

In terms of aircraft assigned, these increases, together with the replacement of *Essex*-class carriers with the much larger *Forrestal*'s and *Enterprise*'s will just about offset the reduction to 12 equivalent air wings. In other words, each equivalent air wing will have about 25 percent more aircraft than the present average air wing.

Ships. The attack carrier force at the end of the current fiscal year will consist of one nuclear-powered carrier, the *Enterprise*, and seven *Forrestal*, two *Midway*, and five *Essex* class. In fiscal year 1969, the last of the conventionally powered attack carriers now under construction, the *John F. Kennedy*, will join the fleet, followed in fiscal year 1972 by the second of the nuclear-powered carriers.

As I stated last year, if we are to retain a force of 15 carriers, two more will have to be provided. One is scheduled for fiscal year 1969 and one in a later year; both will be nuclear powered. Fifty million dollars is included in the fiscal year 1968 budget for long leadtime components for the fiscal year 1969 carrier. When these ships are delivered to the fleet the remaining *Essex*-class carriers will be retired from the CVA force, which would then consist of four nuclear powered, eight *Forrestal*- and three *Midway*-class carriers, for a total of 15.

Carrier aircraft. No major change is contemplated in the composition of the aircraft complement of the attack carrier forces from that projected a year ago. The decline in the number of fighter aircraft after fiscal year 1967 reflects two factors—the previously mentioned reduction from 15 to 12 air wing equivalents beginning in fiscal year 1968 and the substitution of the more capable F-111B for other fighter aircraft on a less than one for one basis.

In contrast to the fighters the number of attack aircraft will have increased substantially by the time the transition to the 12 equivalent air wings is complete. At that point, the attack aircraft force will consist of A-6's and the new A-7's.

Inasmuch as the A-3 heavy aircraft are no longer required for the strategic mission, they are now being used as tankers to extend the range of "shorter legged" Navy aircraft.

No significant changes have been made in the combat readiness training aircraft forces.

ASW and destroyer forces

Three years ago in recognition of the unsatisfactory state of our knowledge in antisubmarine warfare I requested the Navy to undertake systematic long-term studies of all of the related aspects of the problem. From these studies has come a much better understanding of both the character and extent of the threat and the capabilities of the forces required to cope with it. As a result it now appears that some additional changes should be made in our ASW program. These involve the size of our ASW carrier forces and the substitution of land-based patrol aircraft for the seaplanes.

ASW carriers. We now have eight *Essex*-class ASW carriers, one of which, the *Intrepid*, is temporarily operating as an attack carrier in support of southeast Asia operations. Our studies show that compared with other ASW forces, the CVS ASW Group is a high-cost system in relation to its effectiveness; the annual operation cost of a CVS is about \$32 million, including about \$17.5 million for the aircraft complement.