



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

STUDIES

Littoral Combat Ship: An Examination of Its Possible Concepts of Operations

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Resources: Forces & Capabilities

In 2008, the US Navy commissioned USS Freedom (LCS-1), the first of a new type of ship, the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), produced by Lockheed Martin. It anticipated commissioning a second, distinctly different LCS variant, to be named Independence (LCS-2), produced by General Dynamics, late in 2009. Despite initial issues with design, operational requirements, and especially cost growth, the Navy plans to order substantial numbers of one variant to help address the problem of declining surface ship force levels.

At the urging of then-Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Vern Clark, both types were designed without passing through the normal requirements process. Thus, by not keeping with previous practice, there was no formal a priori understanding of how these ships were intended to be used operationally, or what defined operational requirements they were intended to help meet.

Consequently, despite some conceptual work by various Navy organizations such as Third Fleet and Navy Warfare Development Command (NWDC), there is rather little understanding of what these ships may, or should, be able to do once they are out in the Fleet in numbers. While much of this no doubt will come from future operational testing, evaluation, and experimentation, it is useful to consider what potential concepts of operation may be possible and worth evaluating further.

Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to take the platforms as designed and constructed, and attempt to answer the question: "How can they be used effectively?"

This inquiry will offer some possible inputs concerning these four questions:

- What are the ships' projected missions?
- Where and how could they be employed?
- What do the ships' characteristics enable them to do that other ships cannot?
- What additional missions could they accomplish if certain modifications were made or capabilities added?