduced the funding for maritime logistical forces and "further reduces the logistical forces as a proportion of the fleet." It also noted that "decades of downsizing and consolidation" have left the maritime logistics forces "brittle" and contributed to the decline of the U.S. shipbuilding industry and the Merchant Marine," which is expected to carry the bulk of military material and equipment for an overseas contingency.

"Failing to remedy this situation, when adversaries have U.S. logistics networks in their crosshairs could cause the United States to lose a war and fail its allies and partners in their hour of need. An unsupported force may quickly become a defeated one," the report warned.

The report spelled out in detail the shortfalls in the size of the Navy logistical support fleet of oilers, supply and repair ships that would be necessary to support and sustain combat formations in a conflict in the western Pacific, and the even greater deficiencies in the Military Sealift Command's and Maritime Administration's fleets of aged ships that are approaching or already past a normal service life.

It also highlighted the risks that China's vastly expanded Navy and commercial fleet and its ability to interdict U.S. naval forces and forward support stations would pose to the ability to project and sustain power in a

major conflict.

The report proposed major increases in the numbers and types of logistical ships, dramatic changes in operational formations and concepts of resupplying deployed Navy and Marine Corps forces. It estimated the cost of buying the additional and different ships and capabilities at $47.8 billion over 30 years, which it said would be $1.6 billion a years above what the Navy plans to spend on its maritime logistics capabilities.

Spencer noted that the weakness of the Navy's maritime logistics was brought up by members of Congress during a visit to Capitol Hill the day before. He said a member of the Senate Armed Service Committee who was particularly strong on the issue told him the Navy was not funding what was needed. "And I said, 'you're exactly right, and we have to get after this'."

He promised that the audience was going to hear him and the new chief of naval operations "talking about the battle. And it's not steaming to the battle. Our first battle is getting off the pier. And we have to start addressing this in earnest."