Reagan's Escalation

The *Iowa* task force is part of a dangerous attempt by the current administration to escalate the arms race. Many of the *Iowa*'s sealaunch cruise missiles (SLCMs) will be armed with 200-kiloton nuclear warheads, and the destroyers and the cruiser in the fleet will also be capable of carrying SLCMs. The range of a SLCM armed with strategic nuclear warheads is between 1,400 and 2,300 miles, and an advanced guidance system makes the SLCM one of the world's most accurate missiles. Because it would fly beneath the range of enemy radar, it would be impossible to detect and, hence, the most effective weapon for attacking the Soviet Union's hardened missile silos.

The Soviet Union has no weapon comparable to the *Iowa*'s sealaunch cruise missiles. In the words of Ambassador Gerard Smith, chief negotiator for the SALT I treaty, the deployment of the sealaunch cruise missile will "give credence to the growing apprehension that the US is not only preparing to fight a nuclear war, but that it is also planning to fight a protracted nuclear war, if such can be imagined."

Senator Charles Mathias, R-Maryland has said,

"If you start this particular kind of arms race, it will be absolutely impossible to get reductions. In five years, the Russians will catch up, we will put ourselves in a position in which all the principles of arms control will be destroyed."

A Threat to a Nuclear Weapons Freeze

Verification is an essential element of the proposal for a bilateral nuclear freeze. The extreme smallness of the sealaunch cruise missiles, together with the Navy's strategy for deploying them will make their presence impossible for the Soviets to verify, unless the United States invites the KGB and Soviet military observers into every US port. The deployment of the *Iowa* thus threatens the possibility of negotiating a nuclear weapons freeze. Senator Claiborne Pell, who backs both the nuclear freeze proposal and the proposal for homeporting the task force in his own state of Rhode Island, has conceded that "there's a contradiction" in supporting both.

The deployment of the proposed fleet also undermines the arms limitation negotiations now taking place in Geneva. The purpose of these negotiations, which were demanded by the American people and the United States' allies in Europe, is to limit the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe. Once the *Iowa* task force and its sealaunch cruise missiles are dispatched to the North Atlantic just off the European coast, the agreements negotiated in Geneva to limit deployment of ground-launch cruise missiles in Europe can be easily circumvented.

A Safety and Environmental Danger Zone

The proposal for basing the *Iowa* task force in a densely populated harbor in the northeastern United States marks a turning point in United States military policy. Although the Navy and the backers of the task force say that the citizens of Boston would have nothing to fear, the Navy has conceded that 379 nuclear weapons accidents occurred between 1965 and 1977. Both organizations have been silent about the conclusion of a General Accounting Office (GAO) study that one consequence of a nuclear weapons accident could be the release of plutonium downwind in a "radiological cigar-shaped cloud extending from the accident scene for about 28 miles, with a maximum width of about 2.5 miles." Millions of people live within a 28-mile radius of the Boston navy yard.

No environmental impact study has been scheduled to be made before the homeporting contract is awarded. Even if such a study were contracted, it is a matter of Navy policy to avoid considering the possibility of a nuclear weapons accident in its environmental impact studies. The Ad Hoc Committee for a Safe Boston Harbor was the first organization to ask whether dangerous LNG tankers and the *Iowa* task force would be situated in Boston at the same time, and what the impact of a LNG explosion would be on the *Iowa*'s nuclear weapons. As of July 15, the Navy's originally specified date for making the homeporting decision, the Ad Hoc Committee had yet to receive an answer. Thus, without an environmental impact study to refer to, no one can know all of the dangers posed by the homeporting proposal. In addition to the nuclear dangers, however, preliminary research indicates that the dredging necessary for basing the *Iowa* in Boston would result in the mixture of lead and PCBs, now just below the harbor's surface, in the harbor's already filthy water.

According to a Presidential Study made in 1981,

"The near-term economic benefits of a major new military base may not be sufficient to offset the cost of required additional community facilities and services."

Better Ways of Revitalizing Boston's Economy

Everyone wants more jobs and a more secure economic base for Boston. As the facts and figures finally indicate, however, the *Iowa* task force will not provide the promised 3,000 jobs or the $143 million annual payroll. Instead, it will deepen Boston's dependence on a militarized economy. Thus, the installation of the task force is not the path to Boston's economic revitalization.

The Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) has conceded that the task force will not provide 3,000 long term jobs for Boston's citizens. It now says it will provide 1,300 short term construction jobs and 1,200 long term jobs. Navy policy dictates that only one third of the longterm jobs associated with such a fleet would come to the Boston area. The EDIC's revised figures, the Navy's formula, and the necessity for displacing 75 current warehouse workers should the fleet be installed in Boston all lead to the conclusion that the task force will directly provide only 325 longterm jobs for Boston's economy. The prospect of a $143 million annual payroll begins to fade if these more accurate figures are used, and if it is recognized that most Navy families associated with the fleet will not be moving to the Boston area.