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National Emergency Command Post Afloat (NECPA)

The NECPA is an emergency command post afloat which provides survivability through mobility while at sea and which requires two ships to insure that one is at sea and fully operational at all times. The use of two ships adds most to the survivability of the entire NMCS. If only one ship were available in the NMCS, it would not be available during its dockside maintenance periods. Also, the need to keep one ship in a high state of readiness or near readiness would preclude the extensive exercising and operational experimentation necessary for evolution of operational capabilities. It would also inhibit the introduction of the many minor improvements in equipment and facilities that temporarily disrupt operational capability but that are necessary for long term improvement.

The NECPA is capable of accommodating a Presidential Group and approximately 300 supporting staff members. It is capable of independent operations in a general war environment for a period of at least two weeks without external logistical support.

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Under current concepts of operation the NECPA is not readily accessible to the Presidential Group. In addition a major weakness may be its vulnerability to submarine or air attack. These problems could be considerably reduced by providing adequate fleet protection when appropriate. By operating in protected waters such as the Chesapeake Bay, it would be not only much more accessible and relatively safe from submarines but would still have to be targeted with many weapons to insure destruction. Another problem is the difficulty of transporting large groups of personnel to the ship; this situation could be alleviated by having adequate numbers of standby helicopters immediately available for this purpose. Operating the NECPA nearer to the Washington area would also ease this problem.

Staff and communications support for intense crisis situations and for general war is adequate. The ship is large enough to accommodate a data base of the size and scope to provide the essential information required. Greater capability could be attained, however, with the addition of improved communications and technical staff support. Finally, space available on one of the NECPAs is adequate to provide the flexibility required for future growth and modification of the system.

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At the present time, the two NECPA ships authorized are the USS NORTHAMPTON and the USS WRIGHT. The NORTHAMPTON was placed in operation as an interim measure pending conversion of the WRIGHT and the SAIPAN. Due to the interim nature of her planned service and inherent limitations in her design, the NORTHAMPTON was not outfitted with optimum facilities, and, through operational experience to date, she is known to have many deficiencies. For example (1) there is extremely limited contiguous deck space, (2) there is limited space for operating helicopters, (3) there is an undesirable placement of communications equipment, (4) unsuitable antenna system configuration causes mutual circuit interference particularly on voice channels, (5) there are no VLF communications, (6) there is no automatic data processing capability, no manual display, or voice conferencing capability, and (7) available space is not adequate for growth.

On the other hand, the SAIPAN, which was eliminated from the NMCS program, contains 12,000 square feet of contiguous command post deck space (as opposed to only 2,400 square feet on the NORTHAMPTON), improved design and installation of communications

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and antenna systems including space for digital data systems and VLF, and space for simultaneous operation of two helicopters.

These deficiencies in the NORTHAMPTON and the dissimilarity in configuration with the WRIGHT place serious operational limitations on the ability of this NECPA to perform its assigned mission. Without costly modifications, there is little or no space to permit a growth potential in the NORTHAMPTON. Separate Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) and different operating instructions are required for each NECPA because of the different accommodations and facilities.

National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP)

The NEACP provides for (1) a ground alert facility for use by the President or an Alternate Decision Group; (2) the ability to transport or accompany designated authorities on trips outside the Washington area while acting as an operational facility; and (3) an airborne communications relay facility as required. The present program consists of three aircraft.

The NEACP, once airborne, is the most survivable of all the alternates because of its high degree of mobility. Due to its

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