

## COAST ARTILLERY

(Extract from Brassey's "ARTILLERY OF THE WORLD")

Coast Artillery as a specialised branch fell into disuse after World War II. Fortresses with fixed armaments from 6" to 15" in concrete emplacements designed to protect naval bases and anchorages proved only too vulnerable to land attack and aerial bombing. Equally the supporting fire of naval craft and aerial bombardment effectively neutralised coastal fortifications sited to cover beaches and other landing places suitable for invasion. While it was realised that coast artillery was to some extent a deterrent it locked up men and equipment in fixed defences which in the event seldom if ever fired a shot. Further, the advance of weapon technology in the shape of airpower and surface-to-surface guided missiles specially designed for attacking ships provided a far more flexible and effective counter both to invasion and to long-range ship-to-shore bombardment.

Nevertheless guns, especially if sited in commanding positions, are still an economical method of providing close-in defence of harbour and anchorages against surprise attack or fast, small raiding craft and also for the control of straits and approaches through shoals or shallows where shipping must follow a predetermined course. "Classical" coast systems were very effective. The range was discovered by continuously solving the triangle formed by the height of the gun above sea-level and the angle of sight from the gun to the target, and range and bearing data was passed electronically to the split function layers by the 'follow the pointer' system. Even with manually operated breech mechanisms laying direct and estimating the lead, the chance of a hit in two or three rounds was good. Some of these antiquated but but still serviceable systems of fire control may still be in service for harbour defence. The disadvantage is that they are all optical and depend on good visibility, and director operators and layers have to be skilled, intelligent, and regularly practiced.

The Soviet Union, Norway, Sweden, Yugoslavia and Cuba have coast artillery units which are naval manned. The most complets, as might be expected, are the Soviet Union's, covering all naval bases and major ports as well as providing full visual and radar cover along the coastline. In Finland, Portugal and Spain the coast artillery is manned by the army.