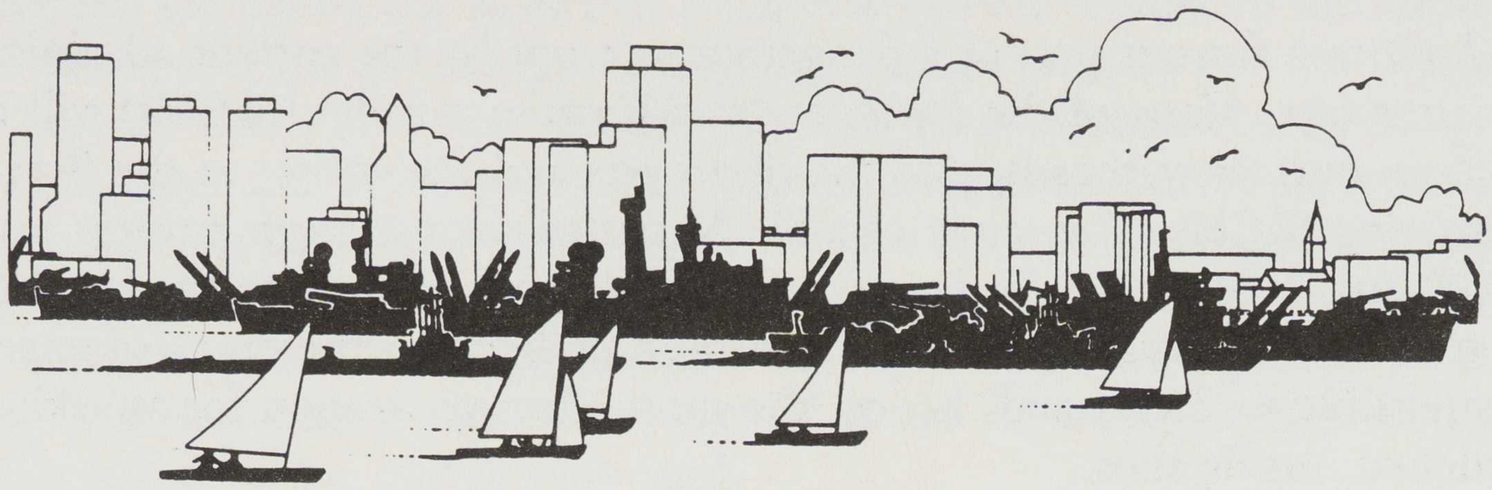
AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR A SAFE BOSTON HARBOR

c/o 2161 Mass Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140 • 661-6130



The Homeporting Proposal

In March of 1983, Governor Dukakis announced that the City of Boston and the State of Massachusetts had submitted a proposal to the United States Navy for basing the battleship *Iowa* task force, which is intended to carry both conventional and nuclear weaponry, in Boston harbor. The homeporting of the task force in Boston would, said Governor Dukakis, bring 3,000 jobs to Boston, thus revitalizing its economy. He promised that this new civilian payroll, if added to that of the task force's sailors, would boost Boston's economy by $143 million annually.

The battleship *Iowa* task force will consist of a refurbished World War II battleship, the *Iowa*, two guided missile destroyers, one naval destroyer, one cruiser, and two frigates. Its weapons will include as many as 500 sealaunch cruise missiles (SLCM's), each of which is capable of carrying 200-kiloton strategic nuclear warheads, plus antiship missiles, torpedoes, and depth charges armed with nuclear warheads.

The fleet, which will be mobile, will be stationed primarily in the waters off Europe, in the highly militarized area of the North Atlantic Ocean, when it is not in its homeport. The task force has at least three intended functions: 1) As a carrier of cruise missiles, it is part of President Reagan's plan to fight and "win" a prolonged nuclear war with the Soviet Union. The cruise missiles can also be used as part of a pre-emptive first-strike campaign. 2) The task force's ASROC missiles and a number of its cruise missiles can be used in ship-to-ship combat in an attempt to keep the Soviet fleet out of the Mid-Atlantic. 3) The fleet can be used in a military intervention of the Third World.

The homeporting proposal, which was prepared by the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC), an agency of the city government, represents the attempt of a small group of corporate and political leaders to win the *Iowa* task force for Boston. John Lehman, Secretary of the Navy, is scheduled to decide later this year whether the task force will be located in Massachusetts (Boston harbor), Rhode Island (North Kingston/Quonset Point), or New York (Staten Island/New York Harbor).

The backers of Boston's homeporting proposal are not united in their beliefs about installing the *Iowa* task force in their city. Most Massachusetts congressmen opposed the recommissioning of the battleship and the deployment of cruise missiles but argue that if they are going to be deployed, Boston should share in the spoils. Others, such as Senator Kennedy and Senator Tsongas, say that jobs are not the issue. Some homeport backers concede that the shortage of low-income and middle-income housing in Boston and the likelihood of discrimination against Black sailors in the metropolitan housing market are problems that must be addressed. Indeed, as shown in the discussions below, other problems exist that must also be addressed.