

# THE CASE FOR SHIPS TAKEN UP FROM TRADE

## AN ALTERNATIVE TO SHIPBUILDING

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I first became acquainted with the concept of ships taken up from trade (STUFT) while serving as the amphibious operations officer on Commander Sixth Fleet's NATO staff, Naval Striking and Support Forces Southern Europe, in Naples, Italy, 1987–90.

At that time, I was responsible to Commander Sixth Fleet for coordinating all amphibious training exercises for NATO throughout the Mediterranean. The principal amphibious participants, during that time, were amphibious forces from Italy, Turkey, Greece, France, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. Furthermore, during that assignment, I became familiar with the success of STUFT through my Royal Marine counterpart, LtCol Andrew Eames, as STUFT was employed by the United Kingdom during the 1982 Falklands (Malvinas) War. Because Andrew fought in that war, I received his firsthand views. Likewise, during my tenure as the amphibious operations officer, the British Royal Marines and Royal Navy were keen to exercise the STUFT concept during specific portions of NATO amphibious training exercises. Therefore, we identified detailed training

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objectives to accommodate these training objectives.

In the past, we have been able to buy the battlefield in terms of time, distance, and money. However, in today's world of emerging technologies, there is not time, distance, or money to buy the battlefield. Appropriations for new shipbuilding are not necessarily a priority when funding is scarce, the debt is soaring, and we are not at war. However, in my view, that is not an excuse for a lack of readiness. While we should be forward-looking in the development of modern technology and the building of advanced warships, we must also have an interim solution to ensure we have a plan for accruing necessary shipping when war occurs on short notice, as evidenced by past history.

SS Canberra and HMS Andromeda (F57) outside Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, just after the surrender of Argentine forces on 14 June 1982.  
Image: Ken Griffiths

