



NAVY MEDICINE

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OP-ED

How the U.S. Navy Protects America

By: Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson, Jr.

The United States Navy is coming to the “Magic City” this week to celebrate Navy Week Birmingham May 2-9. Throughout the week, Sailors will be at the Tuscaloosa Air Show and events throughout the Birmingham metropolitan area to show you our ships, planes, and other weapons the Navy uses to safeguard the seas and our homeland.

We invite you to see the Blue Angels flight demonstration team, talk to Sailors from the submarine USS Alabama or experience what it’s like to be inside a Navy jet. It’s also an opportunity for us to tell you about your Navy, and how we help protect this great nation.

The people of Birmingham have every reason to be proud of their Navy. We train to be ready to fight on the sea, under the sea, and high above the sea with a collection of platforms that range from ships and submarines to jets that take off and land on Navy aircraft carriers.

Our "Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" reflects recent thinking among military, political and economic strategists about the role U.S. seapower should play in keeping America - and its economy -- secure in the post-9/11 world. Your Navy’s ability to operate on the world’s oceans is very important. It gives the Navy the power to protect America’s interests – anytime, anywhere.

One goal is protection of the world's sea lanes in an era when foreign political crises, terrorists, smugglers and pirates may pose a more imminent threat to the flow of trade across the seas.

Economies worldwide are tied to the security of the seas. 70% of the world is covered by water, 80% of the world lives on or near the coastline and 90% of our commerce sails across the

oceans. Any disruption to this global system caused by instability has a direct impact on the American quality of life.

Birmingham is also connected by the oceans through its markets around the world. Port Birmingham is the largest inland shipping center of general commodities on the Tennessee-Warrior-Tombigbee river system and according to the Alabama State Port Authority, the total economic impact of the ports in Mobile is \$7.92 billion.

In other words, whatever happens on the world's oceans is very important to American security and prosperity. It's important to the preservation of American jobs, securing a lasting peace worldwide, and most fundamentally, providing for our national defense. After all, the United States is bounded by oceans on both sides.

The Navy's job is getting bigger. That is because the challenges our country faces are so unpredictable and diverse. We need to be ready to confront a range of challenges, whenever and wherever they happen.

On any given day, the U.S. military might need to attack a terrorist camp, capture a pirate vessel, and deliver emergency relief – all in different parts of the world. Most recently, the Navy hospital ship Comfort delivered huge amounts of supplies and provided hospital-quality medical care – from the sea – to the people of Haiti after a devastating earthquake.

While our equipment is impressive, we are nothing without the people who serve in our Navy. Our Sailors – including nearly 4,000 active and reserve Sailors from Alabama – are highly trained, motivated, and courageous. We hope you'll join us during Birmingham Navy Week so that you can meet some of these Sailors, hear their stories and get to know your Navy a little better.

Vice Admiral Adam M. Robinson is the 36th Surgeon General of the United States Navy and Chief of the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. He will be participating in Birmingham's Navy Week.

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