

AIRLIFT AND SEALIFT FORCES

Included in this program are the Military Airlift Command transports, the Air Force's troop carrier aircraft assigned to the Tactical Air Command and the unified commands, the transport and troop carrier aircraft in the Air Force's reserve components, and the troop ships, cargo ships, tankers and "forward mobile depot" ships operated by the Military Sea Transportation Service.

Although not specifically included in the airlift/sealift program, those elements of other major programs whose missions and capabilities are closely related to the general requirement for lift have also been considered in determining what forces should be provided here. These other elements include such specialized transportation forces as the carrier-on-board delivery aircraft of the Navy and the cargo aircraft of the Marine Corps.

Within the context of this specific program, the lift mission consists of two main tasks: the strategic requirement for transport support of military operations in overseas areas and the tactical requirement for intratheater and assault airlift. The strategic task can be further divided into the requirement for the initial rapid military response to distant crises and the longer term requirement for continuing support and resupply of overseas military operations. This distinction is very important because it helps determine what kind of equipment is needed, when it must be available, how it should be organized and deployed, and who should control it. As you know, during the past several years, our principal concern in the airlift/sealift area has been to build up a quick-reaction capability adequate to meet our global security commitments. More recently, our experience in supporting a major military deployment in southeast Asia has focused our attention on the problems of providing lift support over the longer term, and especially under conditions when it is not feasible to requisition commercial shipping.

STRATEGIC MOVEMENT

All of our studies show that the length and cost of a war, as well as the size of the force ultimately required to terminate it favorably, are importantly influenced by how fast we can bring the full weight of our military power to bear on the situation.

In previous posture statements I have discussed at some length the range of strategies available to us for meeting the requirement for such prompt and effective response to distant military contingencies. Basically, these choices range from reliance on large ready forces deployed overseas in advance of need, to reliance on a central reserve of men and equipment in the United States to be deployed by airlift and sealift as required. A strategy which combines features of both these extremes might provide for prepositioning equipment and supplies overseas, either on land or aboard ship, with the men to be airlifted in as needed. Although each of these approaches has its own advantages and disadvantages with respect to operational flexibility, foreign exchange costs, total manpower and equipment requirements, etc., the strategy of a mobile central reserve supported by an adequate lift capability and balanced prepositioning has long been accepted as the preferred alternative for meeting the rapid response objective.