

The Navy We Need

And the one we got

by Scott Shuger

Photo by Charles Kennedy

The current political and economic climate dictates that something like \$300 billion worth of military programs will have to be canceled during the new administration. And of all the services, the Navy is the most likely to be deeply cut. Over the past eight years, it is the only service that has actually grown. While the number of Army divisions has remained the same and the number of planes in the Air Force's tactical wings has actually shrunk, the Navy's fleet has swelled by more than 100 ships to 587, and its senior enlisted ranks have almost doubled since 1981. Moreover, the Navy's proposals for new programs—those not already underway—total around \$80 billion.

Among the items the Navy is plumping for:

- ▶ Two more *Nimitz*-class nuclear supercarriers, for a total of eight vessels of that class, bringing fleet strength to 15 flattops, up from 12 in 1981.
- ▶ Smaller ships. The Navy wants 26 *Burke*-class guided-missile destroyers to go with the three already under construction and the 27 larger, *Ticonderoga*-class guided-missile cruisers already funded.
- ▶ Subs anyone? The Navy wants up to 30 *Seawolf*-

class attack submarines—subs designed to sink other subs—producing a fleet of 100 nuclear-powered attack subs. The Navy also wants money to complete the *Ohio*-class nuclear-powered submarines with their long-range Trident D5 missiles, for a total of 16-20 boats of that class.

▶ Don't forget the planes. The Navy wants to continue purchasing the carrier-based F/A-18 strike fighter, for a total of more than 1,000. It also wants to buy a new version of the carrier-based F-14 fighter, and to fund improvements for the older models already in the inventory, for a total of nearly 600.

To understand which weapons belong on the Navy's shopping list and which ones don't, you have to understand the scenarios the Navy is likely to encounter. While it's impossible to know just what our military needs will be next year, let alone 5, 10, 15 years from now, we can be certain that we'll need conventional weapons and nuclear weapons to keep the peace with the Soviets; we'll need to be ready to fight in limited, "tactical" engagements; and we should have the capacity to fight "strategic" battles on a global scale.

Many of the items on the Navy's budget request aren't what we need for any of these scenarios. And

Scott Shuger is writing a book on the Navy.

many of the weapons that we do need are either inadequately funded or missing from the budget entirely.

A one-shot deal

Consider that first item: two more big nuclear aircraft carriers. So powerful is the mystique of carriers that senior Navy officials admit that in wartime they'd really want not the 15 carriers their request is based on but 20 to 24. Yet the carrier mystique belies considerable historical shortcomings. World War II's largest aircraft carrier, Japan's *Shinano*, had been in service for only ten days when it was sunk by four torpedo hits from a single American submarine. [See "The Sinking of a Supercarrier," Joseph Enright and James Ryan, May 1987.] In Vietnam, despite operating in an environment free of submarines and, for the most part, free of fighter aircraft, U.S. carrier airwings hardly altered the war's outcome—but did produce scores of POWs. Limited uses of U.S. carriers in Grenada and Lebanon, and the use of an Argentine carrier in the Falklands, were likewise ineffectual.

These instances of vulnerability and inefficiency suggest that the *Nimitz*-class big-deck carriers the Navy wants won't be useful in many of the scenarios it must plan for. As far as the strategic nuclear environment goes, it is hard to see their advantage. The Soviets' development of a worldwide reconnaissance system, cruise missiles, and a substantial ocean-going, blue-water navy has largely negated any pre-existing American edge.

During my own service as a naval officer in the late seventies and early eighties I participated in some exercises where, in theory at least, my carrier battle group arrived undetected at a point in the ocean from which it could launch raids against Soviet targets. But we probably never did get close enough to pull off an airstrike that would truly work. ("Probably" because, happily, our work remained in the realm of simulation, as all such exercises do. No one knows for sure what would really happen.) Invariably, the flying distance required complicated refueling plans, and, in order to conserve fuel, these bomber routes would be at very high and hence very detectable altitudes. When we practiced long-range strikes against non-Soviet targets, we ran into the same kinds of problems. In addition, no naval aircraft has electronics immune to the debilitating electromagnetic pulse produced by nuclear explosions.

Since stationing tanker airplanes along flight routes would be enormously difficult during battle, many of these sorties would wind up being one-way missions—recovering on land or ditching in the sea after bomb delivery. Even supposing round-trip missions could be pulled off, the carrier may well be

located and sunk any time *after* the raid launches, because, while carriers have a hard time hiding from the Soviets under the best of circumstances, they become much more detectable once planes start operating. So even if inland targets get hit, you might still lose the subsequent use of an entire airwing. So in all-out and anti-Soviet scenarios, supercarriers look to be a one-shot deal. It seems that the Navy quietly admitted as much when some years ago it pretty much dropped carriers from our first-line nuclear war plans.

The old joke is that the reason you build aircraft carriers is so you can put planes on them to keep them from getting sunk. Because of the difficulties facing them, our carriers have come to resemble this punch line. Naval aviators proudly think of the 86-plane airwing as the carrier's "main battery," but much of that air strength has gone over to defending the carrier. It used to be that a carrier's fighter complement—the Hellcats, the Corsairs, the Panthers, the Phantoms—could sling bombs and rockets underneath. But the 20 F-14 fighters onboard today's carriers carry no air-to-surface weapons (save for an extremely short-range gun). Instead, they carry air-to-air weapons designed to stave off fighters and bombers that might attack the carrier. The five aircraft that jam enemy radar and the five planes we use to provide our own radar are likewise impotent. Ditto for the ten antisubmarine planes and the eight antisubmarine/search-and-rescue helicopters. That leaves only 38 planes—A-6, A-7, and F/A-18 bombers—for enemy ships and installations to worry about. In other words, as an offensive threat, a navy supercarrier is only about 44 percent efficient.

Gas money

Despite these drawbacks, there remains some evidence that carriers can be useful in limited, tactical fighting. Indeed, the Soviets seem to recognize this. At a shipyard on the Black Sea, they are now completing their second medium-sized, U.S.-style aircraft carrier. (The first was finished in 1985, but it's still not deployed.) These new vessels have catapults for launching heavy aircraft, arresting-gear for landing them, and angled decks that allow carriers to launch and land aircraft at the same time—features U.S. carriers have had for a generation. The Soviets evidently believe that in a crisis, where only a limited bit of hell is breaking loose, one piece at a time—and where the theater of operations is bereft of hostile submarines—carriers can provide military power and a visually striking symbol of national presence, without depending on foreign basing arrangements.

But there are factors that impugn the need for big-deck, nuclear-powered carriers like the *Nimitz*-class.

Much of the huge expense of a *Nimitz*-class carrier stems from the cost of its nuclear power plants. The argument in favor of this kind of propulsion is that it can go 13 years between refuelings. But since most of a carrier battle group's elements aren't nuclear-powered, what good is this? All the escorts—the battleships, the cruisers, the destroyers, the frigates—must refuel every week or so. And the planes on board a carrier guzzle fuel at about the same rate.

With its airplanes, a *Nimitz*-class carrier costs at least \$5 billion. This drains capital from training, testing, parts, and maintenance. Amazingly, it's not uncommon for navy squadrons to cut back their flight hours drastically or even to be grounded due to the scarcity of aviation fuel near the end of a fiscal quarter. This even happens to squadrons already at sea. Several times during my carrier service we had to drop anchor and wait for more fuel money. I'd much rather have "less capable" carriers with more readiness. A gassed-up VW beats a bone-dry Corvette off the line every time.

One reason for the calamities aboard the *Stark* (hit by an Iraqi plane) and the *Vincennes* (which accidentally downed an Iranian 747) was that they found themselves operating in the Persian Gulf without any air support from a carrier. [See "Why Did the Navy Shoot Down 290 Civilians?" Scott Shuger, October 1988] That's because the Navy is loath to deploy carriers to bodies of water it considers too small—where it fears they can become trapped. Thus these two most recent U.S. naval disasters clearly illustrate what we might call the paradox of the "high value unit": if a weapon is considered too valuable to lose, it is often considered too valuable to *use*. This is like having a couch so expensive, everyone is afraid to sit on it.

A prominent proposal to make naval airpower more practical and cost-effective has been the mid-size or "Gary Hart" carrier—a conventionally powered smaller carrier. While this might work in a world with honest contractors and no interservice rivalries, it's likely that, in this world, any such ship will end up being a high value unit anyway.

The real solution was showcased in the Falklands war—the only comprehensive naval action since World War II. At the center of the British naval force were two small, straight-deck carriers supporting Harrier vertical/short-take-off-and-landing (VSTOL) jets, which don't require a catapult because they take off almost as vertically as helicopters. Such a simplified airwing—far simpler than that which would operate from a "Gary Hart" carrier—can still perform a wide variety of operations. In the Falklands, the British had these planes flying air-defense and ground-support missions, as well as helicopters providing antisubmarine protection and

search-and-rescue missions. The results were impressive: Harriers destroyed 26 Argentine aircraft in exchange for only two losses due to enemy action, and their cluster-bombs and rockets helped crumble opposing army units. (This success was due, at least in part, to the absence of a credible Argentine submarine threat.)

The U.S. Navy already has 12 similar VSTOL/helo carriers (and is hoping to build two more), but because naval planners are so enthralled/paralyzed by big carriers and the kind of aircraft that needs a big flight deck, it limits them to the very ancillary role of supporting marine amphibious assaults. Amazingly, it could probably build eight or ten more of them for the price of the two proposed nuclear big-decks. (Since it's politically infeasible nowadays to call any ships "Gary Hart" carriers, perhaps we can think of these as "Donna Rice" carriers—capable of causing some trouble and unimportant enough to be used.) The resultant force of 20 small carriers would give the U.S. Navy plenty of usable Falklands-style power for limited battles using conventional weapons without wasting assets on big, strategic nuclear scenarios against the Soviets in which naval air power no longer makes much sense.

Phoenix and Midway

What about the planes that the Navy is requesting, those F/A-18s and F-14s? Were the Navy to switch over to a VSTOL/helo small carrier force, it wouldn't need more F/A-18s and F-14s. But even if big-deck carriers are retained, there are grounds for concern about the particular aircraft the Navy wants.

It's true, the F/A-18 is faster and more maneuverable than the A-7 bomber it is replacing. It has an advanced "heads-up" cockpit design, where the gauges are displayed as part of the windshield. It has a better radar. And unlike the A-7, it is twin-engined—making it more survivable and thus better for long operations over open oceans. These are the fighter-style features that make it fun to fly, but the shortcomings of the F/A-18 have been clear for some time. [See "Dress Blues and Bleeding Mohawks," Scott Shuger, October 1983.] As a bomber, it's a big step backwards because it *carries fewer bombs* than the A-7 and can only carry them about *half as far*. The Navy has tried to solve the problem, but there's no quick fix. Outfitting the F/A-18 with external fuel tanks hampers its bomb capacity and hinders its much-vaunted maneuverability. Shortening all scheduled carrier flights to accommodate the F/A-18's poorer endurance restricts the range of the entire airwing. Here is another instance where the Navy "modern-

ized” and lost punch.

The manufacturer of the A-7, LTV, has put forward several programs to upgrade its engine, electronics, maneuverability, and survivability at about one-third the cost of an F/A-18. This isn't nearly as exciting as buying a new plane, but it makes more sense.

The F-14 that the Navy wants more of is a formidable aircraft. It has the best fighter radar there

The old joke is that an aircraft carrier is a ship equipped with planes whose purpose is to keep it from being sunk. Because of the difficulties facing them, our carriers have come to resemble this punch line.

is (because of its long-range detection, Iranians successfully used it as an early warning plane). It has the longest-range fighter weapon—the Phoenix missile. Its variable geometry wing gives it an unrivaled combination of performance and “station time,” the ability to stay aloft for long periods. But there are still big problems.

Despite the fact that *one-on-one* the F-14 can probably beat any fighter in the world (with the possible exception of the U.S. Air Force F-15 and F-16), it's hard to see how that's relevant to combat against the Soviets, whose fighter planes outnumber ours somewhere between *six and seven to one*. (This includes the obsolescent and obsolete planes they keep operational.) Unlike the Libyans, the Soviets won't settle for even odds.

Furthermore, the plane is advertised as being pre-eminent in air-to-air combat against other planes and in defending a ship against cruise missiles or bombers—but it's very difficult to carry out both missions simultaneously. If the F-14 carries all or mostly Phoenix missiles for its mission of shooting down bombers or the antiship cruise missiles they carry—it can carry up to six of these huge things—it must sacrifice all or some of its short- and medium-range missiles, and also lose a good deal of its maneuverability.

But suppose we are in the Pacific, where Soviet missiles pose an enormous threat to our carriers.

And suppose that we have three carriers deployed there. Further suppose that all 60 of the F-14s are “mission capable” and each is fully loaded with six Phoenix missiles. On the best estimates available, the Soviets have at least 350-400 antiship cruise missiles launchable from the bombers of their Pacific fleet alone. That means it's not unlikely that a few air-launched cruise missiles will score nuclear hits on carriers in such an all-out scenario even if every navy F-14 pilot has a perfect day.

There are some features of the situation that make it hard to accept even this optimistic an outcome. First, I have never witnessed or heard of an F-14 squadron with all its planes “up” at once. Second, one of those carriers deployed in the Pacific Fleet is likely to be the *Midway*, which, due to its smaller flight-deck and hangar, doesn't have any F-14s. Third, it's more than a little reasonable to expect that in any such scenario the Soviets will also be shooting at our carriers with sub-launched and surface-launched antiship missiles, not just those from bombers. And fourth, and perhaps most relevant to any discussion of the budget, the Phoenix missile is so expensive—costing \$1 million apiece—that carrier airwings don't carry enough of them to outfit each of their F-14s with six.

If we are going to spend more money for fighters based on carriers, we should go to something with the air-to-air capability of the F-14, which is due largely to the superb heat-seeking Sidewinder. But we should probably cancel the Sparrow missile, which imposes maneuvering restrictions on the aircraft launching it and which is vulnerable to counter-maneuvers and electronic countermeasures. And we would be better off without the impractical weight and expense of the Phoenix missile.

Money well spent

Let's turn now to submarines. This is probably an area where the Navy should spend heavily, although in a somewhat different fashion than is currently being suggested. The simple fact, of course, is that submarines are much, much harder to detect than surface ships. “There are two kinds of ships,” say the sub guys, “submarines and targets.” I've seen enough photos of American carriers through periscope crosshairs—most sub crew offices feature one—to become a believer. Despite all the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) equipment that carrier groups take with them to sea, in my own experience most exercises against subs ended up with my carrier getting a green flare at close quarters, the standard simulation for a successful torpedo or cruise missile attack.

There are two important corollaries of the sub-

marine's stealth. First, it follows that no matter how sophisticated and expensive, submarines are quite generally *not* high value units—we can afford to use them because we aren't as likely to lose them. In other words, firepower put on a submarine is *more efficient* than that put on anything else. That's one reason why the Navy's recent trend of putting Harpoon and Tomahawk cruise missiles on attack submarines is a good move. If these weapons are worthwhile—and the evidence is that the Russians respect them tremendously—then they should be put where they'll do the most good.

The second consequence is of particular importance for strategic scenarios. Let's say that any feature of a weapon system that tends to discourage potential adversaries from starting a war or escalating one already in progress is "stabilizing" and that any feature that would encourage them to do so is "destabilizing." Having most of our strategic warheads on virtually impossible-to-find submarines is quite stabilizing—since the Soviets don't know where they are, they're less likely to launch against them. Putting a weapon on a submarine enhances its stabilizing features more than putting it on anything else.

Money spent on submarines is as well spent as money gets at the Pentagon. But this doesn't mean that all of the proposed sub programs should be sacrosanct. For instance, although nuclear power makes much more sense for subs than surface ships—since they operate pretty independently, they aren't hampered by a conventionally powered

entourage—and although nuke-powered subs are getting quieter all the time, they still aren't the quietest subs. No, that accolade goes to diesel/electric boats running on batteries. Now these conventional designs don't have the operating range that nukes have and hence would be suited only for roles where range doesn't matter—say, a patrol off Norfolk or a minelaying operation in the Dardanelles Straits near the Black Sea. But the importance of those missions is a good reason to build non-nuke subs.

Right now, the U.S. Navy has only four diesel subs, none of them state-of-the-art combat vessels. We currently depend on the diesel subs of our allies to perform the missions diesels do best. It's foolish to rely on the British, German, and Italian navies for our security. There are crucial scenarios in which having friends with diesels won't do us much good. The Soviets maintain missile sub patrols off both our coasts, and we can't expect Britain to help us patrol them. The closeness of Russian "boomers" to our shores positions them to fire first-strike salvos with only a fraction of the warning time we'd get on their ICBMs. This is dangerously destabilizing.

The best response to this would be to fill the waters close to our shores with super-quiet diesel/electric boats, watching for the slightest indication of launch by those Russian subs. Also, conventionally powered subs require fewer men, and their crews don't have to undergo as much time-consuming and expensive physics and engineering training. And if a submarine is simpler to operate, crew members can concentrate more on *tactics*. It's long been suspected that the Navy's nearly all-nuke sub force is very strong on running submarines but not as strong as it should be on *fighting* with them. (As a response to this problem, we should consider the British navy's approach—maintaining two different classes of submarine officer, a general officer specializing in tactics and operations, and an engineering officer specializing in power plants.)

Spit and shoestring

Although the *Seawolf* does represent some advances over the current U.S. front-line nuclear attack sub, the *Los Angeles*-class—it has upgraded sonar, more torpedo tubes, and is equipped for under-ice operations—if we eliminated the *Seawolf* or cut back on it, we could build many more diesel/electrics, since they cost only about *one-fourth* as much. Given the resultant gains in strategic stability, independence from our allies, and tactical crew talent, this seems like a good trade.

Because the chief strategic value of submarines is that they enhance whatever stabilizing features a

The Washington Monthly is looking for a few good copy writers. If you have a way with ad copy and would be interested in helping with a direct mail campaign, call Janet Duncan at (202) 462-0128, or write to:

The Washington Monthly
1611 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20009

Outfitting the F/A-18 with external fuel tanks hampers its ability to carry bombs and hinders its much-vaunted maneuverability. Here is another instance where the Navy "modernized" and lost its punch.

weapon has, we need to think more carefully about strategic subs. The present development of the *Ohio*-class sub and its D5 ballistic missile incorporates several principal changes over earlier systems: increased missile range (from 4,500 to 6,000 nautical miles), increased missile accuracy (from being able to hit a city to being able to hit a missile silo), increased missiles per sub (up from 16 on the Poseidon missile boats to 24 on the *Ohio*-class), and increased warheads per missile (from eight to ten, with the built-in possibility of going up to 14).

Of these features, only the first—increased missile range—is stabilizing. If your subs can hit the enemy's targets from farther away, there is more ocean for the subs to hide in. The upshot is that the enemy is that much less encouraged to try a first strike, since retaliation is ensured. But increasing the accuracy of a missile actually harms stability. If you make sub-launched missiles accurate enough to hit nuclear weapons sites, rather than accurate enough just to hit sprawling population centers, the enemy becomes jittery. If he knows you have lots of virtually impossible-to-find weapons targeted at the bulk of his nuclear arsenal, then (especially in a crisis) his fear of losing it altogether tempts him to launch his nuclear weapons first. And increasing the number of warheads per sub is also problematic. Submarine commanders know that no matter how stealthy their boats are in general, once they launch at least one missile they will be much easier to find. So they are inclined to fire *all* their missiles if they are inclined to fire *any*. Subjecting more warheads to this logic heightens the rate at which a nuclear war would accelerate.

Attention should also be drawn to a curious feature of the Navy's current attempts to improve the wartime survivability of its ballistic missile submarine command, control, and communications (C3). While it is quite generally true that in the U.S. military, combat C3 has been horribly neglected and stands in need of great repair, here is a case where

the neglect is *stabilizing*. As long as C3 with our missile subs remains at the spit-and-shoestring level, the Soviets know that if they were to decapitate the U.S. civilian and military authorities preemptively they would suffer the response of a basically unlocatable fleet of autonomous sub commanders who would attack their targets as soon as they stopped hearing from home. This fact makes such preemptive strikes less attractive to them.

Guerrillas and redcoats

In effect then, the *Ohio*-class submarine and supporting programs aren't adding to stability. Here is a sobering example where technological changes have been adopted not because they further military goals but simply because the technology exists.

We could get back to pure strategic strength if we opted for a submarine force with the following features: long-range missiles, the longer the better, but with decreased accuracy, fewer warheads per submarine, but more missile-bearing submarines.

As for new surface ships, while there's still room in a modern navy for them, I don't think there's much for the likes of the *Ticonderoga*-class and *Burke*-class Aegis radar ships. For all their gee-whiz equipment, they won't really be capable of acting independently without air cover. The *Vincennes*, a *Ticonderoga*-class ship, and the *Stark* already showed that. And a surface ship is not the best anti-submarine platform—another submarine is. Nor is it the best device for shooting down planes—another plane is. In most scenarios, these fancy ships will fall prey to all the (far cheaper) cruise missiles and torpedoes out there. Once again the Falklands war is instructive—of the 29 surface ships in the British task force, five were sunk and seven others were damaged—a casualty rate of 41 percent. On the other hand, it is possible to build surface ships that are more like guerrillas and less like redcoats—well-armed, high-speed, highly maneuverable, small

craft. Strap on a small gun, some cruise and anti-air missiles and you have something that in reasonable numbers can cause some real trouble. Just ask the U.S. carrier pilots who tried, without much luck, to sink Vietnamese and Cambodian gunboats. Or the navy investigators who found that the *Vincennes's* troubles with Iranian gunboats contributed to its miscalculations about the Airbus. Most of the navies of the world have good stocks of these craft. The Soviets have more than 500 of them. We have seven. There is no reason why the U.S. Navy has a crappier small-boat fleet than your average Colombian drug dealer.

In his just-published book on his years as Reagan's secretary of the Navy, John Lehman defends his opposition to what he describes as the "whole trendy

school of military reform . . . [built] around the ideas that complexity and technology were bad and that simplicity and cheapness were good." He argues: "The tremendous American edge in technology is an inherent advantage provided by our culture and our economic system. We must build to this advantage, not trade it away for cheaper, smaller, less capable ships and aircraft and weapons built in greater numbers, which is the forte of a totalitarian, centralized, Gosplan economy." This reference to the Soviets is the worst kind of fallacy—like saying that because the Nazis introduced jets and rockets, we shouldn't have them. In light of the raft of technotroubles bedeviling the Navy that Lehman bought us, we need to think much more carefully about the Navy his successors want to buy us next. □

The Worst City Government

If you thought the government of the Virgin Islands was unwise to hire personnel consultants from the D.C. government, think about China. In 1987, the People's Republic hosted Gwynne Washington, an assistant director of D.C.'s Department of Corrections, which last year allowed 18 escapes. Asking the District for advice on prison security is like asking Mother Teresa for tips on birth control.

The first lesson that D.O.C. officials might have offered is semantics. On the night of January 19, inmates at Lorton prison burned down the administration building. Many of us might call this a riot. Not Hallem Williams. "It was not a riot," said the director of corrections. "It was a fire with opportunistic vandalism and a murder. . . ."

"Our management is sound," said Williams. But a 1987 report by the National Institute of Corrections, a federal agency, found that Lorton guards had a habit of forgetting to lock the doors. It's no surprise, then, that three of the 18 escapees simply walked out.

Our favorite: the armed robber who strolled out with his family as visiting hours ended. . . .

Nor does "sound management" leap to mind to describe the D.O.C.'s early release program to ease overcrowding. The delicate task of deciding which 800 inmates to return to the streets fell to low-level clerks with little training. "Nobody gave [us] any specific guidelines," one worker told *The Washington Post*. "It was catch-as-catch-can." Or can't.

It might have seemed logical for the parole board to make decisions about early release, but it was busy running a special rehabilitation program for ex-cons—well, for one ex-con anyway: Mayor Marion Barry's ex-wife, who served time for defrauding tenants of a D.C. housing project. She was paid \$28,000 for a three-month study of the needs of women inmates. . . .

The security at Lorton might seem impressive compared to that at Oak Hill, the District's maximum security facility for young offenders, run by the city's Youth Services Administration. In 1987,

25 percent of the inmates escaped, including two convicted of murder. Investigators from the U.S. Department of Education found that a \$200,000 education program was "almost nonexistent." And this winter, a court-appointed monitor found the prison infested with rats and snakes and the inmates "entirely out of underwear."

Meanwhile, more than 6,000 city employees—roughly one in seven—make more than \$40,000 a year, according to David Clarke, chairman of the D.C. city council. "Like those of us on perpetual diets know so well," he said, "obesity is often reflected by a bulging middle". . . .

Second place this month goes to Chicago, where, the *Chicago Tribune* reports, about \$70 million in parking fines remain uncollected because the 11 city agencies that control them can't coordinate. But not to worry. Several city council members have proposed a new system—complete with a provision to grant themselves immunity from parking fines. . . .

—Katherine Boo