U.S. STRATEGY IN THE PERSIAN GULF:
THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCE
AS AN INSTRUMENT OF
POLICY

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Submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy,
Murdoch University,
Perth,
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To my parents:

Shrimati Acharya and Shri Janardan Acharya
DECLARATION

This thesis is my own, original work.

Amitav Acharya
ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of US strategic involvement in the Persian Gulf region since the Iranian revolution. Although it deals with all the major aspects and instruments of the American strategy, the focus is on the military instrument - the Rapid Deployment Force (RDP). This reflects the central role the military instrument has come to play in US efforts to restore its strategic influence and credibility in the wake of setbacks represented in the fall of the Shah of Iran, the hostage crisis and the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.

US strategic interest in the Gulf dates back to the Second World War period. US capability for long-range military intervention can be traced to the birth of the US Marine Corps more than two hundred years ago. But it is during the early 1980s that power projection became the central element of US policy toward the Gulf.

This transition owed largely to US perceptions of the crises in Iran and Afghanistan. Both were seen as symbolising trends, namely: internal instability and Soviet interventionism, which could threaten Western interests especially access to oil. Such perceptions spurred the Carter Doctrine which announced the US resolve to use force, if necessary, to protect Western interests in the Gulf from external (Soviet) threats. President Reagan extended this commitment to internally-generated threats by declaring that the US would not "permit" Saudi Arabia, America's most important regional ally", to be "another Iran".
Programs to make the RDF a credible instrument of US policy have led to a four-service force structure equipped and trained for combat in the Gulf region, a new unified command organization (Central Command), improved capability for airlift, sealift and prepositioning, and basing and access arrangements in a number of regional locations. These programs have led to a dramatic improvement in US capability for military intervention in the region.

But several problems still hinder the application of this capability in support of US interests and objectives. These problems include the Gulf's remoteness from the peacetime locations of the RDF's constituent units, inadequate access to regional ports and airfields continuing deficiencies in the RDF's mobility support and the harsh and difficult natural and operational conditions obtaining in the region. These constraints severely limit the force's ability to counter a major Soviet attack on Iran which has been the focus of the Central Command's contingency-planning. The Soviets enjoy proximity which in turn would give them the advantage in force ratio, combat power and sustainability.

The RDF can not be an effective answer to the problems of domestic instability and intra-regional conflict which are more likely threats to US interests in the Gulf. US military intervention in such contingencies could further destabilize the situation. The popular image of the US within the region is negative because of its support for Israel. The local regimes have sought to distance themselves from the RDF and are unlikely to ask for its help against domestic threats.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the product of work conducted in four different parts of the world - New Delhi, Perth, Canberra and Washington, D.C. In the course of my stay in these places, my research and personal life have benefitted from the contribution of a number of individuals. I would like to express my gratitude to them.

Professors T.T. Poulouse and Puspesh Pant of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, encouraged my interest in the discipline of international politics and strategic studies. The thesis could not have been completed without the encouragement and assistance I received from my principal supervisor, Dr. Richard Higgott, throughout my Ph.D. term at Murdoch University.

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<td>AOR</td>
<td>Area of Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWACS</td>
<td>Airborne Warning and Control System</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Congressional Budget Office</td>
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<td>CENTCOM</td>
<td>(US) Central Command</td>
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<td>CENTO</td>
<td>Central Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
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<td>COMIDEASTFOR</td>
<td>Command Middle East Force</td>
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<td>CONUS</td>
<td>Continental United States</td>
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<td>CRAF</td>
<td>Civil Reserve Air Fleet</td>
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<td>CX</td>
<td>Cargo Experimental</td>
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<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defence</td>
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<td>FDL</td>
<td>Fast Deployment Logistics</td>
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<td>FHE</td>
<td>Forward Headquarters Element</td>
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<td>FMS</td>
<td>Foreign Military Sales</td>
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<td>FY</td>
<td>Fiscal Year</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Corporation Council</td>
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<td>JCS</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
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<td>JCSE</td>
<td>Joint Communication Support Element</td>
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<td>JLP</td>
<td>Jordanian Logistics Plan</td>
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<td>JTF</td>
<td>Joint Task Force</td>
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<td>LAV</td>
<td>Light Armoured Vehicle</td>
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<td>MAB</td>
<td>Marine Amphibious Brigade</td>
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mbd. - million barrels day
MPCS - Mobile Protected Gun System
MPS - Maritime Prepositioning Ships
MSC - Military Sealift Command
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA - National Command Authority
NDRF - National Defence Reserve Fleet
NSC - National Security Council
NTPF - Near Term Prepositioned Force
NTPS - Near Term Prepositioning Ship
OPEC - Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PACOM - (US) Pacific Command
PDR Yemen - People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PLO - Palestine Liberation Organization
POL - Petroleum, Oil and Lubricant
RDF - Rapid Deployment Force
RDJTF - Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
REDCOM - (US) Readiness Command
RO/RO - Roll-on/Roll-off
RRF - Ready Reserve Force
SPF - Strategic Projection Force
STRICOM - (US) Strike Command
SWA - Southwest Asia
TOW - Tube-Launched, Optically-Trackered, Wire-Guided
UAE - United Arab Emirates
USAF - United States Air Force
V/STOL - Vertical/Short Take-Off and Landing
INTRODUCTION

1. Origins and Scope of the Study

In the past decade, the Persian Gulf region has decisively influenced the strategic perception and policies of the United States. Continued access to Gulf oil and the related, yet autonomous, objectives of containment of Soviet regional influence and preservation of the conservative local regimes have become major priorities of US strategic planning. These concerns have telescoped in wake of the "threats" posed by the Arab oil embargo, the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

American approaches to its interests in the Gulf have undergone a process of radical change. In the first two decades after World War II, Washington recognized British colonial authority over the region and relied on it for the protection of Western interests. In the wake of the British withdrawal from the region by the early 1970s the US, politically and materially constrained by its Vietnam involvement, chose to apply the Nixon Doctrine in the area and promote Iran and, to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia to manage regional security and safeguard Western interests. Although this approach suffered some erosion in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the oil embargo, it continued to be the basic framework for US regional security posture until the Iranian revolution toppled its main agent: the Shah of Iran. Thereafter, the US, its stakes in Persian Gulf oil having grown enormously since the early 1970s, switched to a policy of relying more on its own military power to preserve and advance the
interests of the Western nations in the face of what was believed to be a growing atmosphere of instability and tension in the area.

The Rapid Deployment Force (for analytical convenience and continuity, this term, rather than the command names: Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) or US Central Command (USCENTCOM), will be used in this thesis) is the chief outcome of this transition. US security posture in the Persian Gulf region in the post-Shah era has been structured primarily around this instrument. While the approach underlying the RDF differs significantly from past US policies in the Gulf, the RDF is not a new concept. A systematic effort to maintain a "central reserve" of ready combat forces with requisite strategic mobility for quick projection to distant crisis spots was undertaken during Robert McNamara's term as Secretary of Defence in the 1960s. Yet the political and financial pressures generated by the Vietnam War led to its withering in the late 1960s. The Carter administration revived it in paper early in its term, but it took the shocks generated by the Iranian revolution to rescue it from bureaucratic doldrums and move it towards reality. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan gave the RDF a final push, when it became the chief practical symbol of America's new-found determination to defend its "vital interests" in the Gulf - by military means if necessary.

The creation of the RDF as a credible instrument of US policy in the Persian Gulf has been intense and multi-faceted. It has led to substantial investments to improve the readiness and combat capability of its force structure, and provide it with additional mobility and logistics support. It has led to the creation of a new unified regional command with the responsibility to plan for varied contingencies and employ US forces to cope with them as directed by
American policymakers. It has also led to the creation of an extensive network of basing and access arrangements involving a number of countries.

2. **Structure of the Study**

These varied aspects of the RDF, and the comprehensive strategic framework built around it, constitute the focus of this study. It will begin with an overview of the evolution of US interests and involvement in the Gulf in the post-war era, although the emphasis will primarily be on the phase following the British withdrawal from the region. The historical context leading to the application of the Nixon Doctrine in the area and its subsequent record will be critically examined in the first chapter. Chapter Two will survey the impact of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on US strategic perceptions. Both crises, constituting the turning point in US regional and global posture, will be analysed in terms of their "wider" geostrategic implications - the manner in which American policymakers chose to view them in 1979-80. At the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that the Iranian and Afghanistan crises were seen in the US as extreme but representative examples of the "internal" and "external" threats to Western interests in the Gulf and such perceptions were decisive in shaping the US response and the military buildup.

The evolution of this response will be the focus of Chapter Three. The first part of the chapter will place the RDF in the historical context of the American force projection planning and capability. Especially, it will examine the rapid deployment initiative under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. The second
part of the chapter will trace the evolution of the RDF as a response to the crises in Iran and Afghanistan and explain the regional and domestic climate that led to the Carter Doctrine and the RDF as its chief instrument.

Chapters Four and Five will survey and analyse the process and character of the RDF buildup. Chapter Four will examine the initiatives undertaken to improve the RDF's force structure, strategic mobility, logistics support and command organization. A main concern of this chapter will be to determine the deficiencies and shortcomings of the RDF in each of these key areas which affect the force's ability to intervene in a Persian Gulf crisis. Chapter Five will look at the outcome of the US quest for obtaining the support and participation of friendly regional states, especially access to their military facilities. Since access is primarily determined by the political sensitivities of the host nations and is contingent upon the state of their overall strategic relationship with the US, this chapter will examine the political response of the regional states to American strategy, especially the idea of "strategic consensus" which former Secretary of State Alexander Haig sought to promote among the regional countries.

Finally, Chapters Six and Seven will investigate the central question of how current US strategy for the Persian Gulf region may be applied to different crisis situations affecting American interests. The RDF command organization, the US Central Command, plans for all types of possible contingencies - from minor intra-regional threats to an all out Soviet invasion. While the exact nature of such planning is impossible to know, in view of the secrecy shrouding the CENTCOM's contingency options, one may discern the broad elements of the
strategy from unclassified official sources and analyse them in terms of the known variables likely to determine their success or failure.

Chapter Six will study the strategy for contingencies not directly involving the Soviet Union in terms of its three leading elements - (a) direct intervention, (b) America's role in encouraging friendly regional countries and NATO allies to provide contingency help to the conservative Gulf states and (c) US-assisted regional self-defence. It will investigate issues such as US response to the Iran-Iraq War, US security relationships with Jordan and Pakistan as they affect the latters' capability to play a contingency role in the Gulf, the potential of Britain and France in providing similar help, the trends in US arms transfers to the conservative Gulf states, including the AWACS package of 1981, and the interaction between the US posture and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) collective security initiative.

Chapter Seven will provide a detailed analysis of US strategic options for a direct Soviet military threat to the Gulf. It will examine the range of possible contingencies involving a direct Soviet attack and study the nature of US contingency planning to counter the "worst-case" threat. The three phases of a US response - preemption, defence and escalation - will be examined. A detailed comparative analysis of Soviet and US (and allied) power projection capabilities, including the likely response time and efficiency of various types of forces, will be presented and the major variables affecting the outcome of a confrontation will be discussed. Finally, the possibility of nuclearization and the geographical spread of such a confrontation will be analysed along with its implications for the US strategy.
3. **Rationale and Data Sources**

The objective of this study is to provide a systematic, comprehensive, analytical and balanced exposition of the US strategic framework for the Gulf focused on its central instrument - the RDF. No such study is currently available. The literature on the RDF, though vast, consists mostly of short or limited treatments: articles appearing in various periodicals or pamphlets. The few books focusing specifically on the RDF are devoted either entirely to the process of its buildup or, when they are written by military analysts, neglect historical and political contexts - crucial as determinants of US strategy. There are also, of course, a number of studies which analyse the historical and political context of US-Persian Gulf relations but in most cases they do not contain informed or adequate discussions of the military aspect - especially the role of the RDF. In short, there has been no comprehensive study of the current US strategy in the Persian Gulf which explores the historic roots of both the RDF and the US policy in the region (the two had distinct lines of evolution), or which examines the fusion of the two in the wake of the crises in Iran and Afghanistan. Further none provides a comprehensive discussion of the subsequent buildup of the RDF and, at the same time, analyses its interaction with the regional political dynamics, the response of key regional and NATO allies and the nature of its contingency-planning. This thesis is intended to be one such study.

The most difficult barrier to the conduct of a major study of the RDF is the classified nature of much of the official data. This is as much due to the usual considerations restricting public access to military information as to the additional care taken in deference to the political sensitivities of the pro-Western regional states, few
of whom desire any publicity over US military options designed to ensure their protection. Thus, reliable information is particularly scarce with respect to the regional access network supporting the RDF. Similarly, US officials have provided little, beyond the level of ambiguous generalities, that throws light on the RDF contingency options and the various "force packages" designed to cope with various threats.

While this barrier can never be fully overcome, one can gain reliable insights into the RDF by surveying the broadest range of publicly available sources*: Congressional hearings, press reports, interviews with officials involved in policymaking and articles in major military journals. This thesis relies extensively on these sources, especially the transcripts of the hearings conducted by various committees of the US Congress dealing with the RDF and the Persian Gulf. These transcripts are often the only publicly available record of official views and data on the various aspects of the RDF. Other official sources used in this study include the annual reports and posture statements issued by the Department of Defence, policy notes issued by the Department of State in addition to its official journal, memoirs of former top officials, public papers of Presidents, reports authored by the staff of various Congressional Committees as well as agencies such as the Congressional Research Service and the Congressional Budget Office, and other US government departments and

*For convenience, the US government sources most frequently cited in the text - the Congressional documents, reports and posture statements by the Department of Defence, and the reports prepared by the Congressional Research Service, the Congressional Budget Office, and the General Accounting Office - are cited in an abbreviated form. Full reference is given in the bibliography. Unless otherwise stated, all official agencies and departments - e.g. Department of Defence, Senate, General Accounting Office - are those of the US government.
agencies. Personal interviews conducted with a number of State and Defence Department officials have been used to check my judgements and supplement the data available from other sources but, at the insistence of the concerned officials, these interviews have not been specifically cited in the chapters. The names of officials interviewed are mentioned in the acknowledgement section.

For the purpose of this thesis, Persian Gulf countries include Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain. Since 1979, it has become fashionable in official US circles to use the term Southwest Asia. Map 1.1 shows the Southwest Asia region as defined by the US Defence Department. It underscores the comprehensive nature of the new US regional strategic framework and highlights the participation in it of countries on the periphery of the Gulf, e.g. Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya. But it should be noted that the central focus of the RDF is the oil-exporting core consisting of the states bordering on the Persian Gulf. These states are also seen in Western circles as having the greatest potential for instability and, therefore, have received most attention from the US Central Command.
CHAPTER 1

REGIONAL SECURITY, WESTERN INTERESTS, AND US POLICY
TOWARD THE PERSIAN GULF REGION IN THE 1970S: AN OVERVIEW

1.1 US Interests and Policy Before the 1970s

The Persian Gulf region's prominence in American global strategy is a fairly recent phenomenon. Although the US had recognized the importance of the region in terms of its location as part of a land bridge between three continents, its proximity to the Soviet Union, and its increasingly significant contribution to the world supply of petroleum, the Gulf did not become a primary zone in American geopolitical planning until the 1970s. Unlike the major European powers, the United States did not at any stage have a colonial presence. Much of the early American involvement in the region was in trade or the activities of American Christian missions in education and health.\(^1\) During the inter-war period, American oil companies introduced the first major element of US interest in that region, owning, by 1939, half ownership of a concession in Kuwait and exclusive concessions in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.\(^2\) In fact the oil companies were instrumental in bringing the region to the notice of the American government. They sought and obtained the State Department's diplomatic efforts to secure agreement on an "open door" policy from the British government, which had been accused of discriminatory practices favouring British oil companies in the competition for oil concessions.\(^3\) Yet the Persian Gulf was far from becoming a strategically-important region for the US. The world had
not fully shifted from coal as the primary source of energy. Then too, the Gulf was producing only about 8 per cent of the total world oil output and the US was almost self-sufficient in meeting its oil requirements.

The long-term strategic value of the region's oil resources was recognized for the first time during the Second World War. The war brought into focus the critical importance of petroleum and its by-products as "foundations of the ability to fight a modern war". Besides, American energy planners realized that in the post-war period, Persian Gulf oil could serve as a "well head" for European recovery as well as for American domestic consumption so that depleting indigenous reserves could be saved for future requirements. This realization was clearly reflected in the Roosevelt administration's declaration, in 1943, that the defence of Saudi Arabia was "vital" to the defence of the US. The US extended direct lend lease assistance to the Kingdom (previously such aid had been given indirectly, through the British) to save it from serious financial trouble caused by the wartime disruption of Saudi oil production. It also proceeded to consolidate the privileged position already enjoyed by US oil multinationals in Saudi Arabia.

The immediate post-war era marked the evolution of two other American interests in the Persian Gulf region: containment of Soviet influence and the preservation of the conservative local regimes. Iran featured centrally in both these developments. The initial impetus for the US-Iranian security relationship came from Iran's young monarch, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who during the war had succeeded his father after the latter's forced abduction by the occupying powers: Britain and the Soviet Union. The new Shah
solicited American friendship as a counterweight to these two traditional enemies. His efforts received a boost when 30,000 American troops (non-combatant) deployed in Iran in order to channel US lend-lease supplies to the Soviet Union (the Persian Gulf Command). But the real breakthrough had to await the end of the war and the advent of the Truman administration. The Shah was able to convince the stridently anti-communist Truman administration of Russia's territorial designs on Iran after the Soviets delayed the withdrawal of their troops from northern Iran beyond a previously-agreed deadline. Suspicious that the Soviets were seeking to carve out a separate state with the long-term objective of its incorporation into the USSR, Truman agreed to ask Moscow to complete the withdrawal. The Azerbaijan crisis came to be regarded as one of the "opening salvos" of the Cold War.

US interest in Iran as a Cold War partner grew steadily thereafter. Iran found prominent mention in the deliberations over the Truman Doctrine. When briefing Congressional leaders on the administration's efforts to combat the communist threat to Greece and the Middle East, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson hypothesized that "like apples in a barrel infected by one rotten one, the corruption of Greece would infect Iran and all to the east". Saudi Arabia also briefly featured in the containment strategy by agreeing to provide base rights to the US at Dhahran - an airfield built by the US to facilitate wartime redeployment of US forces to and from the Far East. But Saudi cooperation was circumscribed due to divisions over the Palestinian issue. Iran, in contrast, lived up to its American designation as the "strategic prize" of the Near East. It participated in all major Western "containment" activities in the region, including
the Baghdad Pact (later called CENTO). It hosted US military missions (as did Saudi Arabia) and became a major regional recipient of US military aid. The alliance was formalized in 1959 when the two parties signed a Bilateral Security Pact. The pact provided for continued US military and economic aid to Iran as well as an American commitment, to take "appropriate action including the use of armed forces" to assist the Iranian government in case of aggression against Iran.11

The third major US interest in the Gulf, regime security in the friendly conservative states, came to the fore at the height of the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute in the early 1950s. The crisis, originating from the Iranian parliament's nationalization of the British owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, was aggravated by the prime ministership of the popular but erratic nationalist leader - Dr. Mohammed Mossadeq - in 1951. Mossadeq's refusal to compromise over the issue of nationalization invited a British-arranged boycott of Iran's oil exports and precipitated a grave economic crisis in Iran. Moreover, Mossadeq spurred a political crisis by seeking to undermine the position of the Shah in the domestic power structure. The US was initially reluctant to take sides, fearing that the alternative to Mossadeq could be a pro-Soviet radical regime in Tehran. But this changed after the domestic position of the Shah came under increasing nationalist attack. After briefly posing as a mediator, the US expressed decisive support for the monarchy. President Eisenhower turned down an appeal by Mossadeq for economic assistance to stave off imminent bankruptcy of the Iranian state. With his position gravely weakened by the economic crisis, Mossadeq was finally overthrown in a
pro-Shah coup in August 1953 to which the CIA provided considerable planning and financial assistance.12

Thus, before the 1970s the three major American interests in the Gulf had been clearly identified and pursued. Yet the Gulf remained somewhat peripheral to overall American strategic planning for the post-war era. The US was pre-occupied with the consolidation of its alliance in Europe. So far as the Cold War was concerned, the distinctive focus was on the Far East, where the US fought wars in Korea and Vietnam. There was no American moves to establish a major military presence in the Gulf. A very minor exception to this attitude was the decision to station a 3-ship (two destroyers and a Command ship) flotilla, called Command Middle East Force, off Bahrain in 1949. The significance of the move, however, was primarily symbolic, to show the US flag in this far-away region. The relatively low priority attached to the Gulf was also reflected in the US military aid policy. Even Iran, the centre of American Cold War concerns in the Gulf, was frustrated in its efforts to obtain American military aid at levels the Shah thought appropriate given his country's proximity to the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of the Azerbaijan crisis, the US delayed action on requests by the Shah for an urgent loan of some $40-50 million; only a scaled down amount was subsequently approved. Similarly, Iran was placed in a lower category (Title 3 Status) when the US enacted the Mutual Defence Assistance Program in 1949 to govern its military aid priority.13 The Shah felt dissatisfied with what he received as reward for his membership in CENTO and his conclusion of a bilateral security pact with the US (after refusing a Soviet offer to sign a "non-agression" pact). As he then wrote, "... although we are deeply grateful for what we have
received, I must in candour point out that it fully meets neither our own needs nor those of the Free World in this vital sector".\textsuperscript{14}

A major factor in the US disinclination to take a more active interest in the Gulf was its recognition of and regard for Britain's historic role as the Gulf's "policeman".\textsuperscript{15} The US considered the Gulf and the Middle East to be within the British sphere of influence and valued the latter's network of treaties with the various tribal sheikhs and rulers and its elaborate regional military presence. Despite occasional differences over issues such as oil concessions, the US turned to London for advice whenever it considered a major strategic move in the Gulf region. It fully supported the British decision to retain its presence in the Gulf after the Second World War and India's independence.\textsuperscript{16} Even in the aftermath of the Suez fiasco in 1956, Washington encouraged British intervention in Kuwait to deter a feared Iraqi attack against the newly independent sheikhdom in 1961.\textsuperscript{17} In fact, British expertise in dealing with sources of intra-regional instability came to be more valued as policy-makers in Washington, especially the Kennedy administration, came to accept that communist expansion into the Third World would more likely be carried through subversion rather than direct military attack. The American view was clearly articulated by Defence Secretary Robert McNamara in 1965:

\textit{We are in Europe, we are not in Aden, the Persian Gulf, or the Far East. If Britain quits, the United States for political reasons cannot take her place. Britain's contribution to Western defence is far greater in these places than it could ever be in Europe alone.}\textsuperscript{18}

It was therefore natural that the British decision to end its presence "east of Suez" by the early 1970s\textsuperscript{19} would force the US to
look for alternative ways to protect its interests in the region. But the significance of the British departure was magnified immensely due to a number of major developments - related to oil, trade, finance and the Arab-Israeli conflict - which followed it in a rapid and overwhelming sequence. It was these developments which brought the Gulf decisively into the centre-stage of American foreign policy in the post-Vietnam era.

1.2 Evolution of US Interests and Objectives Since the British Withdrawal

In the decades after the Second World War, imported oil had become a critical factor in the economic security and well-being of the Western nations. In 1950, oil accounted for about 30 per cent of the combined energy needs of North America, OECD Europe and Japan; by 1973 the figure was about 53 per cent.20 By 1979, 45 per cent of America's, 55 per cent of EEC's and 70 per cent of Japan's energy consumption was in oil.21 As a result, the world in general and the industrial nations in particular, experienced considerable increases in oil consumption. Between 1950 and 1973, oil consumption in the non-communist nations increased at an average annual rate of 7.1 per cent; the consumption level in 1973 was 35 million barrels per day (mbd.) higher than that in 1950. Most of this increase occurred in the OECD bloc, with Western Europe accounting for about 35 per cent, and the north American sector (US and Canada) about one-third.22

The growing oil consumption in the Western countries meant increasing reliance on imports as their domestic oil production lagged far behind the rate of increase in consumption. Countries previously self-sufficient rapidly became importers. In 1950, the United States
was the world's largest producer of petroleum and virtually self-sufficient in meeting domestic requirements. In 1960, it was importing about 16 per cent of its needs. By the time of the first "energy crisis" in 1973, US import dependence had reached 35 per cent; at the time of the second crisis in 1978-1979 it had become 46 per cent. Western Europe and Japan were importing 88 per cent and 100 per cent of their oil requirements respectively by 1979.

With the rise in their consumption levels and import dependence, the developed as well as developing nations of the world increasingly turned their attention to the Persian Gulf region. This region contained the only major "swing" producers which could meet the existing and anticipated rises in the global demand for petroleum. In 1982, for example, the eight Gulf states held about 55 per cent of the world's total proven crude reserves (see Table 1.1). The Gulf had also become the world's largest oil producing region. In 1950, the Gulf states produced only about 17 per cent of the total world crude output; in 1975 they were accounting for about 35 per cent of the same (Table 1.2). Much of this output was available for export since the Gulf producers, with low levels of industrialization and small populations, consumed very little of their own output. Thus, by the end of the 1970s, the Gulf region had become the supplier of about two-thirds of the total worldwide import requirements.

The Western industrial nations were among those who most heavily depended on Persian Gulf oil. In 1980 Western Europe and Japan obtained 57 per cent and 69 per cent of their total crude oil and refined products imports from the Gulf respectively. While the US obtained "only" 27 per cent, few American economists or policy-makers were under the illusion that any damage caused to the European
### TABLE 1.1

**ESTIMATED PERSIAN GULF CRUDE OIL AND NATURAL GAS PROVED RESERVES,**

*December 31, 1982*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Crude Oil (billion barrels)</th>
<th>Natural Gas (trillion cubic feet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait(^1)</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia(^1)</td>
<td>165.3</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total - Persian Gulf</td>
<td>367.5</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Total</td>
<td>670.2</td>
<td>3,034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Include one-half of the Partitioned Zone (formerly called Neutral Zone).

### Table 1.2

**Percentage of World Crude Oil Production by Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>63.38</td>
<td>54.56</td>
<td>37.24</td>
<td>24.86</td>
<td>19.83</td>
<td>18.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>13.22</td>
<td>16.94</td>
<td>16.47</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>13.24</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>16.87</td>
<td>20.30</td>
<td>22.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>9.37</td>
<td>10.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia, Middle East</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>19.34</td>
<td>28.17</td>
<td>34.23</td>
<td>43.02</td>
<td>42.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>8.36</td>
<td>10.01</td>
<td>8.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Zone</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>12.78</td>
<td>14.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia-New Zealand</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total World Production</strong></td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Authority:** United States Department of Energy.

and Japanese economies due to a disruption in the flow of oil would not severely affect basic American economic and strategic interests. Politically, oil shortages could cause severe strains in the Western alliance system; given their greater dependency, Western Europe and Japan would be inclined to pursue unilateral measures to achieve energy security. This pattern became all too evident after the 1973-1974 oil crisis, the leading examples being the refusal of almost all European allies to allow overflight rights to US aircraft carrying equipment and supplies to Israel during the October War, Europe's separate position on the question of Palestinian rights, and attempts by European nations, especially France, to seek "special relationships" with some OPEC nations. Secondly, the economies of the OECD nations being closely interdependent, collapse of any segment could not but be seriously damaging to the rest. Thirdly, oil shortages of major proportions would exert an upward pressure on prices in the world market, the effects of which could not be confined outside the American economy. In fact, several studies estimated that a major drop in oil supplies would have serious consequences for the US economy. In 1978, the Congressional Budget Office calculated that a one year cutback on oil imports of 3 million barrels per day would lead to a US GNP reduction by 2.8 per cent, assuming that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve had been kept at 500 million barrels. If the import loss was 4 mbd. for one year, with a Strategic Petroleum Reserve of 250 million barrels, the US GNP would drop 9.8 per cent and the unemployment rate would rise by 3.2 per cent above the rate forecast for 1982.

During the 1970s, the Western nations became painfully aware of the vulnerability of their access to oil, especially the vital portion
which came from the Persian Gulf region. The question of access involves three closely-interlinked aspects: continuity of supply, sufficiency of supply, and affordability. In other words, access to oil must be "continued access ... at reasonable prices and in sufficient quantities".\textsuperscript{32} (emphasis added) For the Western nations, trends negatively affecting all three conditions appeared during the 1970s. The decade opened with the governments of the producer nations - their bargaining power considerably enhanced through OPEC - demanding higher prices for their resource, greater overall control over production and pricing, and larger shares in the revenues generated from export. Iran was the leader of negotiations which achieved a substantial breakthrough for the producers with respect to many of these demands. The Tehran agreement of February 1971, along with similar concessions already gained by Libya, marked the beginning of a rapid end to the dominant role heretofore played by Western multinationals in the world oil market.\textsuperscript{33}

On the heels of this trend came the second one, which, spearheaded by another Gulf state, Saudi Arabia, saw the progressive emergence of oil as a political weapon for the Arab cause against Israel. The first successful deployment of this weapon by a group of Arab producers, led by Saudi Arabia protesting American support for Israel during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, impressed upon the West that, henceforth, issues bearing upon continuity and sufficiency in the supply of Persian Gulf oil would be subject to their stand on Palestinian rights.\textsuperscript{34} The embargo - which involved a decision by the participants to cease all exports to the US and the Netherlands accompanied by a 5 to 10 per cent cut in their oil production - had grave economic consequences for the consuming nations in general and
the US in particular. Through a series of actions related largely, though not exclusively, to the embargo, the producer states raised oil prices from about $3 per barrel in September 1973 to over $11 per barrel by January 1974. For the US, the embargo caused a reduction of some 2.7 million barrels a day in imports by January 1974, reducing the total petroleum supply 14 per cent below the anticipated consumption level. A Brookings Institution study later estimated that this, combined with the price increases, led to a US GNP loss of about 2.5 per cent in 1973-74, or equivalent to $30 billion at prevalent prices. Indeed, as the Brookings study concluded: "No event of the period following the Second World War ha[d] so sharp and pervasive an impact on the world economy as the series of shocks to the oil market that followed closely on the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war on 6 October 1973".35

A more subtle peacetime use of the "oil weapon" also became evident during the 1970s. It consisted of deliberate production cutbacks, often justified in the name of "conservation", and an expressed unwillingness to raise production levels to ease a tight supply situation unless Arab demands on Palestine were met. Kuwait became a leading practitioner of cutbacks for the sake of conservation, while the Saudis linked their willingness to produce at "any level that is feasibly possible" to the achievement of an acceptable solution to the Palestinian question.36

Apart from embargoes, the oil flow could also be halted by regional instability, invasion, inter-state warfare, and terrorist action. Given the Persian Gulf's history of conflict over ethnic, tribal, and dynastic divisions and territorial disputes, disruption of production and export caused by instability and warfare loomed as a
more likely mode of loss of access than embargoes. Concern was also expressed at the possibility of disruption of the oil tanker traffic at the narrow "chokepoint" of the Strait of Hormuz through which much of the Gulf oil exports would have to pass.\textsuperscript{37} Events during the 1979-80 period substantially added to such concerns. The Iranian revolution confirmed the threat of disruptions caused by domestic instability, while the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led many Western analysts to believe that a subsequent invasion of the oil fields could be imminent. Still later, the Iran-Iraq war demonstrated how interstate conflicts could undermine production and exports as a result of damages caused to oil wells, export terminals and tankers.

Apart from its importance in relation to the consumer nations' access to petroleum, the Persian Gulf region's role in global politics and American foreign policy concerns came to acquire important commercial and financial dimensions. Traditionally, the major American economic activity in the region had been that of the oil multinationals, whose combined capital investments in the Gulf were estimated to be some $3.5 billion in 1974. The replacement value of US company investments in the Gulf oil industry was estimated at some $50 billion in 1972, and annual incomes from these investments was equal to half the US balance-of-payment deficit at that time.\textsuperscript{38} While these stakes were already of immense significance to the US economy, substantial additional opportunities followed the dramatic rise in the oil revenues of the Persian Gulf states as a result of the price increases in the 1970s.

The oil revenues of the six Gulf members of the OPEC - Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Abu Dhabi/UAE and Qatar - rose from under $7 billion in 1971 to more than $72 billion in 1974 and $185 billion
in 1980. The oil wealth boosted domestic consumer spending and led to ambitious socio-economic programs by the oil-rich governments whose countries had remained quite backward and deficient in infrastructure. The combined import bills of the Gulf states plus the two Yemens rose from $8.7 billion in 1973 to $13.5 billion in 1974 (inclusive of arms imports), making the region the "fastest growing market for [US] goods and services in the world". In 1973, the State Department told Congress that the Gulf

... is an area which will provide almost unlimited opportunities for the sale of every kind of U.S. good and service. It is an area which is ideally complementary to the high technology and management services that the United States can provide".

US exports to the Gulf rose from $1.2 billion in 1972 to $3.4 billion in 1974. In 1981, the value of US exports totalled about $11 billion despite the loss of the Iranian market. In 1982 three Gulf states – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE – together constituted the fifth largest export market for the US after Canada, Japan, UK and Mexico. Saudi Arabia alone became America's sixth largest trading partner, surpassing France, Italy and the Netherlands. The US was Saudi Arabia's largest supplier, supplying about one-fifth of total Saudi imports.

The extensive economic involvement provided employment for hundreds of thousands of Americans (including jobs created at home) and the development schemes spurred by the new oil wealth in the region benefitted scores of American businessmen of all persuasions. As the State Department testified in 1975, "... on any given day, hundreds of American businessmen are in the Gulf states actively exploring the possibilities". Facilitating their deals became "one of the primary tasks" of the US embassies, while the State Department was
"on a daily basis ... directly involved in advising and assisting U.S.
businessmen interested in the area".\textsuperscript{45} In November 1978, the Saudi
finance minister revealed that his government had licensed 173
American companies to work in the Kingdom; and that American companies
had won contracts worth $23 billion over the past 4 years alone.\textsuperscript{46}

Finance became another basis for the new American focus on the
Persian Gulf region. With nascent economies and small populations,
the Gulf states were unable to spend a substantial portion of their
oil revenues. Much of this surplus was recycled to the West,
especially to the United States. The official foreign assets of the
Gulf states were estimated by the American government to be over $140
billion in 1980.\textsuperscript{47} Exactly how much of this had found its way to the
US could not be definitely known; the US Treasury Department figures
for the portfolio investment by the Gulf states, which put it at some
$35 billion by 1977, have been contested by critics who found that
such figures did not include funds placed through third parties or
deposits at foreign branches of US banks. In a 1978 report, the
American Jewish Committee claimed that three Gulf states, Saudi
Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE, held about $55 billion in investments
in the US and the foreign branches of American banks.\textsuperscript{48}

These investments were viewed to be a double-edged instrument.
On the one hand, they offered substantial benefits to the US economy.
By augmenting capital availability in the US money market, the
petrodollar inflow reduced the need for government borrowing from the
private sector and kept interest rates lower. This in turn helped to
boost overall economic activity. By investing in the US, the Gulf
states also helped to keep the US dollar stronger against other major
currencies.\textsuperscript{49} On the other hand huge petrodollar holdings were viewed
as a threat - giving the Gulf states some sort of a "money weapon" with which they could manipulate the international financial system and engage in speculative acquisitions in the US.\(^{50}\) As a 1978 CIA report on "Saudi Arabian Foreign Investment" stated: "Temporary dislocation of international financial markets would ensue if the Saudi Arabian government ever chose to use its accumulated wealth as a political weapon".\(^{51}\) American Jewish groups also charged that petrodollar investments gave the Arab countries undue influence over US foreign policy-making. While such charges were dismissed by US officials,\(^ {52}\) the financial power of the Gulf states, especially that of Saudi Arabia, was nonetheless viewed by the US government as a new factor in global politics, and its safe management became a key aspect of the US policy toward the Gulf. From 1974, American officials began speaking of a new regional policy objective: "to assist and encourage the countries of the region to recycle their surplus revenues into the world economy in an orderly and undistruptive manner".\(^ {53}\)

Events since the British withdrawal also affected the politico-strategic elements of the US interest in the Persian Gulf. These elements, while possessing an importance of their own, became more central to US regional concerns given their bearing on the flow of oil. The problem of preserving the conservative status quo in the region was enlarged after the British withdrawal led to the independence of a number of ministates - Qatar, Bahrain and the sheikhdoms that made up the United Arab Emirates. As independent entities, their survival was held in considerable doubt. It was feared that the British withdrawal would unleash the heretofore "frozen" sources of regional instability - tribal, ethnic and dynastic conflicts and inter-state territorial disputes - with the resultant
pressures overwhelming these small and weak states.\textsuperscript{54} American interest in ensuring their survival had become stronger as a result of a number of perceptions; apart from being some of the largest oil producers, they shared American concern for growing Soviet influence and Soviet-sponsored radicalism in the region. Their policies with respect to the flow of oil were also seen as more moderate than the revolutionary regimes. The conservative Arab states were more inclined to use a "carrot approach" - "more favourable consideration in oil supply in return for greater political support for the Palestinian cause" - rather than the 'stick' approach - i.e. embargoes etc. - advocated by radical states.\textsuperscript{55} Moreover, the US was concerned that regimes succeeding a monarchy through coups or revolutions might prove to be either neutral with a bias against the West or openly pro-Soviet. In the Gulf, the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq had earlier confirmed this trend; the revolution in Iran at the end of the 1970s became a far more decisive proof.

The other traditional politico-strategic interest - containment of Soviet influence in the region - was reinforced in the wake of the first entry of the Soviet navy into Indian Ocean waters in March 1968. Occurring only two months after Harold Wilson's announcement of the British withdrawal, the Soviet move sparked off widespread alarm in the West, with fears running high that Pax Sovietica might replace Pax Britannica in the waters of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. In April 1968, Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East Lucius Battle informed the House of Representative's Foreign Affairs Committee of his conviction that "the temptation on the part of the Soviets to fill a vacuum or at least manoeuvre in troubled waters is very great".\textsuperscript{56} The Commander of the US Strike Command told the same
committee later that the Soviet action reflected "an age-old strategy, not new but increasing in intensity and activity, of penetration of the Middle East ... particularly the oil rich areas of the Persian Gulf". This perception became more entrenched as the Soviets began seeking footholds in Iraq, Somalia (later Ethiopia) and South Yemen. In the latter part of the 1970s, as the Soviets became involved in a series of interventions in Africa and the Middle East, there was the talk in the US of a Soviet "geopolitical offensive" with the Gulf region supposedly a prime target. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of the decade was seen as the climax in this sequence, prompting the formulation of the third Presidential doctrine (the previous two being the Truman and Eisenhower doctrines) expressing American concern for Soviet influence and activities in the Middle East, and the first specifically addressed to the Persian Gulf.

For the US, another major development during the 1970s was the emergence of a third major politico-strategic interest based upon a perceived linkage between Gulf security, Western access to oil and a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Previously, the Gulf had been accorded a somewhat secondary place in the American perception of the Arab-Israeli equation. This in itself was a reflection of the relative strategic importance of the Gulf in terms of the military and economic capacity of the regional states. The most powerful Gulf state, Iran, was not Arab and its rivalry with Iraq, the next powerful state, considerably reduced the latter's capacity to devote attention and resources to the Arab-Israeli sector. Saudi military strength was hardly significant, while the smaller Persian Gulf states were still controlled by the British. Moreover, the economic capability of the Gulf states was as yet insubstantial.
Three developments, occurring simultaneously and closely linked to each other, brought about a change in this situation. The first was the advent of petrodollars following the oil price hikes. The major oil producing countries of the Arabian Peninsula, State Department official Joseph Sisco recognized in 1975, "have become the principal financial support for the Arab states more directly involved in the Middle East conflict ... their views [on the Arab-Israeli issue] are very important, and they are regularly consulted by the Arab parties to the [peace] negotiations as well as by the Palestinians".\textsuperscript{58} This meant that if the US was to secure a settlement ensuring Israel's right to exist, which is a significant US interest in the region in its own right,\textsuperscript{59} then it must seek the cooperation of this relatively moderate segment of the Arab hierarchy. The second factor was the realization that the continued stability of the Gulf, upon which the Western access to oil depended, was not "immune to the virus of the Arab-Israeli conflict".\textsuperscript{60} It was feared that a future Arab-Israeli war could involve the conservative Gulf states directly, and that in peacetime, the continuing stalemate over Palestinian autonomy had become the major source of indigenous radicalism and Soviet influence in the region.\textsuperscript{61} The third and the most important factor was the success of the oil weapon. Until the 1973-74 embargo, the oil weapon had been dismissed in US circles on the assumption that the Arabs could not "drink" their oil and that the various political divisions within the Arab bloc would prevent any successful employment of the oil weapon. The success of the embargo demonstrated the opposite economic and political conditions. The Saudi leadership of the embargo, despite King Faisal's previous assurances ruling out such options, was indicative of the new Arab solidarity. Besides, by
1973 unlike the past decade, the Gulf states had acquired the necessary economic capacity to withstand a halt to their oil exports for a relatively long period of time. Thus the oil weapon could no longer be lightly taken.\textsuperscript{62}

The connection between Persian Gulf security and a mutually acceptable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict came to be recognized in most major American policy statements concerning the region, despite Henry Kissinger's initial efforts to conduct Middle East peace negotiations "independent of any oil pressures".\textsuperscript{63} A solution to the Arab-Israeli problem, Kissinger himself acknowledged in 1975, was in "the fundamental national interest of the United States" not only "because of our historical and moral commitment to the survival and well-being of Israel", but also "because of our important interests in the Arab World - an area of more than 150 million people sitting astride the world's largest oil reserves", and "because continuing instability [in the Arab-Israeli zone] risks a new international crisis over oil ..."\textsuperscript{64} Later, both the Carter and Reagan administrations made broadly similar declarations. The Carter administration stated that its Camp David peace initiative was "intimately tied in with the Persian Gulf stability" and "with energy supplies for our country".\textsuperscript{65} The Reagan administration under Secretary of State Haig's stewardship made an initial effort to deemphasize the Arab-Israeli conflict in relation to the Soviet threat in an abortive quest for a "strategic consensus", but finally accepted that: "The pursuit of our interests in the Gulf requires a policy which ... purposefully seeks both peace in the Middle East and security in the Gulf".\textsuperscript{66}
To sum up, as a result of the developments relating to oil, trade, finance, fear of Soviet-inspired or locally-generated instability and the extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Persian Gulf region came to be recognized as an area of major importance to the United States in political, economic and strategic terms. In 1972, Joseph Sisco, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, had noted the "spectacular ... transition of the gulf from ... a position of international significance primarily as part of the British 'lifeline' to India to a position of significant strategic and economic importance to many industrial countries". Eight years later, Sisco's successor under the Carter administration, Harold Saunders, described US interests in the Gulf as "longstanding, major and interrelated", which in the decade since the British withdrawal had "changed little in nature but have grown in importance". He listed the factors affecting US interests in the Gulf as follows:

The area's strategic location and its significance to maintaining a global strategic balance;

The significance we place on the sovereignty and independence of these countries as part of a more stable world;

The world's vital need for the region's oil; and

The importance of these states in international finance and development and as markets for our goods and technology.

American interests and policy objectives in the Gulf, which flowed from these factors, were reiterated by Defence Secretary Harold Brown in 1980:

To insure access to adequate oil supplies;

To resist Soviet expansion;

To promote stability in the region; and

To advance the Middle East peace process, while insuring - and indeed, in order to help insure - the continued security of the State of Israel."
The increased importance of the Gulf meant greater care and seriousness in devising policy options to advance Western interests. The American approach following the British withdrawal evolved in two distinct stages. The immediate phase, lasting until 1979, was to promote local states, especially Iran, as the guardian of Gulf security and protector of Western interests in the region. This policy was consistent with the Nixon Doctrine, but was endorsed and pursued by the Ford and Carter administrations until the downfall of the Shah in early 1979. In the wake of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US switched to a policy of greater reliance on its own power and influence centering around an elaborate and long-term build-up for the projection of military power into the region. This instrument is the Rapid Deployment Force.

1.3 Evolution of US Policy and Strategy in the 1970s

In the 1970s, the US policy toward the Persian Gulf region centred around its efforts to promote Iran as the prime regional actor defending security and Western interests in the area. This policy owed its origins to several factors, the most important of them being the shape of America's global strategic posture in the wake of the Vietnam war. The war prevented Washington from giving any serious consideration to the idea of replacing the British with American forces. As Henry Kissinger later wrote, the Congress and the public "would have tolerated no such commitment". Moreover, no additional forces were available for assignment to the Gulf region in the midst of continuing operations in Southeast Asia. Instead, the Nixon administration sought to respond to the British withdrawal within the framework of its new geopolitical doctrine. The Nixon Doctrine incorporated the following principles:
The United States will keep all its treaty commitments.

We shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us, or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security and the security of the region as a whole.

In cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.71

Although the original inspiration of the Nixon Doctrine had nothing to do with security issues in the Gulf, it was soon evident that this region would become the first, and as it turned out, the most serious test of America's new geopolitical mood. For the Gulf was not only the place where the US needed to come up with a new security posture, it also met the quintessential requirement for operationalizing the Doctrine: the willingness and ability of a local state to assume the responsibility for regional security on the West's behalf. That state was Iran.

The Shah's desire to play the role of a regional leader was not new, but had previously been viewed with scepticism by the US. His domestic power base had been considered too shaky to permit such a role. Indeed, the Kennedy administration thought, and was believed to have told the Shah, that he should devote his attention to his internal political problems rather than to foreign and military affairs.72 By the end of the 1970s, however, the Shah seemed to have overcome most of his domestic limitations, largely as a result of the socio-economic reform program he proudly termed the "White Revolution".73 In addition, his "detente" with the USSR permitted him to devote more attention and resources to the Gulf region.74 Thus the Shah set out to impress upon his American friends his intentions and
ability to become a regional security manager. Advising the US to "physically keep out" of the Gulf (although not from the Indian Ocean, since that was "quite another matter"), he at the same time claimed that Iran could provide the Gulf states "as much protection as the British forces in the area today". To enhance Iran's ability to do so, he planned to build a "balanced and significant defence force of her own", with the "moral support, assistance, of our friends, the greatest of them being the US".

The US was more than willing to comply with this desire. Apart from their Vietnam predicament, American policy-makers cited several other reasons for endorsing the Shah's regional ambitions. Joseph Sisco agreed that Iran had "both the will and the capability" to play a "major role in providing for stability in the gulf and the continued flow of oil to consumer countries". He also recognized Iran's preparedness to "offer assistance to the smaller gulf states should they wish it". Henry Kissinger later stressed that Iran's desired role was not only consistent with US strategic objectives, it was also "achievable without any American resources, since the Shah was willing to pay for the [American] equipment out of his oil revenues". The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence, James H. Noyes, later wrote that Iran's role was preferrable since a direct American role "would have become an acutely divisive force in the Arab world", and conflicted with "Saudi Arabia's and Iran's growing sense of national stature".

After reviewing these various considerations and options, the Nixon administration reached the following decision: firstly, that the US would not replace the British; secondly, that a symbolic American military presence in the form of the US Command Middle East
Force (COMIDEASTFOR) would be retained; and thirdly, that the governing framework of US policy in the Gulf would be to encourage and assist Iran and Saudi Arabia to take up the primary responsibility for regional security. American policy-makers left no doubt as to which state in this "twin-pillar" system was to play the predominant role. It was "Iran in particular", stressed Sisco, that the US expected to be "in the forefront" of Persian Gulf security management.

The Shah continued to dominate the US strategic framework for the region until the revolution toppled his regime. While he ruled, American policy-makers were generally appreciative of his regional security posture, and the policy of reliance on him was considered to be a major American foreign policy success in the post-Vietnam era. The Shah was seen by US policy-makers to be domestically strong and his foreign policy was deemed to be both responsible and fully compatible with US interests in the region. His quest for military power was viewed to be worthy of American support. Even the Carter administration, despite professing a restrictive policy on weapon sales, "wished to be quite generous" with the Shah on the issue of Iranian military purchase requests. Yet in the wake of the Shah's sudden downfall, much of the prevailing assessment of the US policy changed. The backing of Iran under the Nixon Doctrine framework was widely criticised for being short-sighted and based upon dangerously misconceived assumptions regarding the Shah's domestic and regional position.

But it would be a mistake to view the disillusionment with the US policy toward the Gulf within the Nixon Doctrine framework as entirely a byproduct of the Iranian revolution. To be sure, the revolution added much sharpness to the disenchantment as a result of the domestic
controversy over "who lost Iran?", in which one group blamed the Nixon-Kissinger policy while another held the Carter administration's human rights policy and its failure to back the Shah responsible for the US debacle in Iran. But the limitations of the "twin-pillar" policy had become quite recognizable even when the Shah was firmly saddled as Iran's undisputed leader and the Gulf's powerful "policeman". This can be ascertained from an analysis of the three principal issues on which its credibility rested: access to oil, maintenance of a pro-Western cooperative security order in the region, and the role of US arms transfers in its overall strategic framework.

a. Oil: As regards oil, it has been already noted that being the "pillars" of US policy did not prevent Saudi Arabia and Iran from imposing their political and economic conditions on the Western access to oil. While Saudi Arabia was regarded as a "moderate" on prices, it was the driving force behind the political restrictions on the flow of oil. The Shah received praise for having refuelled American "fleets without question" and having "never used his control of oil to bring political pressure" - including his refusal to join "any oil embargo against the West or Israel". But his leading role in OPEC negotiations resulting in steep price hikes earned him the title of "hawk" and inflamed passions in official Washington circles. The Shah followed up his victory at Tehran negotiations by nationalising Iran's oil industry in 1973. The US saw this as a bad precedent for its interests elsewhere in the region. Despite his refusal to join the 1973-1974 Arab oil embargo, he encouraged the accompanying increase in oil prices, justifying his action on the ground that the international oil companies had for long "defrauded" the producing nations "of their just economic benefits". Yet the US, predictably, could accept none
of these arguments and resentment against the Shah became quite serious. Critics of US arms sales to Iran scored a major point by arguing that the American generosity in giving Iran freedom to buy any weapon it liked had not been reciprocated by the Shah in the form of moderation on oil prices. Unless such moderation was forthcoming, "high" officials of the Ford administration were reported to have pressed the Secretary of State, the United States should reconsider its massive arms sales program to Iran.

While the US sought to dissuade Iran from its hawkish stand on oil prices through diplomatic pressures and discrete hints of an arms cut off, dealing with Saudi Arabia and its "oil weapon" was far more problematic. Here the frustrated American policy-makers hinted at a more drastic step if embargoes were pushed too far. Henry Kissinger, then the Secretary of State, made it known that military action would be a possibility if there was "some actual strangulation of the industrialised world" as a result. His views were "fully endorsed" by President Ford, while Defence Secretary James Schlesinger improved upon it by contending that it was "indeed feasible to conduct military operations" against Persian Gulf producers. There was, of course, some attempt by the administration to reassure the nervous oil producers who were told that military action would be a very last option against the most extreme provocations. "Strangulation is the key word", said President Ford, while adding that force would not be used "to bring a price change". In addition, the producer nations could derive some comfort by realizing the constraints on the feasibility of an American seizure of their oil fields. Although some civilian analysts, among them Robert Tucker and Miles Ignatius (pseudonym for a "Washington-based professor"), agreed with
Schlesinger, an authoritative study by the Congressional Research Service, entitled *Oil Fields as Military Objectives: A Feasibility Study*, disagreed. It expressed doubts whether American intervention forces could seize the oilfields (Saudi oilfields were selected as a case study) intact, repair damaged installations rapidly, operate them without the help of the owners and finally ship the petroleum to the consumer nations. Its conclusion:

In short, success would largely depend on two prerequisites:
- slight damage to key installations
- Soviet abstinence from armed intervention.
Since neither essential could be assured, military operations to rescue the United States (much less its key allies) from an air-tight OPEC embargo would combine high costs with high risks wherever we focused our efforts. This country would so deplete its strategic reserves that little would be left for contingencies elsewhere. Prospects would be poor, with plights of far-reaching political, economic, social, psychological, and perhaps military consequence the penalty for failure.92

Yet neither this nor the official reassurances could remove the anxiety of the oil-producing states who took the threat quite seriously. The "oil-grab scenario" entered the lexicon of US Persian Gulf policy permanently. With it, the limitations of the "twin-pillar" approach in ensuring continued access to Persian Gulf oil became quite evident. It is not rash to assume that some of the ground work for the shift in US policy toward an alternative posture - a direct intervention capability whose ultimate shape was the Rapid Deployment Force - was laid as a result of internal Pentagon planning to meet the eventuality of an "oil-grab".

b. Regional security: The Shah's performance on the regional security front, unlike that with respect to oil prices, received praise in US government circles. As Henry Kissinger remarked in May
1976: "We are impressed ... by Iran's initiatives to expand ties of friendship and cooperation with her neighbors. Iran plays a key role in regional stability and has acted with statesmanship". Some of the Shah's diplomatic breakthroughs were cited as making him worthy of such praise. Among them were the Shah's abandonment of Iran's long-standing claim on Bahrain and reservations on the formation of the United Arab Emirates - a federation of the tiny Persian Gulf sheikhdoms which was essential to their continued existence as independent entities. In addition, Iran's success in negotiating a number of agreements with his Gulf Arab neighbours demarcating their continental shelf boundaries was praised as "concrete evidence of its desire for cooperation". Pursuing a formula of "domination through seduction", the Shah launched a substantial campaign - focused on high level diplomacy, trade, cultural exchange and economic cooperation - to improve relations with his fellow monarchs in the region. Besides, he also obtained a major breakthrough in reducing tensions with Iran's traditional and most formidable local rival: Iraq. In an unexpected development, the Shah and Iraq, through Algerian mediation, reached an accord in March 1975 which settled their bitter historical dispute over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway - the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers forming the Iraqi-Iranian border. At the Algiers meeting, Iraq agreed to the Iranian demand for demarcating the boundary along the median line and in return received an Iranian pledge to end its support to the Kurdish insurgents demanding autonomy from the Iraqi state. The compromise was beneficial to both sides. The Shah won for his country a major nationalist demand, and the overall reduction in tensions in the north-western frontier helped him to devote greater attention elsewhere in the region. Iraq, on the
other hand, benefitted from the weakening of a very serious threat to its integrity, which had also prevented the full exploitation of oil reserves in the insurgent areas.97

The Shah's regional role also involved his support for the status quo throughout the region against the forces of indigenous "radicalism" and external "subversion". The most notable example was Iran's military intervention in Oman to support Sultan Qabus against the Soviet and Chinese-backed Dhofar rebellion. Between 1972 and 1977, Iranian counter-insurgency troops, their number varying between 300 to 3000, backed by Iranian artillery, helicopters, strike and reconnaissance aircraft, were involved in extensive anti-insurgent operations.98 The Dhofar campaign gave the untested Iranian military valuable field practice and the Shah a special matter for pride in his role as "regional policeman". To its east, Iran provided logistics and (possibly troop) support to the Pakistani government against the Baluchi insurgents;99 while Iranian aid was offered to Afghanistan to lessen its dependence on Moscow and secure the abandonment of its efforts to carve out a separate "Pushtunistan" involving parts of Pakistani territory. Outside his immediate geostrategic environs, the Shah's vision extended to Africa, where he campaigned for Western support for Somalia (while himself providing some aid) against its Soviet and Cuban backed rival, Ethiopia.

But the Shah's enhanced regional activism was marked by major limitations and failures. In the Persian Gulf region in particular, the Shah failed to inspire the confidence of the Arab states whose security he was seeking to enhance. The Iran-Arab divide was based upon ancient and deep-rooted ethnic, cultural, national and sectarian factors; but matters were not helped by the Shah's occasional heavy
handedness. His seizure of three Persian Gulf islets, Abu Musa and two Tunbs, from the Sheikdoms of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaima, respectively, was bitterly protested by the Gulf Arabs including Saudi Arabia. The Gulf States and Saudi Arabia in particular were profoundly suspicious of Iran's massive military build-up and resentful of the Shah's ties with Israel. Following a trip to the region in 1975, Senator Edward Kennedy reported a "recurrent speculation around the Gulf about the possibility of Iranian ambitions toward other oil-rich states, as its own oil reserves begin to dwindle", and a "keen awareness in neighboring Arab states of Iran's continuing role as Israel's principal source of oil". Saudi Arabia was also "unhappy" about Iranian military intervention on "Arab soil": Oman. Iran, in return, disliked "Saudi obscurantism and 'big brother' posture" toward the smaller Gulf states, which it saw as a threat to its own regional ambitions. Finally, Iran and Saudi Arabia differed often and strongly over the issue of oil prices which reflected their divergent domestic economic growth rate preferences and absorptive capabilities. But the net outcome was to reinforce the divisions in the "twin-pillar" system. Indeed, many US observers, such as Chairman Lee Hamilton of the House Near East Subcommittee, contended that "for several years to come, one of our prime challenges in the Persian Gulf will be to avoid any confrontation between our two close friends."

The "twin-pillar" concept was a clear misnomer because Saudi Arabia was neither willing nor able to act as a "pillar" of the US regional security policy in the sense that Iran did. Manpower shortages, its preoccupation with complex territorial disputes with the smaller Gulf states, and King Faisal's greater emphasis on domestic modernization limited Saudi ability to play an active role
outside its frontiers. But above all, the Saudis were hardly keen about acting under American and Iranian auspices. Against Iran, it was the concern to preserve the "Arabism of the Gulf", against the US it was the concern to preserve the "Arabism of the Middle East" threatened by an American-financed and -equipped Israel. The Kingdom's initial response to the British withdrawal was marked by a cautious, "wait-and-see" attitude. When the Shah was busy installing himself as the head of the new security regime in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, as The Economist observed, "seemed to retreat into itself". King Faisal's leadership of the 1973 oil embargo drove the Kingdom out of its self-imposed passivity, but when it finally turned toward some form of regional activism, it gave the impression of countering, rather than complementing, Iran's leadership. For example, one of the first hints of a new Saudi interest in Persian Gulf diplomacy, a visit by King Khalid to several Gulf capitals, came soon after the Shah had recalled his Gulf ambassadors to protest the proposed creation of an "Arabian Gulf News Agency". The accumulated suspicion of Iran harboured by the Saudi-led Gulf monarchies thwarted the former's efforts, strongly backed by the US, to form a regional collective security grouping of the conservative Gulf states. After the failure of his early overtures, the Shah backed off, settling for a decidedly unilateral posture.

c. US arms sales and regional military build-ups: The third major issue in US policy during the period under investigation involved its encouragement and support of largescale military build-ups in Iran and Saudi Arabia through massive arms sales. Emphasis on arms transfers was inherent in the Nixon Doctrine. As a Pentagon document pointed out in 1970: "The more rapidly [allied and friendly forces]
capabilities can be improved, the sooner it may be possible for the United States to reduce both the monetary and the manpower burden inherent in honoring international obligations".107

Reinforcing this objective was the value of arms transfers in redressing the huge balance-of-payment problems caused by the oil price hikes.108 US weapon sales to the Gulf were also helped by certain developments in the recipient states such as Iran's and Saudi Arabia's increased threat perceptions in the wake of the British withdrawal, the prestige value of armaments, and, in case of Iran, the assumed regional leadership role. The advent of the oil wealth ensured that financial constraints would no longer prevent the Gulf states from buying weapons of greater quality and magnitude, whatever the reason for the purchases.109

Iran, of course, was the regional state at once most committed to the goal of military modernization, and the largest buyer of American-made weapons. The Shah perceived Iran's military capability as central to its new regional security role. This, coupled with the newly acquired ability to pay, contributed to one of the largest and most extravagant military build-ups in peacetime history.

Between March 1970 and March 1977, for example, Iran's defence budget rose by 1100 per cent - from approximately $880 million to $9.4 billion.110 Defence expenditure as a share of GNP rose from 7.8 per cent in 1970 to 14.6 per cent in 1978, while the value of Iran's annual arms imports (in constant 1978 dollars) rose from $264 million in 1970 (9.6 per cent of total imports) to a peak of $2.6 billion in 1977 (17.7 per cent of total imports).111
The impact of such expenditure was reflected in the increasing size and quality of Iran's weapons inventory. Between 1971 and 1979, the size of Iran's armed forces grew from 181,000 to 415,000 personnel, with a similar increase in the number of main/medium battle tanks and combat aircraft. As for quality, in 1971 Iran's inventory included few advanced systems while by 1979 its existing or planned (ordered) inventory included such state-of-the-art systems as F-14 interceptors, Chieftain main battle tanks, F-16 fighter bombers (on order), E-3 airborne warning and control systems (on order) and Spruance-class destroyers. To facilitate Iranian power projection into the Gulf region, the Shah assembled the world's first operational hover-craft squadron (14 units) at the Kharg Island naval base and acquired a fleet of C-130 transport aircraft. Commenting on the extent of the Shah's military build-up, a US Senate Committee report in 1976 observed: "Upon delivery between now [July 1976] and 1981 of equipment ordered to date, Iran, on paper, can be regarded as a regional superpower".

The United States became Iran's largest and most dedicated arms supplier. During a visit to Tehran in 1972, Nixon and Kissinger offered the Shah almost unlimited access to the US conventional weapons inventory. Policy guidelines from the National Security Council transmitting the offer to US government agencies read: "decisions on the acquisition of military equipment should be left primarily to the Government of Iran". US Foreign Military Sales (FMS) agreements with Iran exceeded the $20 billion mark between 1971 and 1978. The Iranian market became a "bonanza" for American weapon manufacturers, with some, like the Grumman Corporation, being able to finance a portion of the development costs of their new weapon
systems from advances made by the Shah's government. At the time of the Shah's downfall, some $12 billion in US military sales was awaiting delivery to Iran over the next five years.\textsuperscript{116}

The military modernization of Saudi Arabia and the extent of US involvement in that process matched those in Iran in dollar value but there were major differences in the type of activity involved. While Iran already had a respectable military establishment which could introduce modern weapon systems more rapidly, the Saudis needed to build a basic infrastructure before going in for advanced systems and thus invested most of their military spending developing it. Accordingly, US military sales to Saudi Arabia, worth over $30 billion between 1971 and 1980, were focused mostly on construction and training. According to one estimate, American "defense-related" programs in the Kingdom were distributed thus: 60 per cent in construction, 20 per cent in training and 20 per cent in hardware.\textsuperscript{117} Much of the construction activity was managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers, which at the end of the 1970s held projects worth more than $20 billion.\textsuperscript{118}

Major Saudi military projects involving US supervision, training and equipment included: (1) Saudi Ordance Corps program - involving the creation of an integrated logistics system for the Saudi Ordance Corps, improvement of its maintenance facilities and construction of its support facility; (2) Saudi naval expansion program - a 10 year modernization program involving the addition of some 25 ships, construction of naval bases and provision of training and maintenance; (3) Royal Saudi Air Force Peace Hawk program - involving the acquisition of the F-5 fighter-bomber, provision of its personnel training and construction of the support infrastructure; (4) Royal
Saudi Air Force Peace Sun program - involving the acquisition of 62 F-15 fighter aircraft and the provision of their training and support infrastructure requirements; (5) HAWK air defence system - designed to protect major Saudi population centres, military cities and oilfields from air attacks; (6) Royal Saudi Army modernization program involving the conversion of two infantry brigades into mechanized formations and equipping them with M-60 tanks, Redeye missile systems, Dragon missile systems, Vulcan air defence artillery and TOW howitzers; and finally (7) National Guard modernization program - designed to organize and train four mechanized infantry battalions and two headquarters into a strike force and equip it with wheeled vehicles, armoured personnel carriers, 20-mm cannons, 81-mm mortars, 90-mm guns, Vulcan air defence artillery and TOW howitzers.¹¹⁹

The scale US arms flow to Saudi Arabia and Iran, coupled with smaller programs in Kuwait and Oman, became a major point of controversy influencing Congressional and public judgements on the merits of Nixon Doctrine as it applied to the Gulf. To begin with, the quantity and sophistication of the weapons sold were criticised for being greatly in excess of the absorptive capability of the recipient states. None of these states had the requisite manpower, industrial base and technical expertise to operate much of their inflowing weaponry without substantial help from the supplier state. In 1976-1977, for example, more than half of Iran's armed force was illiterate and the Iranian Air Force was about 7000 short of its technical personnel requirements.¹²⁰ The manpower problem was even more acute for Saudi Arabia whose native population was far smaller than Iran's. Not surprisingly therefore, a Congressional staff study report in 1977 argued that "The skilled manpower
deficiencies in all gulf [sic] countries and the smallness of the manpower base in some countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, could serve as grounds for severely limiting arms sales ...". In case of Iran, the mismatch between the Shah's military modernization goals and his country's absorptive capacity was succinctly brought out in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee study:

The government of Iran is attempting to create an extremely modern military establishment in a country that lacks the technical, educational and industrial base to provide the necessary trained personnel and management capabilities to operate such an establishment effectively. Iran also lacks experience in logistics and support operations and does not have the maintenance capabilities, the infrastructure (port facilities, roads, rail nets etc.), and the construction capacity to implement its new programs independent of outside support.122

The military modernization programs supported by US military sales in the Gulf were also criticized for their "potentially serious effect on the social, economic, and political structures of the states in the region". In the case of Iran, the traditional argument against military build-ups, the "guns versus butter" dilemma, was acutely reflected; despite the Shah's claim that Iran had ample resources to permit both. Under its Fifth Economic Development Plan, for example, Iran's total outlay on defence constituted 31.1 per cent of its total allocations, compared to only a 2.7 per cent higher allocation for economic development programs.124 Emphasis on the military sector was also causing a diversion of skilled manpower from other sectors of the economy, in which the total available expertise was in limited supply. Apart from the neglect caused to socio-economic development, higher defence spending was responsible for a very high inflation rate in the 1976-1977 period, and a sharp fall in Iran's capital surplus from $10.7 billion in 1974 to $4.5 billion in 1976. Iran reported a budget deficit of $2.4 billion in 1976.125
The domestic political impact of the Shah's military build-up was equally adverse, though less precisely measurable. A noted expert on Iranian affairs, Professor R.K. Ramazani, later contended that the Shah's emphasis on military capability was perceived by the Iranian people "as the means of enhancing the tools of political repression rather than improving the instrument of legitimate national defense". Since the military build-up was a most ostentatious component of the modernization process, it also fueled the resentment of the traditional sectors of the population. This, it should be noted, was, and continues to be, true not only in the case of Saudi Arabia but other conservative states as well. In addition, US support for Iran's military build-up through weapon sales reinforced the charges by the Iranian political opposition that the Shah was an American puppet who would sacrifice the "economic health, social welfare and cultural integrity of the nation" in order to "continue to rule within the framework of American strategic objectives". These accumulated grievances helped undermine the Shah's domestic legitimacy and, as many critics alleged, they were to be major factors in the revolt against the Shah in 1978-79.

The risks entailed in unrestricted arms sales to the Gulf were not confined to the recipient states only. One of the major fallouts of the US arms sales program was the increased American presence in the region, especially in Saudi Arabia and Iran. By 1977, defence-related personnel constituted about one-fifth of the more than 30,000 Americans living in Saudi Arabia. In Iran about one-third of the approximately 40,000 resident Americans were similarly associated. Such presence was widely seen as constituting a major source of resentment against the US within the local population. As the Senate
Foreign Relations Committee report prophetically warned: "anti-Americanism could become a serious problem in Iran, as it has elsewhere, if there were to be a change in government". ¹³⁰

The large American presence was also incompatible with the Nixon Doctrine itself, whose primary objective was to reduce US military presence abroad. Furthermore, it carried the risk of American involvement in a regional conflict, since the recipient states could not use much of their US-supplied weaponry without relying on the advice and expertise of American personnel. In the case of Iran, as a Brookings Institution study warned in 1978:

If Iran found its way into a conflict, the work done by U.S. personnel might be essential to the Iranian military effort. Denial of this support could mean disaster for Iran and certainly would strain U.S. relations. But allowing these personnel to support Iran could involve the United States even though its interests were better served by remaining on the sideline.¹³¹

In addition to these concerns, US arms sales to the Gulf were criticised on the following grounds:¹³²

- The US arms sales program for the Gulf region in general and Iran in particular was in "chaos" and "out of control" of the government agencies with responsibility for managing them. Nixon's 1972 decision on arms sales to Iran was not preceded by any systematic inter-agency consideration, but its net effect was to exempt future Iranian requests from the normal review process;
- Lack of effective oversight by US government agencies often led to corruption and bribery involving sales negotiated by private US weapon manufacturers. Senate investigations revealed that two top American defence suppliers, Northrop and Grumman, paid more than $2 million each in illegal commission to Iranian agents who
assisted the sales of the F-5 and F-14 aircraft respectively. Corruption charges also led to the fining and jailing of the chief of the Iranian Navy;

- The sales were not only in excess of the "legitimate" defence needs of Iran and Saudi Arabia, but such sales encouraged the Shah's heavyhanded treatment of other regional states and contributed to a regional arms race involving Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq;

- Sales to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait constituted a threat to Israeli security because of the possibility that these states, especially Saudi Arabia, could become belligerents in a future Arab-Israeli conflict; and because equipment transferred to these states could pass, either through deliberate transfer or through capture by Palestinian groups, to the "confrontation" states seeking the destruction of Israel;

- The growing cost of weapon purchases was a major cause for the Shah's demand for higher oil prices;

- The vast inflow of arms and advisers to the Gulf raised the possibility of "the diminution of US personnel skills in the US armed forces and a depletion of equipment in the US inventory"; and finally,

- Arms sales were being perceived by the Iranian people as symbolizing US endorsement of the Shah's domestic repression, which, according to the 1974-1975 report of Amnesty International involved "the highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts and a history of torture which is beyond belief". 
The cumulative impact of such controversy, coupled with disillusionment over the Shah's "hawkish" stand on oil prices and the failure of his regional security initiatives cast serious doubts on the merits of the Nixon Doctrine and its "one-pillar" approach to US strategic posture in the Gulf. Additionally, the growing importance of Persian Gulf oil in the world energy balance and the multiplying restrictions on access to it strengthened the view that something more than local surrogate control was needed. The Iranian revolution in 1978-79 leading to the exit of the Shah from the regional scene brought the dangers and inadequacies of the Nixon Doctrine into sharp light. It reinforced the case against strategic dependence on autocratic local regimes as a foreign policy option. Such a policy, critics argued, led to the erosion of the domestic legitimacy of the surrogate regime - whose perceived subservience to the outside patron insulted the nationalist feelings of his subjects - and bred popular antagonism against the external patron for identifying with the regime's oppression. The revolution also precipitated the second major oil crisis of the decade, leading to much greater anxieties about prices and future availability. Faced with such a situation, the US responded by moving toward a posture which it had consiously chosen to abandon a decade earlier.
NOTES


12. For details of the Anglo-Iranian oil crisis, see R.K. Ramazani, Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-1973 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975): Part Two; Benjamin Shwadran, The
Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers (New York: Praeger, 1955): Chapter V; Details of the CIA involvement are given by the leading participant in the operation, Kermit Roosevelt, Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979).


43. The International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade, 1983.


49. "Arabs are the Dollar's Best Friends, Like It or Not", Far Eastern Economic Review (May 25, 1979): 54-60.


51. ibid., p.349.

52. ibid., pp.3,10,200-201.


56. Middle East Record 4(1968): 73.


59. For a good discussion of the sources of American interest and involvement in Israel, see Bernard Reich, "United States Interests in the Middle East", in Haim Shaked and Itamar Rabinovitch (eds), The Middle East and the United States: Perceptions and Policies (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980): 71-77.


71. ibid., pp.224-225.


73. For details, see Saikal, The Rise and Fall of the Shah, op. cit., Chapter III.


78. *Department of State Bulletin* (September 4, 1972): 244.


89. Kissinger's interview with *Business Week*, December 23, 1974. The text of this interview and of related statements by President Ford and Defence Secretary Schlesinger cited in this section are reproduced in *House Committee on International Relations. Oil Fields as Military Objectives: A Feasibility Study* (1975), pp.77-82.

90. ibid., p.77.

National Defence University, 1977); "The Oil Crisis: Is There a Military Option?", The Defence Monitor (December 1979).


94. Department of State Bulletin (September 4, 1972): 244-245.


96. For a history of the Shatt-al-Arab dispute, see Tareq Ismael, Iraq and Iran: Roots of Conflict (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982).


122. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations. U.S. Military Sales to Iran (1976), p.VIII.


130. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations. U.S. Military Sales to Iran (1976), p.X.


CHAPTER 2

CRISIS, THREATS, AND GEOPOLITICS:
US PERCEPTIONS OF IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN

"Twin threats to the flow of oil -- from regional instability and now potentially from the Soviet Union -- require that we firmly defend our vital interests when threatened."


The year 1979 was a watershed for US position and policy in the Persian Gulf region. The year brought in a series of upheavals, beginning with the overthrow of the Shah in Iran and ending with a massive Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Never before in its relatively short but eventful association with the region did the US have to confront challenges more disruptive of Western interests. Further, the Iran and Afghanistan crises were not thought to be isolated events, but rather as examples of the general vicissitude US regional policy would have to confront in the years ahead. Iran was viewed as symbolizing the destabilizing consequences of the rapid modernization of the Persian Gulf societies. In Afghanistan, many Western observers found a demonstration of what some had earlier characterized as a Soviet "geopolitical offensive" in the regions of Africa and the Middle East. Between them, the events in Iran and Afghanistan helped close an era in the US foreign policy posture. From the shockwaves they generated, the foundations of another was laid.
2.1 Implications of the Iranian Revolution

As catalysts of this transition in America's regional role, events in Iran were far more decisive than in Afghanistan. In Iran, the US suffered one of its greatest setbacks in the Middle East region. The replacement of a long-standing staunchly pro-Western ally by a rabidly anti-American Islamic fundamentalist regime had far-reaching and diverse implications for US position in the region.

In the economic field, it meant the loss of a reliable source of oil and a major market for American goods and services. The Iranian market, one of the largest export markets for the industrial world among developing countries was by 1978 worth over $3 billion annually for the US.\(^1\) With the prospective cut backs in the Iranian modernization program the seven top Western nations - US, UK, France, Canada, Italy, Japan and West Germany - stood to lose much of the more than $13 billion worth of goods they were exporting annually to Iran.\(^2\) As regards oil, Iran was the world's fourth largest oil producer and second largest oil exporter. In August-September 1978, Iran produced approximately 6 million barrels per day (mbd), 5.2 mbd of which was exported.\(^3\) But following massive strikes and unrest among the oilfield workers from September 1978, production slumped to 0.2 mbd in the first week of January, 1979. All exports were discontinued in December 1978 and were not to resume until March next year.\(^4\) In all, the disruption in Iranian exports amounted to a loss of about 8 per cent of the world's total trade in petroleum in the first nine months of 1979. Sparking off panic in the international oil market, the Iranian shortfall was instrumental in escalating oil prices by a huge margin (from $12.81 per barrel in December 1978 to $23.50 in October 1979).\(^5\)
The political and strategic consequences of the revolution were equally negative for the US. Prior to Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Tehran, the ill-fated interim regime of Shapur Bakhtiar (appointed by the Shah) announced the complete abandonment of the Shah's regional security posture. Iran's security concerns, said Bakhtiar, would from then on be restricted to the defence of "our own coast and our own country". Among other things this meant the withdrawal of Iranian troops from Oman, where they had assisted Sultan Qabus in curbing the Dhofari rebels. Bakhtiar also announced the scaling down of Iran's military build-up in order to make it conform to "the limits of our possibilities and our resources". In a development that was as much a blow to American defence contractors as to the foreign policy sectors, Iran cancelled its order for about $12 billion worth of military equipment that was due for delivery within the next five years.

The new regime also ended Iran's long-standing participation in the US strategy of "containment". The so-called Northern Tier security system toppled in the wake of Iran's formal exit from CENTO: the two other regional members, Turkey and Pakistan, also withdrew. In concrete terms, the Iranian departure led to the dismantling of two vital electronic listening posts which the US maintained in Northern Iran for monitoring Soviet missile tests. Although the military implications of this loss were said to be insignificant, they provided considerable ammunition to the domestic opponents of the SALT-II treaty who were able to argue that the US ability to ensure Soviet compliance of the treaty had been seriously compromised.

The exit of the Shah similarly threatened US diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Iran quickly halted all oil exports to Israel
and broke off diplomatic relations with that state. While the Shah was one of the rare regional leaders to have openly supported the Camp David peace process. Islamic Iran was vocal at least initially, in its backing for the PLO. A Palestinian delegation visited Teheran soon after the Islamic regime was established, and the PLO was granted full diplomatic recognition. Iran's strong support for the Palestinians might have been a blow to whatever hopes the US still entertained of eliciting a favourable Saudi response to Camp David. The Saudis had been embarrassed by Iran's stand on Palestine and could not afford to look less Islamic on the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

The Carter administration was also concerned about the damaging implications of the revolution for US credibility as a security partner to the other pro-Western regional states. This concern had an important domestic aspect; in the inevitable and heated controversy concerning "who lost Iran" that ensued many critics contended that the administration's pressure on the Shah to improve his human rights record had spurred Iranian opposition to open revolt in the first place. Worse still, they maintained, was Carter's failure to back the Shah adequately once the agitation gained momentum. This was alleged to have undermined the confidence of the pro-Western states in US determination and ability to counter threats to their security. The Carter administration's handling of the Iranian crisis was seen as a blow to the US in its geopolitical competition with the Soviet Union, which in contrast was perceived to be pursuing an aggressive course in consolidating its strategic gains in and around the region.

While the revolution destroyed the very foundations of the US regional security posture, Iran's internal situation continued to
arouse considerable anxiety and apprehension in Washington. The US was sceptical about the Khomeini regime's ability to survive the internal political chaos for long. This chaos was the function of an intense power struggle between Iran's three principal domestic ideological groups; with the clergy and the Marxist groups, (Mujahdeen-i-Khalq, Fedayeen-i-Khalq and the staunchly pro-Soviet Tudeh Party) representing the extremes, and the National Front the centre. The clergy's execution of several thousand officials of the former regime led to the disintegration of the Iranian military already weakened by largescale desertion during the final days of the Shah's regime. With the central authority in shambles. Iran's ethnic minorities repeated a familiar historical pattern of unrest - demanding autonomy and secession. Serious ethnic strife occurred involving the Kurds, the Arabs, the Turkomens and the Baluchs. This, in turn, prompted American fears of a possible Soviet move to exploit the situation to its advantage, including a "repetition of Soviet occupation of portions of that country at the end of World War II".

America's grave strategic debacle in Iran was considerably worsened by the new Islamic regime's continued anti-American stance. Following the Shah's exit from Iran, the Carter administration had embarked on a policy of damage limitation by indicating its desire to establish functional ties with the Khomeini regime. In support of this effort, the administration muted its criticism of the summary trials and executions that had become a daily event in Iran. It approved the shipment of one million barrels of heating oil to Iran and even held talks on the delivery of military equipment ordered by the Shah. But this effort quickly proved to be futile as the clergy
steadily consolidated its hold over Iran's domestic power base and brought to the fore its intense hatred of the US.

This dislike was driven by powerful motivating factors. One was the legacy of America's long support for the Shah's oppressive rule, including the CIA's role in restoring the latter to throne in 1953. Another had to do with the domestic politics of the Islamic republic. If anti-Americanism was a unifying element binding competing constituents of the Islamic revolution then the Khomeini regime was not about to give up that important advantage by negotiating a reconciliation. Thirdly, anti-Americanism was an implied feature of Khomeini's Islamic revolutionary ideology, espousing the liberation of the "downtrodden" masses from the exploitative "dominant" sections such as those spearheaded by the Shah. The US, which had the double demerit of being the Shah's principal backer, and - as a superpower - the "dominant" element in the hierarchy of nations, had become Khomeini's prime ideological target.¹⁸

The hostage crisis which erupted on November 4, 1979, when more than 60 Americans were confined in the US embassy building by militant "student" revolutionaries dealt the final blow to the Carter administration's efforts to come to terms with the Islamic regime. The move by the Iranian revolutionaries was prompted by a fundamental mistrust of the US - an element of which was an apprehension that the latter might engineer a repetition of the 1953 coup to put the Pahlavi regime back on the throne. But once the hostages were taken the crisis was used by the fundamentalist clergy to expose and discredit the moderate political elements¹⁹ - represented by leaders such as Mehdi Bazargan and Abol Hassan Bani Sadr, the prime minister of the provisional Islamic government and the first president of the Islamic
republic, respectively - who were more inclined to restore functional
ties with the US. The continued detention of hostages became a
unifying symbol of the revolution's ultimate humiliation of the hated
superpower. The Carter administration's obsession with the release of
the hostages, leading to the ill-fated rescue mission in 1980, thus
played into the hands of the fundamentalist elements and probably
prolonged the crisis itself. The crisis also aggravated the decline
of US standing in the region. Coming after the demonstrated impotence
of American power to save its closest regional ally, the failure to
secure a prompt release of the American hostages only complicated US
efforts to salvage its regional interests and restore its sinking
credibility.

2.2 Regime Security in the Conservative Gulf States: American
Perceptions of the Threats "from within"

Although Iran was the major setback, American fears about
internal instability in the Persian Gulf region did not end with that
country. In fact the Iranian turmoil reinforced the Carter
administration's perception that Iran was symptomatic of a "wider
strategic crisis" afflicting the entire Middle East region.20 This
belief was articulated by National Security Advisor Zbigniew
Brzezinski in his famous "arc of crisis" formulation. Concurring with
that assessment, the Pentagon noted: "The region has become a breeding
ground for internal upheaval - as has already occurred in Iran - for
war, terrorism, and subversion".21 Such upheavals, in turn, were seen
to be the "common root" of major threats to American and Western
interests in the region. As the Joint-Chiefs-of-Staff noted in their
Posture statement, "regional instabilities could lead to the decline
of US influence, loss of US and allied access to oil, and
confrontation with the Soviet Union".22
After the Shah had fallen, US apprehensions about regime stability in the Persian Gulf region focused on the remaining conservative systems of the Arabian Peninsula. The revolution had generated a sense of pessimism and alarm concerning their ability to withstand a host of internally-generated pressures and challenges—some similar to those which engulfed the Shah. Many of these challenges were, and still are attributed to the impact of modernization.

Modernization—"the interrelated growth trends in the economy, technology, education, urban lifestyles, and mass media exposure"—has unleashed a number of unsettling effects on the traditional rhythm of the oil-rich societies, where it has been especially fast paced and multi-dimensional. To begin with, modernization has eroded the principal "legitimizing values"—Islam, tribe and extended family—that have historically sustained the legitimacy of the centralized and feudal decision-making systems in the Arabian Peninsula. The result has been a double threat to the conservative regimes. On the one hand, the ruling Sheikhs and Kings can no longer count upon the automatic loyalty of the larger, modernizing sector of their populace. On the other, they are faced with the anger and resentment of the older and the traditional sector which has blamed the creeping modernization for destroying Islamic values and life-styles and replacing them with a culture permeated by alien values and ideas. Modernization has also been blamed for breeding the evils of corruption, maldistribution of wealth, waste and social injustice, which have become common features of all Gulf societies. And to the extent that modernization has represented a Western ideal and contributed to a sense of cultural domination by the West, it has been
all the more disliked - given the West's share of responsibility for some of the more grievous setbacks suffered by Muslim peoples; namely European colonialism and, in more recent times, American support for that scourge of Arab pride - Israel.

The accumulated hostility towards modernization has reinforced resurgent trends in Islam. The Iranian revolution, in which Islam played a central role in mobilizing the masses, led to fears of widespread revival of Islamic fundamentalism engulfing the remaining conservative regimes and undermining Western interests throughout the region. The success of the revolution was believed to have instilled a sense of pride within the wider body of Islamic peoples. The Iranian clergy's leading role in the campaign that overthrew a powerful and modernizing monarch within the matter of a single year was encouraging to elements in other Gulf societies resentful of the pro-Western outlooks and modernizing policies of their own regimes. To the general population, so far accustomed to viewing the monarchy as the closest existing approximation to an Islamic form of government, the advent of an Islamic republic in Tehran suggested a viable alternative.

If the message had failed to get across to the Arab population of the Gulf, Khomeini's Iran sought to correct that situation by launching an enthusiastic campaign to "export" it. This desire was driven by several factors. One was a genuine commitment of the Iranian clergy to use Islam as a means to lift oppression and injustice from the Arab societies, which they saw as having fallen victim of the evils of the pro-Western and un-Islamic practices of their rulers. Secondly, a pan-Islamic campaign was also in the best domestic interests of the Iranian religious fundamentalists in their
bid to prevail over the disparate ideological factions challenging their domination of the post-revolutionary polity. Finally, it was a reflection of the Islamic republic's insecurity in the face of what its leaders feared to be attempts by external powers to subvert its existence. To best guarantee the survival of an Islamic regime in Teheran, the Iranian clergy felt, it was necessary to create an Islamic political environment in its neighbourhood. As Khomeini himself told the Iranian public on the occasion of the Iranian New Year, March 21, 1980:

We should set aside the thought that we do not export our revolution, because Islam does not regard various Islamic countries differently and is the supporter of all the oppressed peoples of the world. On the other hand, all the superpowers and all the powers have risen to destroy us. If we remain in a closed environment we shall definitely face defeat ...  

Khomeini's efforts to create an Islamic regional order were promoted mainly through provocative radio broadcasts, although clandestine subversive activities by religious and political groups supported by Teheran, such as the Amal group in Lebanon, also played a role. There were of course, some important barriers to this campaign. Firstly, the level of popular disaffection over the distribution of the benefits of oil wealth, a crucial factor in any revolutionary movement in the region, was considerably lower in the conservative Arab Gulf states than in Iran under the Shah. The former pursued less grandiose schemes for military modernization, and all of them, save Oman, had enough wealth to satisfy most sections of their sparse native populations. Also, political repression in these countries was nothing compared to that perpetrated by the notorious Iranian SAVAK.
Secondly, the ruling regimes of the conservative Arab states, unlike the Shah, were more or less able to maintain a close rapport with their clergy. This was due primarily to the fact that the ideals of Shi'ism, the dominant Islamic sect in Iran, and its historical relations with the ruling political authority are different from those of the Sunni sect to which the majority in the Arabian Peninsula belong.\textsuperscript{32} Shi'ism is peculiar among all Islamic sects as, in the words of one noted analyst, a "historically revolutionary, messianic and legitimistic movement".\textsuperscript{33} As Khomeini himself once claimed, "while other schools have preached submission to rulers, even if they are corrupt and oppressive, Shi'ism had preached resistance against them and denounced them as illegitimate".\textsuperscript{34} This assertion is well reflected throughout the history of Iran in the present century; during which time the regime in Teheran had rarely, if at all, earned the respect and support of the clergy.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, to the extent that the Iranian revolution was deemed to be a vindication of the Shi'i doctrine (and Khomeini made no little effort to emphasize this fact), its appeal was limited in the Sunni-dominated Arabian Peninsula, the Ayatollah's pan-Islamic protestations notwithstanding. Indeed, even he had to concede this fact, observing pessimistically that "many Sunnis ... may regard this rebellion against oppressive government as incompatible with Islam".\textsuperscript{36}

Nonetheless, Khomeini's cause benefitted from one important factor, the presence of a large number of Shi'a Muslims within the population of the Arab Gulf states. Shi'is constitute the majority in Iraq and Bahrain, although Sunni governments rule over them. In Saudi Arabia, according to some estimates, about 275,000 Shi'a Muslims live in the oil-rich Eastern Province where, significantly, they account
for more than one-third of the Arab-American Oil Company's workforce. In all the Sunni-ruled Gulf states, Shi'ites are among the most economically disadvantaged, due, it needs to be noted, to a great extent to the discriminatory practices of the Sunni elite. As such, they seemed to Khomeini to be an ideal target for revolutionary inspiration.

The trend toward a revival of Islamic fundamentalism was indicated in two developments. One was the signs of Shi'i unrest in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Shi'i demonstrations occurred in Bahrain in April 1980; in Kuwait in September and November 1979; and in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province in November 1979 and February 1980. The second development, not linked to Khomeini's influence but suggesting, even more ominously, that the impact of Islamic resurgence might not be confined to the Shi'i sect alone also occurred in Saudi Arabia. On November 20, 1979, a group of some 500 armed men seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca. The group was protesting what it called the unIslamic policies of Al-Saud. Its leader had in his earlier writings attacked corruption in the Kingdom and declared that the Al-Saud should no longer be regarded as leaders of Wahhabism. The insurrection lasted until December 4, producing hundreds of casualties on both sides, before Saudi forces, allegedly assisted by French commandos, flushed out the perpetrators.

Islamic resurgence was not the only trend to have caused alarm in the US regarding the continued survival of the conservative Gulf regimes in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. Among the many effects of modernization, another was its introduction of new criteria of political legitimacy based upon equality and participation. The material and educational advances of the population of the oil-rich
Gulf states has generated, especially within the growing middle class, demands for a greater role in government. Existing centralized and family-ruled political systems offer few opportunities for power-sharing. The record of political participation and democratic institution-building in the Gulf has been exceedingly poor; as one observer has aptly noted, "the 'democratization' process in the gulf has primarily been one of transformation from classical tribalism into an urban and affluent form of tribalism."\textsuperscript{41}

At the time of Iran's revolution, of the conservative Gulf states two - Saudi Arabia and Oman - had no written constitution and two others - the UAE and Qatar - had provisional constitutions only. Kuwait and Bahrain alone functioned under a written constitution. These two states were also the only ones in the Gulf to have undertaken, albeit in extremely limited scale, experiments in political participation. However, both experiments, in the form of elected National Assemblies with little real power over the decision-making process, stood abandoned in 1979.\textsuperscript{42}

In dealing with the problem of political participation, the Gulf have had some factors working to their advantage. Lavish oil wealth has helped to moderate social discontent. Political consciousness among the general public, though expanding, is still relatively limited. In several Gulf monarchies, traditional institutions such as the Majlis do provide some opportunity to the common people to present their grievances before the ruler in person. In addition the regimes have allowed elements of the educated middle class some degree of participation in the decision-making process by drafting them into cabinet or executive positions.
But the long-term adequacy of these factors in meeting the rising political expectations of the expanding middle class in the Gulf societies is questionable. This realization was evident in the decision of the Kuwaiti leadership to revive its 50-member National Assembly in 1981. Elections to the Assembly took place in 1981 and 1985. Bahrain has indicated its desire to follow the Kuwaiti lead and reconstitute its own National Assembly. In 1981, Sultan Qaboos of Oman decreed the appointment of a "Consultative Assembly" of 19 government officials and 36 appointed members. The UAE extended its provisional constitution in 1981 for another 5 years. Even the Saudis, whose opposition and pressure had been partly responsible for the dissolution of the Kuwaiti and Bahraini legislatures in the 1970s, have appointed a committee to draw up a constitution and study options for setting up an appointed "consultative council". Whether such measures would enable the Gulf monarchies to successfully deal with the problem of political participation hinges on many factors, especially their policies regarding the pace of modernization and, more important, the state of the world oil market affecting the flow of oil revenues. Difficult economic conditions caused by a slump in oil revenues could fuel the resentment of the Gulf middle class against the existing political system and pose serious challenges to the regimes.

Another source of potential social and political unrest in the region is the presence of large numbers of foreigners in the conservative Gulf states: an offshoot of the massive development projects made possible by oil wealth. By 1975, according to one study, the representation of foreigners in the total workforce had reached 40 per cent in Bahrain, 69 per cent in Kuwait, 81 per cent in
Qatar, 43 per cent in Saudi Arabia and 85 per cent in the UAE.44 In 1980, there were an estimated three million foreign workers in the six conservative states of the Persian Gulf.45 Much of the non-European migrant community has lived in conditions far inferior to that of his/her fellow native worker, and enjoyed few rights. Resentment, as a consequence, has been strong.46 Although the non-Arab immigrant community is unlikely to initiate a major unrest by itself, it could be susceptible to radical and subversive influences from elements either in the native population or the resident non-citizen Arab community. A significant segment of the latter category, about half a million in the entire Arabian Peninsula, are expatriate Palestinians. They have been seen by the US and, privately, by the Gulf regimes to be a potentially destabilizing factor.47

The "threat" posed by migrant workers, of course, could be exaggerated. Despite their relatively inferior status vis-a-vis the natives, the migrant workers in most cases enjoy salaries far better than colleagues at home. The threat of instant deportation acts as a deterrent to any untoward political activity on their part. Moreover, as a diffuse social community drawn from several nations, they are hard to unify through clandestine activity.48 The Palestinians in particular, unlike most other migrant communities, are a well-established middle class with a genuine stake in the existing system. Without a home to go back to if deported, the Palestinian middle class, according to one observer, "is perfectly satisfied with its material status and shuns any Palestinian political activity if it conflicts with current policies".49 Besides, although the Palestinians living in the Gulf enjoy few political rights, they are relatively free to express themselves on the Arab-Israeli conflict and
make regular financial contributions to the PLO. In Kuwait, where a large number of them live, the Palestinians are largely unorganized or loosely organized, and the majority identify with the more moderate factions within the PLO.50

But the Persian Gulf regimes also face threats stemming from the activities of radical opposition groups organized around an interlocking spectrum of ideological affiliations: communism, socialism, nationalism or plain democratic republicanism. In the 1970s, Oman faced a major insurgency in its isolated Dhofar province.51 Beginning as a small tribal agitation formed by homecoming Dhofari workers exposed to the ideas of Arab nationalism, the movement grew in size and militancy after acquiring powerful external backers— including the USSR, China and the PLO. The PDR Yemen coordinated the flow of support and actively contributed to the overall rebel effort. Although the movement was defeated by Sultan Qabus with help from Iran and Britain, a remnant of the revolutionary organization, the Popular Front for Liberation of Oman (PFLP), continued a campaign of radio propaganda from Aden. The withdrawal of Iranian forces from Oman following the Shah's ousting for a time spurred fears of its revival—a prospect that has not been completely ruled out despite the recent GCC-mediated rapprochement between Oman and the PDR Yemen.

Among the other conservative states, the Saudi regime has faced a number of radical groups, although very little is known about their inclinations and activities in concrete terms. A Communist Party of Saudi Arabia was formed in 1975 espousing the goal of a "patriotic, democratic and republican regime" that would ensure political freedom, trade union rights, nationalization of resources and friendly
relations with the USSR. A long-standing Nasserite group, the Union of the People of the Arabian Peninsula, claimed responsibility for planning the Grand Mosque insurrection, although its leader disappeared in Lebanon soon after making the claim. Three opposition groups, the National Front for the Liberation of Saudi Arabia, the Popular Democratic Front and the Federation of Democratic Forces, were believed to be behind a revolutionary conspiracy attempt which was uncovered by the Saudi authorities in June-July 1969.

The Bahraini regime has faced similar challenges, especially from the activities of two groups, the National Front for the Liberation of Bahrain and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Bahrain. The latter is believed to be a communist group tied to South Yemen. While no indigenous communist parties have been reported in Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait, two leftist PLO factions, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, are said to have a base there. Cells of the Arab Nationalist Movement also continue to exist in most of the Gulf states.

It should be noted, however, that none of the groups enjoy a broad popular base. One of the major reasons is the very sparsity of population in the Arabian Peninsula. Communist groups are generally disliked for their atheist ideology and for their subservience to external powers. The vitality of these groups is also undermined by endemic internal factional squabbles and by the loss of external sources of support following the death of Nasser and growing Iraqi moderation. Finally, the stringent internal security measures prevalent in all the conservative Gulf states, their effectiveness bolstered by regional cooperation on intelligence-sharing, extradition
of criminals, border patrols and the provision of extremely harsh punishments for political offenses, have all acted as a deterrent to dissident activities.\textsuperscript{56}

In the Arabian Peninsula, the extended size of the ruling royal families and their internal cohesion are crucial to the continuation of the conservative order in the face of growing indigenous or external challenges. A prime example is Saudi Arabia which has a royal family that numbers around 5,000 and dominates every aspect of the Saudi political, administrative and military structures. Yet, if the past is any guide, dynastic factionalism and rivalries remain a looming threat to regime stability in the region. Forced deposition of rulers by contesting family members have recent precedents in Oman, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Sharjah. Latent dynastic competitions have continued to cloud stability of a variety of ruling families, especially in Ras al-Khaima, Qatar and Kuwait.\textsuperscript{57}

Although the Al-Saud dynasty in Saudi Arabia has so far failed to live up to all predictions of serious dynastic strife over the question of succession (evident in the conduct of prompt and smooth successions to Faisal and Khaled), factional competition between the powerful "Sudairi Seven" (sons of King Ibn Saud and his senior Queen), whose membership includes King Fahd and the defence minister, Prince Sultan, and the more conservative group headed by Prince Abdallah, Crown Prince and the powerful head of the National Guard, has continued.\textsuperscript{58} The division covers policy issues; the former is said to favour modernization, higher levels of oil production and good relations with the US, while the latter is believed to lean more toward Palestinian and Pan-Arab causes and enjoys a closer rapport with the clergy. The possibility of such disagreements leading to serious dynastic strife cannot be ruled out.
Rivalry between two different dynasties is another factor affecting regime stability in the region. The dominance of Al-Saud is resented by the former ruling families of Al-Hasa (Eastern Province) and Hejaz which were conquered by Ibn Saud's legendary Ikhwan. Among other Gulf states, continued tensions between the Al-Khalifa ruling family of Bahrain and the Al-Thani ruling family of Qatar have prevented sincere cooperation between the two states over issues like disputed islands and territory. Similarly, rivalry between the ruling families of Abu Dhabi (Al-Nihayan) and Dubai (Al-Muktaum) has undermined the political integration of the UAE. Inter-dynastic resentment has been a major factor behind Dubai's minimal contribution to the federal budget, its disregard for the federal currency board and refusal to integrate its armed forces into the UAE Defence Force.

Finally, inter-state territorial disputes and irredentist claims have historically been a major source of hostility and warfare in the Gulf region. Traditionally, most boundary disputes in the area used to derive from claims staked on the basis of past military conquests and from the issue of land usage by nomadic tribes to whom territorial limits made little sense. Most of the desert boundaries remained undemarcated during the era of British supremacy in the region, but disputes were frozen under the looming presence of British military power. The discovery of oil and the decline of British authority, however, led to the revival of many latent disputes and the creation of fresh ones. Since then, apart from becoming a major and direct source of inter-state tension and conflict within the region, territorial claims have often interlocked with other political, tribal and ethnic differences between the regional states in exacerbating the overall tension.
At one end of the spectrum are the irredentist claims of the larger Gulf states on their smaller neighbours. Two major instances are the Iranian claim to Bahrain and the Iraqi claim to Kuwait. Although the Shah had abandoned Iran's claim to Bahrain when it conflicted with his aspirations for regional leadership, some members of the Islamic clergy appeared to revive it following the installation of the Khomeini regime in Teheran. For a time, this created serious concern in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Iraq offered military protection to the latter against any Iranian attempt to take the island by force.

Iraq's claim on Kuwait, first staked after Kuwaiti independence in 1961, led to several incidents involving border clashes and Iraqi occupation of a Kuwaiti border post in 1973. Later, however, Iraq, in keeping with its shift toward greater moderation in dealing with the Gulf Arab states, narrowed its claim to a request for lease of two Kuwaiti islands - Warbah and Bubiyan, - located strategically off its Gulf coast. At the time of the Iranian revolution, negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait remained inconclusive, leading many observers to view the dispute as being still alive. Given the strategic and economic value of the islands - which dominate the approach to the key Iraqi port and naval base of Umm Qasr and possession of which would enable Iraq to claim a greater portion of the oil-rich seabed - it is difficult to rule out serious future incidents involving Iraqi attempts to clinch their acquisition.

The Iranian revolution unfroze its dispute with Iraq over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway and with Ras al-Khaima over the two Tumb islets. While a settlement on the former had been reached through Algerian mediation in 1975, the Iraqi leaders had felt humiliated by the accord which involved territorial concessions on their side.
Thus, in a move that exemplified the transient nature of territorial settlements in the region, Baghdad denounced and repudiated the agreement when the Iranian state appeared to be falling apart as a result of prolonged internal strife. The border issue was one of the major factors behind the Iraqi initiation of the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980, demonstrating how territorial disputes could interlock with other political or ethnic considerations in promoting large scale inter-state tensions. Iraq also for a time threatened military action to restore Abu Musa and the Tunbs, seized by the Shah in 1971 from the sheikhdoms of Sharjah and Ras-al-Khaima respectively, to Arab sovereignty.

In the 1970s, the Gulf witnessed an encouraging trend toward settlement of boundary disputes. Apart from the renunciation of Iran's claim over Bahrain and the Algiers accord with Iraq over Shatt-al-Arab, a number of offshore boundary agreements were reached: between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 1968-69, Abu Dhabi and Qatar in 1969, Iran and Qatar in 1969-70, Iran and Bahrain in 1971-72, Iran and Oman in 1974, Iran and Sharjah in 1971, Iran and Dubai in 1974 and Iran and Abu Dhabi in 1971. The issue of dividing the Iraqi-Saudi Neutral Zone was also settled, as was another long-standing dispute over the Buraimi Oasis between the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, relations between the peninsular Gulf states at the time of Iran's revolution were still affected by a number of lingering disputes: between Oman and Saudi Arabia over Umm Zumul near the northernmost reaches of the Rub' al-Khali desert; Oman and Ras al-Khaima over their land and offshore boundaries on the Musandam Peninsula; Qatar and Bahrain over Zabarah village on the Qatari west coast and the Hawar Islands and a number of small disputes between the sheikhdoms that make up the UAE.
These varied sources of intra-regional tension in the Gulf greatly reinforced the shockwaves of the Iranian turmoil itself and led the US to view the Persian Gulf region as one of the most volatile and strife-prone areas of the world. Such perceptions were widely entrenched within the American policy-making establishment before the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan at the end of 1979. While the Soviet invasion greatly aggravated the general mood of alarm concerning the threats to US interests in the Persian Gulf, it is unlikely that the Carter administration's response to the invasion would have been so patently bellicose had it not been preceded by the spectre of regionwide domestic instability raised by the Iranian revolution. In fact, leading administration officials, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, were convinced that the Soviet decision to invade was heavily influenced by the vacuum and opportunities created by the Shah's exit. As Brzezinski later wrote:

The Iranian disaster shattered the strategic pivot of a protected tier shielding the crucial oil-rich region of the Persian Gulf from possible Soviet intrusion ... Had the Shah not fallen, it is unlikely that the Soviets would have moved so openly into Afghanistan, transforming that neutral buffer into an offensive wedge, bringing the Russians so much closer to their historic target of the Indian Ocean.69

2.3 The Afghanistan Crisis and Dimensions of the "External Threat"

To the US, the "proximity, power and behavior" of the Soviet Union constitute "the most dangerous threat" to its interests in the Persian Gulf and Middle East regions.70 Although American concern regarding Soviet influence and activities in the broader region is long-standing, it was the Afghanistan crisis and the Carter Doctrine which spurred a new awareness of the "Soviet threat" focusing
specifically on the Persian Gulf region. The Afghanistan crisis also led to an intensified American commitment to countering Soviet threats to the Persian Gulf.

2.3.1 Competing perceptions of the Afghanistan crisis:

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, resulting in the overthrow of the relatively independent-minded Hafizullah Amin regime and its replacement by a far more compliant Babrak Karmal, sparked off an intensified debate in the US about the motives and intentions underlying the Soviet action. Several lines of interpretation were advanced. One school held that the Soviet invasion was part of an offensive "grand design", constituting another step along a predetermined course of expansion. This school saw the invasion in the context of earlier Soviet interventions in Africa and the Middle East, and therefore, dismissed suggestions that it reflected Soviet insecurity against the Islamic uprising in Iran and its possible spill-over into its own Muslim population. Rather, as Richard Pipes, a most noted advocate of this view, insisted: the invasion was part of a calculated Soviet "pincer ... directed toward the Middle East and aim[ed] at cutting off, in the event of hostilities, fossil fuels and minerals without which the economies of America's allies would not be able to function".

Although the "grand design" hypothesis did not have many adherents within the policy-making circles or the academic community in the US, for the administration it might have served a useful political purpose by aggravating the public's alarm regarding the implications of the Soviet invasion and thereby rallying support for its reprisals (sanctions and military build-up). The alternative
conception of the Soviet motives in Afghanistan viewed the invasion as essentially a "defensive", "short-term", "local" and "limited" step. George F. Kennan, the most respected adherant of this school, hypothesized that the Soviets might have been "sucked into it ... rather involuntarily". The basic assumption underlying this view, to borrow Dennis Ross' expression, was that the Soviets "were impelled to act by the prospective costs of not acting, and not by the expected gains of their action". (emphasis original)

The proponents of the "defensive" view argued their case on the following lines. The evident failure of the Amin regime to broaden its control and contain the growing domestic rebellion against its radical policies had created the possibility that the communist revolution in Afghanistan could have been totally defeated. But the Soviet stakes in Afghanistan - in economic, political, and prestige terms - had become too substantial for them to permit that reversal. Although there is no hard evidence to support the suggestion that the Soviets had engineered the downfall of the Doud regime in April 1978, they had nonetheless moved quickly to recognize the new communist regime and undertook a significant expansion of their presence and aid activities in that country. The Soviets signed a Treaty of Friendship with the new regime in December 1978 and agreed to provide it with considerable aid over the next five years. Indeed, the Soviet political and economic investment in Afghanistan was to a large extent unprecedented for a Third World client nation. Its loss would have represented a proportionately severe setback. It would have damaged Soviet prestige internationally. Moreover, failure to protect a client regime from the forces of counterrevolution could have undermined Soviet credibility before other communist regimes while encouraging their internal opponents.
The "defensive" view further held that the implications of the advent of a non-communist regime in Kabul for the security of its own southern borders needed to be added to the list of Soviet apprehensions. A setback in Afghanistan would have come in the midst of an escalating regional trend toward Islamic fundamentalism sparked off by the Iranian revolution. An Islamic republic in Afghanistan, which the Soviets probably foresaw as the likely outcome of the communist defeat, could have greatly increased the possibility that its own large central Asian Muslim population would be aroused to revolt. Soviet insecurity against such a development could have been further enhanced by the alleged Chinese and Pakistani backing of the Afghan rebels.79

A third line of interpretation, which rejected the "grand design" hypothesis but contended that the Soviet motives were not all "defensive", termed the invasion an "opportunistic" move. According to this view, while the Soviets were worried about the immense costs of loosing Afghanistan from their sphere of influence, that alone would have been an insufficient basis for military action if they had also not perceived in it great opportunities to advance their interests in the wider regional context. As former State Department official Joseph Sisco stated, the Soviets, "pursuing a policy of tactical opportunism, assessed correctly" that a takeover of Afghanistan "would put them in a good position to exploit the instability that exists in the area ... to our disadvantage".80 There already existed an exploitable situation of chaos and turmoil in Iran. Further opportunities could be created by encouraging the ethnic strife in Pakistan, especially in Baluchistan. And the Soviets, perhaps miscalculating, thought that they could achieve their goals with a relatively lower level of military and political risk.
The United States was experiencing a severe loss of position and credibility throughout the region, and was not in a position to retaliate strongly against a Soviet move.\(^{81}\) And the Soviets had "nothing to lose" in terms of their relations with the US, since the latter was already moving toward a significant dilution of its commitment to detente. A few weeks before the Soviet action, NATO had announced its decision to modernize its intermediate-range missiles in Europe by introducing Persing II and cruise missiles. It had become increasingly evident that SALT-II would not be ratified by the US Congress. The US also had normalized its relations with China, a step that would surely have magnified Soviet insecurity.\(^{82}\)

The Carter administration did not publicly side with any particular viewpoint, although there were clear and major differences among top foreign policy officials regarding the motives underlying the invasion. To Brzezinski, as he later wrote, the invasion was "part of the current phase of Soviet assertiveness" which in turn was "symptomatic of the long-term [Soviet] historical drive ... toward the Persian Gulf", with "military power supplanting Marxist ideology as its basic, dynamic source". In May 1979, when indications of growing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan became available, he had briefed the President "specifically on Molotov's proposal to Hitler in late 1940 that the Nazis recognize the Soviet claim to preeminence in the region south of Batum and Baku".\(^{83}\) Secretary of State Vance, on the other hand, leaned more toward the "defensive" interpretation, although, according to his memoirs, he believed the Soviets "badly miscalculated" the extent of US and international reaction and the resistance offered by the Afghan population to the Soviet occupation.\(^{84}\) But the focus of the administration's public position
was not so much to speculate on Soviet motives, but to emphasize the objective geostrategic consequences. 85

The military occupation of Afghanistan, the administration contended, had drastically altered the strategic balance in the entire Southwest Asian region and, coming after the disintegration of the Northern Tier system following the Iranian revolution, had opened up the entire region to direct or indirect Soviet penetration. "A Soviet occupied Afghanistan", claimed President Carter, "is a stepping stone to possible control over much of the world's oil supplies". The invasion, by bringing "Soviet military forces to within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Strait of Hormuz" posed a "grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil". 86 Moreover, staging from bases in Afghanistan Soviet combat aircraft could now attack US warships operating near the Persian Gulf region and neutralize US carrier-based aviation. Soviet fighters would for the first time be able to reach the Strait of Hormuz, removing a significant constraint on Soviet power projection into the Gulf region. 87

A Soviet position in Afghanistan, said Harold Brown, would also enable Moscow "to apply pressure, be it military, political, or internal insurgent, to Iran and Pakistan and the littoral states of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea". 88 Whether a desire to exploit local instabilities had originally gone into Soviet calculations or not, the Soviet would now be in a position to take advantage of the ethnic strife in Iran and Pakistan in order to make further inroads to the region and threaten Western interests. 89 As the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned:

... In Afghanistan, the Soviets demonstrated a willingness to use internal turmoil as a pretext for direct military intervention. ... the West clearly
cannot afford to discount the possibility of future Soviet or Soviet-formented aggression elsewhere in the Middle East, especially in Iran. The United States must be prepared to face the likelihood of confrontation with the Soviet Union in the region throughout the 1980s.*

2.3.2 The Soviet "threat" to the Persian Gulf

Thus the significance of the Afghanistan crisis, as with the Iranian revolution, came to be judged in the context of its wider geostrategic implications. Especially, it influenced American perceptions of the Soviet "threat" to the Persian Gulf. There were several elements in this perception. As in the case of the Afghanistan crisis itself, the US view of the Soviet threat to the Gulf began with a search for possible motives. Here one issue that aroused intense speculation was Soviet designs on Persian Gulf oil. This linkage was assumed in two broad variations.

The first took the view that the Soviets were about to undertake an aggressive interest in Persian Gulf oil owing to their own prospective energy shortage. The most important basis for such predictions had come from the CIA which, in a series of reports during the second half of the 1970s, had forecast that the Soviet Union, the world's largest producer of petroleum, could become a net importer of that resource after the mid-1980s. This theme, although the Agency subsequently came up with a less pessimistic prediction, lingered in much of the Western speculation about the future direction of Soviet Persian Gulf policy. Since the loss of export capacity would have grave domestic and foreign policy implications for the Soviets (such as depriving them of their single most important source of hard currency and hurting their leadership of the Warsaw Pact) they were felt unlikely to bear a domestic "oil crisis" passively. Several
possible courses of action were anticipated. In 1980, Admiral Stansfield Turner, the then CIA director, told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that:

To ease the problem, Moscow will no doubt make an intense effort to obtain oil at concessional prices from the oil producing countries through barter deals, sometimes involving arms sales. More forceful action, ranging from covert subversion to intimidation, or, in the extreme military action, cannot be ruled out.93

The second version of the linkage between oil and Soviet policy argued that even if the USSR continued to be self-sufficient in meeting its domestic and alliance oil requirements, there were other factors which could encourage it to take possession of the Persian Gulf oilfields.94 The Soviets, as a House Foreign Affairs Committee report pointed out, could "use the revenue generated by the sale of oil to revitalize [their] sagging economy while simultaneously continuing to enlarge [their] military power". Gulf oil could also be used either as an incentive or as a weapon to "placate or coerce restive client states, and to procure new clients in strategically important areas of the world". Above all, the Soviets could use their control of Persian Gulf oil to exploit the divisions within the Western alliance.95 Given the differential between American import needs and that of its European and Japanese allies, and given the history of allied discord over Middle Eastern political issues that bear upon their access to oil, a Soviet offer to Western Europe or Japan of a secure energy supply could lead the latter to distance themselves from US policies. As a top Pentagon official put it, "Soviet control, even indirectly, of a substantial part of the Persian Gulf oil ... could reduce Western Europe and Japan, even if not the United States, to being, in effect, economic vassals of the U.S.S.R., even if the oil flow were never cut off".96
Apart from oil, several other factors were seen as forming the basis of the Soviet "threat" to the Persian Gulf. Although much of the speculation concerning these motives took place within the general academic and policy-making community, they also influenced official perceptions. Some of the explanations used to characterize Soviet motives in Afghanistan were extended to describe possible Soviet intentions with respect to the Persian Gulf. For example, a Soviet drive to the Gulf through Iran or Afghanistan could be one way (the more popular scenario was a drive to the Indian Ocean through Baluchistan) of fulfilling Russia's "historic interest in a warm water port". In a more "defensive" vein, the Soviets might want to secure the Gulf so as to gain, in the words of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, a "greater capability to contain the forces of Islamic resurgence and ethnic self-determination that threaten to spill into the USSR", specifically the 50 million Soviet Central Asian Muslim population. A closely-related perspective on Soviet motives for control of the Persian Gulf found it lying in Russia's traditional sensitivity toward turmoil in areas close to its border. As one writer claimed, this Soviet "Monroe Doctrine" had been "extended recently to the Gulf region recently from [its] traditional zone, Persia, with very little notice in the West".

Besides instigating an intense speculation on possible Soviet motives for threatening stability in the Persian Gulf, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan closely influenced American perception of the instruments of the Soviet "threat". The invasion was seen as exemplifying the evolving Soviet doctrine and capability for power projection. To begin with, US officials and civilian analysts were particularly concerned that Afghanistan was the first post-war
instance of a direct Soviet invasion outside Eastern Europe. To many, this underscored the possibility that the Soviet Union, which had traditionally relied upon other instruments in its dealings with the Third World, would now be "plainly willing to add direct warfare to its abundant array of expansionist instruments". This would be especially true of countries in close proximity to the USSR; as President Carter put it, Afghanistan was a warning that "the Soviets will use force to take over a neighboring country".

American analysts also saw in Afghanistan a vivid demonstration of the growing reach and sophistication of Soviet projection forces. The massive Soviet airlift to Kabul and the swift and effective deployment of its airborne units all indicated a level of quality and efficiency unattained during past interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Moreover, Afghanistan highlighted the flexibility of Soviet intervention options with respect to the Persian Gulf region. Traditionally, the Soviet naval contingent in the Indian Ocean, since its first arrival in 1968, had attracted greater focus as the most visible and dedicated instrument of Soviet influence projection to the littoral region. In the Afghanistan operation, however, the employment of about 100,000 Soviet ground troops and a large number of tanks drew attention to the overland component of the Soviet military threat. The Soviets, should they decide to launch an overland attack on a Persian Gulf state, could draw upon a reservoir of more than 20 ground divisions stationed in the Transcaucasus, North Caucasus and Turkestan military districts. Heavily armoured and enjoying good battlefield mobility, these divisions could pose a far more formidable threat than that which could be projected through naval activity alone. In fact, the Soviet Navy's ability to play a
meaningful combat role could be enhanced if it was deployed in coordination with land forces. Afghanistan, as an article in the US Naval Institute Proceedings pointed out, marked "the first time" when the Soviet Navy deployed to the Indian Ocean "as a defensive flank for the Soviet Army". Coming on the heels of a major Soviet effort to enhance the sustainability and strikepower of its seaborne military instrument, this combination was seen as an "ominous development".105

Apart from revealing new dimensions of Moscow's potential for direct power projection, the Afghanistan crisis reinforced existing notions regarding the indirect projection of Soviet power and influence into the Gulf. Since the late 1970s, there had been a popular perception among Western analysts which saw the increasing Soviet involvement in countries lying in the "periphery" of the Arabian peninsula, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, South Yemen, Ethiopia and even Syria and Libya, as part of Moscow's strategy to "encircle" the oil-rich conservative Gulf states, with whom it otherwise lacked even diplomatic relations (except Kuwait). Some analysts saw it as a deliberate, calculated effort, somewhat akin to the "grand design" interpretation of Soviet geopolitical behaviour. As a noted Kremlinologist described it: "Though the ultimate target in the region is Saudi Arabia, Moscow shrewdly pursues an indirect strategy: it seeks to subvert the center by radicalizing the periphery."106

The view was shared by many in the wider US policy-making community. As a House Foreign Affairs Committee report put it, "by enlarging their physical and military presence in these states [Libya, Ethiopia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Yemen, and North Yemen], the Soviets also retain the option of using the mere shadow of their power to influence the policies and actions of the moderate, oil-producing
states of the Gulf". In some cases the Soviets could use their
influence with the periphery to support radical movements in the
conservative states, such as South Yemeni backing for the Dhofari
rebels. The Reagan administration viewed Soviet presence in the
peripheral states in a similar light; as a senior official put it: "We
see Soviet presence in Syria, Libya, South Yemen and the Horn of
Africa, as well as continued aggression in Afghanistan, as incremental
tactics in an effort eventually to control and dominate Southwest
Asia".

Although the US acknowledged that the Soviet geopolitical drive
around the Arabian Peninsula had received major setbacks, most notably
in Egypt, Somalia and to a lesser extent, in Iraq (Iraq's attempt to
diversify it arms purchases, its support for Somalia against Soviet-
backed Ethiopia and, above all, its public condemnation of the Soviet
invasion of Afghanistan), it was nonetheless viewed as posing
increasing dangers to Western interests in the Persian Gulf. Iraq,
which in the 1970s was considered to be the "linchpin of Soviet
influence in the Gulf", still retained varied links with Moscow,
including the Treaty of Friendship (signed in 1972), provision of
access to the Soviet Navy at Umm Qasr, and economic and trade
contacts. But the US was more worried about Soviet involvement in
South Yemen and Ethiopia.

"Soviet influence and control in South Yemen", as the Pentagon
claimed in a later report, was "more pervasive than in any other
nation in the region". Washington had been concerned about the
steady growth of Soviet and communist bloc presence in that country.
According to a Pentagon estimate published in 1983, 2,000 Soviet
military personnel were stationed in South Yemen, which also had
negotiated about $1 billion worth of arms agreements with the USSR. Moscow and Aden had signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, and the Soviets were seen as deriving a number of crucial benefits from their Yemeni foothold. "The Soviet communication and intelligence collection facilities" in Aden and Socotra Island, according to the Pentagon, "could greatly assist the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron's capabilities during any crisis",111 including one in the Gulf. They also put Moscow in a position to control the chokepoint at the Strait of Bab el Mandeb and the approach to the Red Sea. In addition, South Yemen was regarded in the West to be a "centre for revolutionaries, opposition forces and rebels in the whole region",112 apart from being a direct threat to the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia and Oman.

The Soviet presence in Ethiopia, likewise, was considered to be an important element in Moscow's strategy in the Gulf. Ethiopia provided the Soviet Union facilities (Dhalak Island) which enhanced the latter's ability to dominate the Bab el Mandeb Strait and project naval power into the Gulf region. In addition, Ethiopia, which had become a major recipient of Soviet arms and which also stationed a large number of Soviet, East German and Cuban military personnel, was seen as a major link in Moscow's effort to put psychological pressure on the conservative Gulf states.113

2.3.3 The US view: an appraisal

As the foregoing analysis clearly indicates, the US view of the implications of the Afghanistan crisis was decidedly alarmist. The alarm was well represented within the top policy-making circles, where the President himself called the invasion "the greatest threat to
peace since the Second World War". It was also widely reflected in the media and the academic community, whether they identified with the "grand design" view or the "defensive" or "opportunistic" interpretations. Although there were some honorable exceptions, such as George F. Kennan, their protestations received little notice.

This was not so much because the exponents of the grim, majority view based their case in sounder logic or greater historical and contemporary evidence. The emotional and political context in which the American view of Afghanistan took shape could have permitted no large measure of rational debate. The frustration and anger generated by what was nationally perceived to be a major blow to US global position and prestige closely influenced the perspectives of the policy-makers. In addition, both the Carter regime and its political opponents saw important opportunities in using the more alarming interpretation of the Afghanistan crisis to advance their domestic political and electoral fortunes. The former could use it to rationalise an overtly bellicose response which probably owed as much to strategic necessity as to the political necessity of shoring up its sagging domestic popularity. The conservative and Republican opponents of Carter used it to expose more strikingly the alleged "naivety" in the President's previous dealings with the Soviets and strengthen the case against his reelection. As such it was inevitable that the US view of Soviet geopolitical involvement in the Persian Gulf in the immediate aftermath of the Iran and Afghanistan crises could not but undergo major distortion.

This distortion becomes apparent when one examines the implications of Afghanistan in the light of past and contemporary Soviet geopolitical conduct in the region. One may begin by looking
at the so-called "grand design" view although, as noted earlier, it had few adherents either within or without the policy-making establishment. This was not surprising since the advocates of this view have had little to offer as concrete evidence, historical or contemporary, to prove the existence of a veritable master plan in the Kremlin's files.\textsuperscript{115} Nor is it logical or realistic to assume that such a master plan could ever be developed: as Francis Fukuyama sensibly points out, "politics in the Middle East is too unstable and chaotic to allow a geopolitical planning horizon longer than the next six months to a year".\textsuperscript{116} Furthermore, a master plan is inconsistent with the record of Soviet geopolitical behaviour. In the Middle East as in any volatile geostrategic theatre, to base one's tactical conduct on a set master plan would only mean compromising the room for flexibility and manoeuvre, and exposing oneself to higher levels of risk. The Soviet record in the Middle East has revealed little propensity to take on high-risk adventures; indeed, if anything, it has demonstrated an adeptness in exploiting low-risk opportunities. In other words, as Dimitri Simes observed, the Soviets have been successful "precisely because they do not have a master plan".\textsuperscript{117}

If the grand design theory fails the test of logic or evidence, the view perceiving a linkage or continuity in the Czarist, Stalinist and contemporary Soviet policies toward the Gulf can be most generously labelled as crude and simplistic. Moreover, this view ignores the fact that the debate on whether the Czars or Stalin actually sought a warm water port in the Indian Ocean is by no means settled. To quote noted historian Malcolm Yapp, the "various documents and episodes" cited in support of such claims are "invariably out of context, beginning with the forged will of Peter the Great".\textsuperscript{118}
Some of the arguments used by the proponents of the "defensive" view of Soviet design in the Gulf are equally dubious. One example is the view that the Soviet desire to establish hegemony in the Gulf might stem from concern for potential ethnic unrest in central Asia. Such arguments are tied to an assumption that the Soviet Muslims are a highly oppressed lot and are constantly on the lookout for ways to escape the economic, social and political hardships of a totalitarian state and that they are about to achieve some success in such a bid. This assumption may be overstated. The Soviet central Asians are not all Muslims, and those who are Muslims are not an ethnically or culturally homogeneous group. Furthermore, in dealing with their Muslim minorities, the Soviets have "adopted a policy of controlling [rather] than suppressing Islam", as a Times journalist who recently visited the region found out. Despite the existence of underground religious movements, the Soviet Muslims do enjoy some degree of religious and cultural freedom, especially for a people who, in the course of the decades of living under communist rule, have tended to grow more secular than fellow Muslims across the border. Economic development projects have lifted the material conditions of the Soviet Muslims well above those of most of their Southwest Asian cousins; though it is still way below that of the Russians. As one observer testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee:

There are indications that many Soviet Muslims have found ways to reach a modus vivendi with the Soviet system. They also seem to regard themselves as better off than the people across the southern border. Their assumption is that they should be a model for emulation by the inhabitants of neighboring lands, not the reverse.

The argument concerning the extension of the Soviet "Monroe Doctrine" to the Gulf should be viewed with similar caution. While there can be no doubt that the Soviets would be happier if surrounded
by a ring of friendly neighbours across their southern borders, there is not much evidence, Afghanistan notwithstanding, that they have launched an active and aggressive effort to get rid of the existing pro-Western regimes, or to make them and other neutral regimes more compliant. In the past the Soviets have tolerated, and even at times developed close functional ties with, staunchly pro-Western regimes in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. In Iran, the Soviets were initially sceptical and ambivalent regarding the Islamic revolution against the Shah. Indeed, they have shown little inclination to invade or subvert a pro-Western regime on the grounds of ideological incompatibility alone and, even when there had been strong incentives for getting rid of a particularly hostile one, preferred to have that objective "indefinitely postponed" if no low-risk way could be found to achieve it.122

As regards the perception of Soviet interests and objectives concerning Persian Gulf oil there has been no solid evidence to support the claim that the Soviet interest in Gulf oil flows from an imminent energy shortage at home. In a July 1981 report to Congress, the US Defence Intelligence Agency stated that "the Soviet Union would continue to be the world's largest oil producer and remain a net oil exporter for the foreseeable future".123 Indeed, the Soviets themselves ridiculed the CIA's predictions. In a paper presented to a London seminar after the Carter Doctrine was enunciated, Soviet scholar Ruben N. Andreasyan noted:

... the Soviet Union firmly holds first place in the world in oil production, and it is not going to cede it to anyone. ... The Soviet Union is the only great industrial power which has enough oil reserves and produces enough oil to be independent of the import of this expensive raw material. This is one of the major factors of our strategic invulnerability.124
Second, if the Soviets do become an importing nation in the unforeseen future, it does not follow that they will initiate direct or indirect military action to secure control over the Persian Gulf oilfields. The Soviets are surely aware of a Western stake in these resources, and the high military and political risks involved in any such operation, which would go against their traditional preference for low-risk ventures. One would find it difficult to disagree with Geoffrey Jukes when he says "it is arguable that nowadays raw materials are more cheaply secured by purchase than by invasion, especially with a commodity as vulnerable to guerilla action as oil, and that if the likelihood of invasion is directly linked to a perceived need for the product, it should perhaps have been explained why Soviet rather than European or Japanese invasion should be postulated".125

As for the view that Persian Gulf oil might be attractive to the Soviets for reasons other than their own consumption - such as to appropriate oil revenues or to create divisions within the Western alliance, - the prospects, as the Soviets would surely know, of such goals being realized even after the necessary control passed over to them are at best highly uncertain. It strains the imagination to contemplate that any regime, however friendly or subservient to Soviet wishes, will surrender its oil revenues to its Kremlin masters. And if the Soviets apply force to make good their claim, they may well have to pay a price (in terms of conducting the invasion and maintaining production under strict vigilance, thereafter) exceeding the total revenues of the invaded state; assuming that sabotage failed to destroy the oil facilities altogether. Moreover, it can be plausibly said that far from dividing the Western alliance, a Soviet takeover of
a substantial portion of the oil (which could not be an invisible or low-key effort) might actually spur greater unity and determination among the allies.

Next, one may analyse US perceptions regarding the instruments of the Soviet "threat". First, the tendency to interpret Afghanistan as a demonstration of Soviet "willingness and ability to interfere by direct military means in the affairs of regional states"126 can be construed to be a crude generalization which ignores the special context of the deep-rooted and long-standing relationship between the two countries. Soviet-Afghan relations, one may say, resemble to a certain extent the "special relationship" that exists between the US and Saudi Arabia where, as shall be seen later, the US has committed itself to preserve the political status quo (the Reagan "Corollary" to the Carter Doctrine, see Chapter 6). As a country bordering directly on the USSR, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan did not demonstrate the efficiency of the Soviet instruments for direct power projection over longer distances. In fact, Soviet ability to intervene substantially in theatres not contiguous to its territory or where it lacks a usable overland approach (Saudi Arabia, for example) remains quite limited; despite some progress during the preceding decade (see Chapter 7).

In so far as Soviet "indirect" power projection is concerned, the so-called "encirclement" view appears to be fallacious because it assumes a deliberate design on the part of Moscow — similar to the "grand design" view — for which no proof has been provided. It is not self-evident that Moscow had chosen its allies in the periphery of the Gulf to intimidate the core states rather than with other strategic and local factors in mind. For example, the Soviet-Syrian relationship can hardly be said to have been forged on the principal
basis of a shared interest in subverting the Gulf. Similarly, the origins of Soviet ties with Ethiopia had as much to do with the conflict in the Horn of Africa than a desire to apply pressure in the conservative Peninsula. Moreover, the Soviet alliances constituting the perceived "encirclement" have proven to be all too fragile, as evidenced in the case of Egypt or Somalia. As the DOD itself noted: "the record of "Soviet attempts to insert presence outside their own territory ... is hardly unblemished".  

Finally, the US inclination to view Soviet activities in the region as essentially "offensive" is highly questionable. The Soviets have several economic and political interests in the region which can explain a great deal of their involvement. The Soviet naval activities in the region are not necessarily geared to a "capability to harass and disrupt the Persian Gulf oil lanes" or to curtail "supply to the West by blocking the Strait of Hormuz or interdicting tankers", as US officials are frequently prone to assert. Such views overlook, often deliberately, the fact that Soviet naval activities in the Indian Ocean have come largely as a response to the American deployment of strategic ballistic missile submarines and the development of the Diego Garcia facility. Moreover, while the Soviets have made good political use of their Indian Ocean naval presence, their ability to conduct effective seaborne interventions into the littoral regions is far from developed. In addition such interventions, as well as Soviet disruption of the oil lanes, can hardly be envisaged if the US Navy - with a far superior ocean warfighting capability - chooses to oppose it (as it certainly will if a friendly state or the oil lanes are at stake). Indeed, there is little evidence to support the claim that the Soviet naval presence in
the Indian Ocean is motivated by a desire to interfere with shipping or intervene on the littoral, rather than counter the West's seaborne strike capacity.

But such reasoning was hardly evident in the official thinking of the Carter administration in the aftermath of the Afghanistan crisis. It ignored the "defensive" rationale behind the Soviet move, and chose to emphasize the potential consequences of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan as a "stepping stone" to the Gulf. It saw the Soviet decision to use force in Afghanistan as a dangerous and telling precedent. The problem of securing Western interests in the Gulf was viewed essentially as a military problem. Never since World War II, observed George F. Kennan, "has there been so far-reaching a militarization of thought and discourse in the capital". The administration's mood soon led to actions: enunciation of a Presidential doctrine committing the US to possible military intervention in the Gulf, and steps to build-up a military instrument to carry out that commitment, the Rapid Deployment Force.
NOTES


4. ibid.


7. ibid.; Shahram Chubin, "Repercussions of the Crisis in Iran", Survival (May-June 1979): 99-100.


9. Reich, "The United States and Iran", op. cit., p.16.


12. One of the most forceful critics was Henry Kissinger. See his interview with The Economist (February 10, 1979): 32.


15. For information on the minority problem in Iran, see Nikki R. Keddie, "The Minorities Question in Iran", in Tahir Kheli and Ayubi, The Iran-Iraq War, op. cit., pp.85-108.


A classified CIA study, leaked to the press in January 1980, however, had reached the opposite conclusion. The study was reported to have warned the Carter administration that the Al-Saud regime's survival "could not be assured beyond the next two years". Intra-dynastic squabbles were cited as a major factor. For reference to this study, see Joe Stork, "Saudi Arabia and the US", Merip Reports (October 1980): 29.


34. Islam and Revolution, op. cit., p.327.


60. Price, Oil and Middle East Security, op. cit., p.27.


70. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture for Fiscal Year 1984, p.7.


79. According to recollections made by former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, the factor of Islamic contamination was one of the "two theories ... advanced within the administration" on Soviet motives in Afghanistan, (the other one was the "opportunistic" view). Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983): 388.


82. According to Vance, this view had wide prevalence within the Carter administration as well. Hard Choices, op. cit., p.388.


89. Department of State Bulletin (January 1980): A.

90. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture for Fiscal Year 1982, p.13.

91. The CIA predictions are analyzed in a Rand Corporation study. See Ethan S. Burger, Eastern Europe and Oil: The Soviet Dilemma P-6368 (Santa Monica: Rand Cooperation, October 1979): 6-7.


97. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture for Fiscal Year 1984, p.7.

98. This estimate is from Congressional Research Service, Soviet Policy toward the Third World (1980), p.10.


100. A point frequently stressed by the Carter administration, see "An Interview with Brzezinski", Time (January 14, 1980): 11.


126. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture for Fiscal Year 1984, p.6.

127. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture for Fiscal Year 1981, p.27.


CHAPTER 3

RAPID DEPLOYMENT STRATEGY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"For most of its history, the United States has had a capability to project military power into other regions of the world, in order to protect our vital interests; indeed, that has been one of the historic missions of the United States Marine Corps. ... recent events have reemphasized the nature and extent both of our interests in remote areas of the world and of the threats to them - particularly the problem of access to the Persian Gulf oil vital to us, but even more so to our allies and friends. When this administration came into office four years after the 1973 oil embargo, we found that the United States had little or no capability for quickly and effectively deploying military forces to that critical region of the world. We have begun a careful effort to design and implement a security strategy for that region and a capability to execute that strategy - an effort that was intensified after the Iranian revolution, the seizure of our diplomatic personnel in Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. While the potential missions of our Rapid Deployment Forces are global, in practice most of our planning and programming has focused on Southwest Asia."


Washington's response to the Southwest Asian crises of 1979 had two aspects. The first related to crisis management; comprising a number of short-term measures to cope with setbacks unfolding in rapid succession. These included economic sanctions and diplomatic efforts (e.g. at the UN) aimed at punishing the offending sides - Khomeini's Iran for holding the hostages and Soviet Union for invading Afghanistan; military posturing, mainly in the form of increased naval deployments, to demonstrate American "resolve" to friends and enemies
and diplomatic moves to reassure the pro-Western regional states of America's continued commitment to their security and stability. The second aspect was the fashioning of a long-term posture to replace the defunct Nixon Doctrine. This process, parallel to and interacting with the short-term responses, was influenced not only by the changing American perception of Persian Gulf geopolitics, but also by a considerable erosion of the "Vietnam Syndrome" in the domestic arena and a consequent reappraisal of the utility of military force as a policy instrument. The most important outcome of this planning was to be the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force.

3.1 Rapid Deployment: The Early Post-War Phase

The conceptual and practical basis of the RDF — denoting a capability to project ready combat forces to distant crisis spots with speed and efficiency in order to protect threatened national interests — was hardly new. The United States, as the Pentagon frequently and proudly pointed out, had been "in the rapid deployment and power projection business for a long time". Since its birth in 1775, the Marine Corps had served as the country's premier long-distance intervention force — occupying a major and glamorous position in American military tradition. A light infantry outfit with unique amphibious capabilities, the Corps had also evolved into a combined arms force with armour and air support. Despite pressures for demobilization after the World War II campaigns, the National Security Act of 1947 retained the Corps with its amphibious mission. Supporters of the Corps' continued existence, as The Legislative History of the "Marine Corps Act" records, wanted the Marines "to provide a balanced force in readiness for a naval campaign and, at the
same time, a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large-scale war - (emphasis added) - in essence what came to be known as the "rapid deployment mission" from the time of the Kennedy administration. The Corps survived its occasional critics and the absence of major amphibious operations - General McArthur's Inchon landing being the sole exception - to become a spearhead of the Rapid Deployment Force set up by the Carter administration in 1979-1980.

After the Second World War, the rapid deployment of American military forces to crisis spots in distant areas was made the individual responsibility of all the services of the US military. The Key West Agreement of March 1948 between Defence Secretary James Forrestal and the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed all Services "to maintain in readiness mobile reserve forces, properly organized, trained, and equipped for employment in emergency". This position was restated in September 1951 in a document, Joint Action Armed Forces (JAAF), issued by the departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The JAAF was superseded by the first Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF) document issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in November 1959, but the new document contained the same language regarding the individual service responsibility for rapid deployment missions. The UNAAF, however, was specific in assigning the services responsibility for organizing, training, and equipping forces for supporting unified or specified commands some of which held responsibility for the conduct of American military operations in distant regions. The provisions of the JAAF and the UNAFF governed US military interventions during the 1950s, such as Korea and Lebanon. While the services were individually responsible for mobilizing and
transporting their units from home locations to the conflict theatres, the command of these units passed onto the theatre unified commander (as in Korea) or field commander (as in Lebanon) once the forces arrived at their destinations.\textsuperscript{4} At the end of the decade, the individual service capabilities for the rapid deployment mission consisted of:

- The Strategic Army Corps (STRAC), organized in 1958, consisting of approximately 116,000 men organized into a Corps headquarters, three combat-ready divisions, a logistical command headquarters, and non-divisional combat and combat-support units.

- The Tactical Air Command (TAC), set up in March 1946, comprising 51,000 personnel and approximately 850 combat (fighter and reconnaissance) and combat-support (air refuelling and transport) aircraft.

- The USMC Fleet Marine Force (FMF), consisting of 114,400 troops organized in three combat divisions, three aircraft wings, and two commands - FMF Atlantic and FMF Pacific.\textsuperscript{5}

- Navy forces spearheaded by carrier battle groups.\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{3.2 The McNamara Strategy}

US doctrine and planning for long-range military intervention underwent major changes during the 1960s. These changes were part of the substantial restructuring of the US conventional force posture carried out under the initiative and direction of Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defence under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. McNamara's strategic doctrines responded to a widely-perceived need to adapt US military strategy to the shifting nature of global challenges. The trends in the global political situation were then
being viewed as pointing toward a sharp escalation of strife and instability in the Third World. "All the studies we have done", reported Army Chief of Staff Harold Johnson, "indicate that in the years since 1945, the number of troublespots has increased rather than decreased; and this is occasioned largely by the enormous number of new nations that have appeared, particularly in Africa". The new nations were a factor in global instability not only because they lacked any "experience in self-government" and were "yet to achieve any sense of national cohesiveness among their heterogeneous population", but also because the process of their emergence had in many cases become a tempting target for Soviet and Chinese meddling. Under McNamara's leadership, the Pentagon became increasingly concerned about what it saw as communist bloc's support for "what Mr. Khruschev euphemistically called wars of national liberation or popular revolts, which we know as covert armed aggression, insurrection and subversion".

The Kennedy administration, unlike its predecessor, believed that an outright war would be the unlikely mode of communist expansion due to the strength of the American nuclear deterrent. The real problem, as McNamara repeatedly emphasized, was that "of covert armed aggressions, insurrections and subversion"; in fact, "to the extent we deter the Communists from initiating larger wars, we may anticipate even greater efforts on their part in so-called wars of national liberation".

The American military strategy developed since the Second World War and focused on the nuclear deterrent had no realistic answer to this type of challenge. The United States, McNamara stressed, would have to "face up to the fact" that strategic nuclear forces were not
"a credible deterrent to all kinds of aggression" and tactical nuclear weapons "could not be substituted for conventional forces in the kinds of conflicts in which we were most likely to become involved during the 1960s". This was true not only of the Third World situations, but also of Europe. The credibility of the prevailing strategic doctrine of "massive retaliation" against a Soviet conventional attack came to be increasingly questioned as the Soviet Union moved towards a second strike capability. As one noted critic, Henry Kissinger, argued, the US "cannot expect to counter limited military challenges by the response appropriate to all-out surprise attack". Upon entering office, President Kennedy agreed; the "massive retaliation" doctrine was unsuited to limited threats because it left no choice between "inglorious retreat or unlimited retaliation".

The Kennedy administration's defence policy attached the highest priority to achieving "greater versatility" and flexibility in the US conventional force posture. The objective of this restructuring was not only to overcome the loopholes of "massive retaliation" in Europe, but also to enable the US to "cope with the entire spectrum of limited aggressions, ranging from small-scale guerilla and subversive activities to overt attacks involving sizable regular military forces". The global and varied nature of the threats perceived were underscored in the Kennedy administration's adoption of a "two-and-a-half-war" strategy. The US, the strategy stipulated, must have a capability to wage, simultaneously but with help from allies, two major conventional wars - a three month conventional forward defence of Europe against the Warsaw Pact and a defence of South Korea or Southeast Asia against a full-scale Chinese invasion - and a small operation elsewhere.
But the essence of flexibility lay in fulfilling what McNamara called "a basic, fundamental military requirement for a rapid deployment capability". A rapid deployment capability would ensure a more efficient distribution of limited resources, and serve both to deter and prevent limited conflicts from expanding into larger conflicts. In the words of the then Army Chief of Staff:

The events which occur during the first days of a developing distant crisis will greatly influence - and may in fact decide - its outcome. Timely projection of military power can serve to halt enemy aggression or result in a shorter period of involvement, with fewer casualties, a smaller total force commitment, or less destruction within the conflict area. To paraphrase an old aphorism - a brigade in time may serve the commitment of nine. Or - to go a step further - being demonstrably ready and able to commit a division in time may eliminate the need to commit any.

Planning a capability for rapid deployment involved a choice or compromise between two alternative approaches. One was "forward deployment", involving reliance on forces deployed overseas in advance of need near potential troublespots, ready to move in quickly as the conflict erupted. This approach, however, entailed considerable political and practical problems. As McNamara pointed out, it requires very large numbers of men, great quantities of equipment, long periods of overseas service, and involves all of the uncertainties and difficulties associated with foreign bases, such as base rights, status-of-forces agreements ... It also reduces the flexibility of our military posture and considerably increases defense expenditures abroad, thereby adversely affecting our balance of payment.

The alternative to "forward deployment" was the "central reserve" approach, which relied upon a central reserve of troops and equipment stationed in the continental United States which could be deployed by airlift and sealift at the first hints of trouble overseas. According to McNamara:
a mobile "fire brigade" reserve, centrally located in the United States and ready for deployment to a threatened spot anywhere in the world. is basically a more economical and flexible use of military forces. Fewer men and less equipment can do the job and most of the problems involved in stationing large U.S. forces in foreign countries in peacetime could be avoided. 19

McNamara recognized, however, that the "central reserve" concept could not be feasible unless backed up by substantial enhancement in US strategic mobility resources. Given the large costs and long lead times involved in building and maintaining the requisite air and sea lift (especially airlift, since sealift could not be rapid enough) resources to support a "two-and-a-half-war" strategy, McNamara decided to "draw upon elements of both approaches". 20 There would be some form of "forward deployment", not of troops but of equipment (prepositioning). With "adequate lift capability and balanced prepositioning" the "central reserve" approach would be "the preferred alternative for meeting the rapid response objective". 21 The essential ingredients of this strategy had three aspects:

First, we must maintain forces ready for rapid deployment and entry into combat.

Second, ships and aircraft must be configured for the movement of our forces and must be readily available to carry them to overseas areas and to insure the flow of follow-on reinforcement and resupply.

And third, in those areas where our commitments are firm and certain, we must maintain stocks of selected equipment and supplies at some of our overseas bases. 25

During the 1960s, the Pentagon developed and pursued programs designed to enhance US capabilities in all three areas. With respect to the first, the most significant development was the creation of the US Strike Command in September 1961. The Strike Command brought together the Strategic Army Corps and the combat-ready units of the Tactical Air Command "into a unified command with the object of
integrating the combat powers of both into a single, highly mobile operating force of the highest combat effectiveness and speediest reaction capabilities." The Army component consisted of an expanded Strategic Army Corps of 8 divisions and combat support forces organized into two Corps headquarters. The Air Force component comprised of three numbered air forces and more than 40 squadrons of reconnaissance, tactical fighter, troop carrier and tanker aircraft. From this reservoir of forces, the Strike Command could "form up powerful striking forces tailored" to the nature and intensity of the contingency. The Command was headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida (the future headquarters of the RDJTF and Central Command), where it functioned under a Commander-in-Chief drawn from the Army and a deputy drawn from the Air Force.

Initially, the Strike Command's mission was not focused on any specific geographical area. It was intended "to provide an integrated, mobile, highly combat-ready force ... instantly available for use as an augmentation to existing theater forces under the unified commanders, or as the primary force for use in remote areas." But since most other areas of the globe had already been "assigned" to one of the unified commands, the Joint Chief of Staff in December 1963 directed the Strike Command to assume responsibility for all US defence-related activities in the Middle East, Africa south of the Sahara and South Asia (MEAFSA). The original mission of reinforcing other unified commands was retained, but while in such operations the Strike Command's assets after moving into the theatre had to function under the control of the command being reinforced, it had independent control over the planning and execution of contingency operations within its own area of responsibility. And that area was quite vast,
from Dakar, West Africa to the Burmese border in South Asia and from Capetown, South Africa to the Iran-Soviet border. The Strike Command trained extensively in desert warfare, and participated in exercises in the Middle East region. In May 1964, for example, 100,000 soldiers and airmen drawn from 4 Army divisions and 15 Air Force squadrons operating from 25 airbases from Texas to Oregon participated in Exercise DESERTSTRIKE. In March-May of the same year, the Strike Command conducted Exercise DELAWAR with Iranian forces, in which a joint task force composed of an airborne brigade and 2 fighter squadrons with associated airlift participated.

But the Strike Command's functions were constrained by several factors. Firstly, its force structure did not include any Navy or Marine component. Given the inherent flexibility of naval forces and the traditional foreign intervention role of the Marines, their abstention from any unified command was bound to affect its strength and versatility. Secondly, the Army and Air Force components allocated to the Strike Command were not under its day-to-day operational control in peacetime, except at the time of joint exercises. This caused considerable uncertainty and confusion, severely limiting the Command's ability to achieve coordinated and flexible contingency planning and resource allocation. Third, the Strike Command's Middle East focus could not be taken very seriously since the British were still present in much of the region and were relied upon by the US to control "brush fire" contingencies. But the decisive blow to the Strike Command was the deployment of much of the CONUS-based troops to Vietnam. The Command "just sort of withered on the vine because most of the forces they had to work with went to Southeast Asia".
Apart from the Strike Command, the other major initiative under McNamara's rapid deployment program was for enhanced strategic mobility. Airlift received most attention; the DOD program involved both increased procurement of existing primary airlifters - the C-130 and the C-141 - as well as the development and acquisition of a new intercontinental airlifter - the C-5. The C-5 fulfilled the vital requirement for a plane capable of carrying outsize cargo; unlike the C-141, it could carry almost all types of heavy bulky equipment which the ground forces required for maximum combat effectiveness. As a result of the airlift initiatives during the 1962-1963 period, the Pentagon claimed that the Strategic Army Corps, with a 75 per cent increase in its airlift, could give the US "great flexibility to deal with multiple situations in widely separated areas".31

With respect to sealift and prepositioning, the two legs were merged into the relatively novel concept of maritime prepositioning under a Forward Floating Depots (FFD) program. Initially, 3 VICTORY class ships were modified into "mobile depots" carrying balanced stocks of bulky and heavy combat equipment and supplies. The FFD concept required these ships to be "stationed overseas within a few days steaming distance of potential trouble spots, and thus very quickly available to 'marry up' with airlifted forces from the central reserve". Three ships were actually deployed to the Philippines in FY 1963 and several others were planned to be added later before the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam disrupted the program.32

Instead, the Pentagon came up with the idea of the Fast Deployment Logistics Ship (FDL) as the cornerstone of its long-term, integrated plan to enhance US rapid strategic mobility capabilities. The plan called for a mix of 6 C-5 squadrons, 14 C-141 squadrons and
30 FDLs, along with cargo ships and aircraft under commercial ownership. The requirement for the FDL was established in the 1964 Pentagon study LOGLAND (Logistics Support for Land Operations), which examined various mix of airlift, sealift and prepositioning to decide the most cost-effective route to a rapid deployment capability. One option considered was to go for additional C-5 procurement, but it was discarded as too costly. The FDLs, on the other hand, were found to be an attractive, practical alternative.

The FDLs were to be fast, large payload (8 to 10,000 short tons) ships capable of delivering cargo either at normal ports or over-the-beach, thereby providing greater operational flexibility than the slower (16 knots) and smaller payload (2,265 short ton) VICTORY ships. According to plans developed by the Pentagon, some FDLs would have been fully-loaded and forward deployed near likely trouble spots, while others would have been partially-loaded but kept at US ports in a ready condition, which would have allowed them to be fully-loaded and sail off in a few days. Thus the FDLs would have made an "enormous contribution" not only to the US "rapid deployment capability" but would also have been "highly efficient carriers for resupply after the initial deployment phase".

But the FDL concept ran into serious opposition in the Congress which, under pressure from the powerful maritime lobby, argued that the FDL would deprive private shipbuilding and cargo firms of much lucrative defence transportation contracting. Congress also objected to the high cost ($2 billion) of the project. But the most important factor working against the FDL was the Vietnam War-inspired opposition in the country to military interventions abroad. The possession of the FDL, it was feared, could tempt the President to use
military force more freely as a foreign policy instrument. The influential Senator, Richard Russell, objected that "if it is easy for us to go anywhere and do anything, we will always be going somewhere and doing something".\textsuperscript{37} Denying all funds for the 5 FDLS requested by the Pentagon in its FY 1968 budget, the Senate Armed Services Committee Authorization Report argued that the FDLS could give the "impression that the United States has assumed the function of policing the world and that it can be thought to be at least considering intervention in any kind of strife or commotion".\textsuperscript{38} In the face of such Congressional resistance, the FDLL program rapidly faded into oblivion.

During the term of the Nixon administration, Congress further restricted executive discretion in committing US military forces to war through the War Powers Resolution (November 1973). Faced with widespread anti-intervention sentiments caused by the Vietnam War, the administration made major changes in the US strategic posture. Firstly, it reduced the geostrategic basis for its conventional force planning from the "two-and-a-half-war" strategy to a "one-and-a-half war" strategy, citing among other things, the weakening of communist pressure as a result of the Sino-Soviet rift. In his 1970 foreign policy report to Congress, Nixon stated that the US would from now on "maintain in peacetime general purpose forces adequate for simultaneously meeting a major Communist attack in either Europe or Asia, assisting allies against non-Chinese threats in Asia, and contending with a [minor] contingency elsewhere".\textsuperscript{39} (emphasis added) Secondly, while McNamara's stress on a flexible and expanded conventional force posture was motivated by a desire to directly intervene against "national liberation" wars and other forms of
instability, the new administration, in the spirit of the Nixon Doctrine, decided that "future guerilla and subversive threats should be dealt with primarily by the indigenous forces of our allies", although the US would "provide economic and military assistance to supplement local efforts where our interests are involved".40

The shift from McNamara's rapid deployment strategy could be discerned from a number of developments. The effort to gain Congressional approval for the FDLs was finally abandoned in the FY1971 budget request and the Pentagon went for commercial building and charter of cargo ships to modernize its sealift resources.41 The strategic mobility program received another major setback when it was found that the procurement costs of the C-5 airlifter would be much higher than anticipated. Unable to gain the extra funds at a time of strong and widespread domestic demand for defence budget cuts, the Pentagon reduced its procurement target for the C-5 from 120 to about 80 planes.42

Furthermore, in a revision of the unified command plan in April 1971, the US Strike Command was disbanded and replaced by a more modest US Readiness Command. While the Strike Command's ineffectiveness, as discussed earlier, had already led to pressures for its abolition, political factors and budgetary constraints (also largely politically-induced) proved decisive. Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird admitted this when he explained the abolition of the Strike Command as a move "to reflect changes in our international commitments and policies ... in keeping with the Nixon Doctrine".43 The replacement for Strike, the Readiness Command, retained in theory the "limited war" mission of its predecessor, including the "responsibility to provide a general reserve of combat ready forces to
reinforce other U.S. commands, perform deployment planning and assist...
in developing doctrines and techniques for the joint employment of forces". But it was neither a combatant command nor assigned a specific geographic jurisdiction. The Readiness Command was to be "manned austerely" and "devote its entire effort to training and to developing recommendations for new doctrines, procedures, and tactics".44

The Nixon administration abhorred McNamara's idea that "half war" contingencies could be best managed by projecting a central reserve of army and land-based tactical air forces - especially the former. The Vietnam War had demonstrated the kind of fatal entanglement that ground force interventions could lead to. Instead the Nixon Doctrine, widely dubbed a "blue water doctrine", recognized sea power as the primary instrument for distant power projection. This was evident when under the revised unified command plan responsibility for the Indian Ocean was given to the US Pacific Command. The Pentagon described the new arrangement as "more compatible with the forces likely to be deployed for contingencies in these areas".45 The Nixon administration also initiated a major effort to build-up US naval power in the Indian Ocean. The most important initiatives undertaken for this purpose were the development of Diego Garcia as a major communications and naval support base and increased size and frequency of US naval deployments to the Ocean.46

3.3 RDF Under Carter

3.3.1 Evolution before the Iranian revolution

Prior to the Iranian revolution, the Carter administration did little to change the lines adopted by its two Republican predecessors.
But one of its early perceptions (as distinguished from action) would later be regarded as the "genesis" of the current RDF. This was a "broadly gauged review of the US-Soviet strategic balance" undertaken in the early days of the new administration. Such reviews were not a novel practice, but as the initiator of the study, Zbigniew Brzezinski, later revealed, this particular one was not "a narrowly focused accounting of the relative military strength of the two countries but a more sophisticated appraisal of the relative performance - military, political, economic, and ideological - of the two competing systems".47 Conducted by Professor Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard, the findings of the study were distilled into a Presidential Review Memorandum - PRM-10 - with appropriate inputs from the military establishment. The study concluded that in the East-West competition, the USSR had made "its greatest strides" in the military field, while the US was generally ahead in the rest of the areas. The memorandum proposed greater US and allied military effort, both in the conventional and nuclear fields, to counter Soviet military advances in the European front. In the non-NATO arena, it "identified the Persian Gulf as a vulnerable and vital region, to which greater military concern ought to be given".48 Exactly what form of concern was contemplated was later recalled by General P.X. Kelly, the first Commander of the RDF:

... PRM-10 discussed the forces required beyond those necessary for NATO. Included were Army and Marine Corps land-combat forces, together with naval and tactical air forces, and strategic mobility forces with the range and payload to minimize our dependence on overseas staging and logistical support bases. This, in essence, was the rapid deployment force.49

The PRM-10 was made into official policy in the form of Presidential Directive-18 which ordered the formation of a "deployment
force of light divisions with strategic mobility independent of overseas bases and logistical support" and "moderate naval and tactical air forces which could be used in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, Korea or elsewhere". Although PRM-10 and PD-18 were classified documents, broad outlines of what they contained were available from official statements and press leaks. Speaking at Wake Forrest University in March, 1978, President Carter himself announced that his administration was "improving and will maintain quickly deployable forces - air, land, and sea - to defend our interests throughout the world". Press reports leaking the plans gave more detailed accounts. One report published in July 1978 disclosed that PD-18 had called for a "rapid reaction mobile force for quick strikes in Third World crises" which could consist of approximately 100,000 troops, including 2 army airborne divisions and a Marine Amphibious Brigade, backed by 2 to 4 aircraft carriers and up to 3 Air Force wings totalling about 200 planes. In the article, Brzezinski was quoted to the effect that where appropriate, this force could be used in a "preemptive" mode (because "who gets there first had command of the situation") to contain escalation of minor contingencies.

Despite its inclusion in a Presidential Directive, the rapid deployment concept was received in the policy-making establishment with little enthusiasm. During inter-agency discussions of the PRM-10 and PD-18, the State Department argued that regional security issues such as in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region could better be dealt with by negotiating a naval arms limitations agreement with the Soviets. Indeed, in September 1977, Brzezinski himself issued a memorandum requesting the Secretary of Defence to monitor and limit the pace of construction at Diego Garcia in accordance with progress in the US-Soviet Naval Arms Limitations Talks.
Moreover, the idea of a special intervention force was incompatible with the initiatives propounded by the Carter administration early in its term to place US foreign policy on a new "moral" footing. Among other things, the administration had hoped to base its global posture on a "worldwide web of bilateral, political, and, where appropriate, economic relations with the new emerging regional 'influentials' thereby widening, in keeping with historical circumstances, our earlier reliance on the Atlantic community". The states identified in this category included Venezuela, Brazil, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, India and Indonesia. There could be little doubt that creation of a special intervention force would have been especially unwelcome to these states. Many, such as Iran, wanted themselves to dominate the management of security affairs in their respective regions.

The Carter administration, which had retained the "one-and-a-half war" posture, was out to undercut the major substantive basis for that "half war" planning by proposing to withdraw US troops from South Korea and reassign them to NATO. Although the proposal was not carried out, the Pentagon was attaching ever more emphasis to the European theatre, often to the exclusion of attention elsewhere. As General P.X. Kelly later commented, "since American security priorities at the time [pre-Iranian revolution] were devoted primarily to NATO, the creation of ... a contingency force was naturally placed on the back burner". Until the Iranian revolution, the only progress attained in implementing PD-18's proposed deployment force was "several detailed staff studies" on comparative US-Soviet capability for limited contingencies. Although these studies later had "considerable
influence" in shaping the rapid deployment programs undertaken after the fall of the Shah, they were not decision documents of any importance. In a related development, responding to the secret "consolidated guidance" issued by the Secretary of Defence in 1978, the Army had begun to plan for a "Unilateral Corps" (the name stressing its independence from NATO or other alliance commitments). This initiative was intended to bring the Army's light divisions as well as other service units as a "go anywhere" force for limited contingencies. But when the outgoing Army Chief, Bernard Rogers, revealed this project in late June 1979, he conceded that it had not gone beyond the initial planning stage and was unable to predict its expected activation date or the details of its size and command structure.

3.3.2 The RDF as a response to the Southwest Asian crises

The fall of the Shah was a major turning point in the evolution of the rapid deployment concept. It needs to be stressed that it was the Iranian revolution, and not the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which provided the decisive impetus for the transformation of the rapid deployment initiative of PD-18 into an actual intervention force by mid-1980. In fact, by the time the Soviet invasion took place, most of the planning for the Rapid Deployment Force was at an advanced stage: specific force assignments had been decided upon, headquarters identified, and official statements announcing the creation of the force made.

Barely a month and a half after the Shah left Teheran, Brzezinski, who had been dismayed by the "slow reaction" from the military to the PD-18 concept, submitted a memorandum to the President
"urging a new 'security framework' to reassert U.S. power and influence" in the Gulf and abandon the stalematized Indian Ocean naval limitation talks with the Soviets. The centrepiece of this strategy was to be a credible American capability to project power into the region. As the Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East told the House Middle East Subcommittee, with the Shah gone, the US would have to "rely more heavily on our own military capability" to protect Western interests in the region.

In a bid to assess the feelings of key regional states and to reassure them of America's continued commitment to their security, Harold Brown toured Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel and Jordan in February 1979. Brown was reported to have discussed with the Saudis the possibility of increasing US military assistance to the region, enhancing US naval presence in the Indian Ocean and building up a force for crisis intervention. Upon returning to Washington, Brown announced that the oil flow from the Gulf was "clearly part of our vital interests" which would be defended "with whatever means are appropriate, including military force where necessary". That such a statement did not reflect the solitary views of the Defence Secretary was confirmed by Energy Secretary (and former Defence Secretary) James Schlesinger who asserted that the US would protect its "vital interests in the Gulf "even if that involves the use of military strength or of military presence".

Further evidence of the administration's plans to pursue a more assertive role in the region came when it overreacted to the Yemeni crisis in March. Even though there was considerable doubt regarding the seriousness of reported South Yemeni incursions into the North, the President waived the requirement for Congressional oversight in
rushing approximately $400 million worth of military equipment to North Yemen. At the same time, the aircraft carrier Constellation was dispatched to the Arabian Sea, and a fleet of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) planes were deployed to Saudi Arabia to strengthen Saudi air defences. The moves were justified as "to reassure American friends in the region and to demonstrate U.S. resolve".

A crucial policy session to determine the administration's Persian Gulf strategy was held in the third week of June, in the form of two successive White House meetings attended by all top foreign policy and defence officials including Carter, Vance, Brzezinski, Brown, Schlesinger and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General David Jones. The meeting reviewed the implications of the unfolding events in Southwest Asia and debated proposals for an appropriate response. In his memoirs, Brzezinski recalls the lines advocated by different participants:

At one point in that debate, Schlesinger argued forcefully that American military presence in the Indian Ocean - Persian Gulf area should "balance" the Soviets, and when Vance and Christopher reacted negatively, I not only backed Schlesinger, but stated that in fact our objective ought to be military preponderance, since the area was vital to the United States while not of equal significance to the Soviets.

According to press reports, these deliberations led to broad agreement on the following measures: (1) preparation of a list of military deployment options to the Gulf by the Pentagon; (2) exploration of the feasibility of a permanent Indian Ocean naval fleet; (3) regular deployment of land-based aircraft to friendly countries in the region; (4) increased military sales to the region; (5) closer cooperation with the pro-Western regional states in the security field; and (6) movement on the Palestinian issue.
The idea of an Indian Ocean fleet - to be called the Fifth Fleet - as a long-term measure to protect Western interests in the Gulf and other Indian Ocean littoral regions had been under consideration for some time. The Horn of Africa crisis in 1978 had removed the last vestiges of official interest in the Indian Ocean naval limitation talks with the Soviets. The Pentagon advocated that the Fifth Fleet "would be tangible evidence that we have a vital national interest in the Gulf and we are prepared to do what is necessary, including the use of military force, to defend our vital interests there". Noted naval strategists such as the former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Admiral Thomas Moorer, and Alvin J. Cottrell argued that "a formal fleet designation" be given to "whatever U.S. naval presence is retained in the region" because that would be "important for regional perceptions".

But the problems facing the creation of such a fleet were numerous and weighty. Firstly, it was clear that a Fifth Fleet could not be assembled without withdrawing ships from other existing fleets. But as the Pentagon itself admitted, any major and long-term detachment of units from the Sixth or Seventh Fleets would "reduce" their "ability to respond to a NATO alert in the Mediterranean or a contingency in the Western Pacific". Secondly, Navy officials understood from recent experience that any large-scale Indian Ocean presence "would be an enormous logistical enterprise, and it would not come cheap". The requirements would be especially great if a carrier was to be homeported - a move without which the Fifth Fleet could not be deemed a sufficiently credible deterrent. But the Pentagon found that "about five years and about $800 million would be needed to homeport a battle group". Moreover, the US had
difficulty in finding a location in the Indian Ocean that could offer adequate facilities for the ships, air wing and about 15,000 military and enlisted personnel involved in homeporting a carrier. As against this, the existing arrangement for Indian Ocean deployments - in the form of naval task forces (Task Force 70) reporting to Commander, Seventh Fleet and the US Pacific Command - was said to have worked well. The Fifth Fleet proposal was subsequently dropped.\(^{76}\)

In contrast, US policy-makers decided that the time had come to bring rapidly into reality the deployment force concept outlined in Presidential Directive 18. A few days after revelations of the Army's plans for a "go anywhere" "Unilateral Corps", Defence Secretary Brown stated that the US had combat-ready forces available to deal with emergency situations involving the disruption of oil supplies.\(^{77}\) Later, he went on to disclose that such combat ready forces were to be called "Rapid Deployment Forces - distinct from the forces earmarked for or assigned to NATO".\(^{78}\) Although he emphasized that such forces could be deployed anywhere in the world, the Persian Gulf region was to be the primary focus.

The hostage crisis in Teheran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan added momentum to the rapid deployment program. As President Carter warned Iran of "grave consequences" if the hostages were harmed, his military commanders were discomfited to find that very little advance planning had been done to respond to contingencies in the region. As the outspoken Commander of the US Readiness Command, General Volney Warner, later recalled: "we didn't even have maps for Southwest Asia and many of us couldn't pronounce the names".\(^{79}\) Inevitably, however, naval deployments to the region were increased as a result of the hostage crisis. The carrier Midnight,
already operating in the region, was joined by a second carrier, *Kitty Hawk*, in the last week of November. This marked the beginning of what was to remain for a long time a policy of two-carrier presence in the region.\(^8\) These deployments were justified not only as deterents to any Iranian harming of American hostages, but also as moves to convince local states, Saudi Arabia in particular, that the US would not be averse to "use its immense military power" to protect its national interest.\(^9\)

Earlier, in September 1979, Carter had ordered an increase from three to five ships of the US Command Middle East Force (COMIDEASTFOR). Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US had close to 30 ships in the Gulf/Arabian sea region, including, at one stage, 3 aircraft carriers. US intervention options acquired new meaning in March 1980, when a Seventh Fleet amphibious task group with 1,800 embarked Marines arrived in the area. Until March 1981, four such task groups deployed to the Indian Ocean, ensuring the continuous presence of at least one Navy-Marine amphibious team.\(^8\) The Navy also planned and carried out several exercises of varying scale and type. The US naval build-up continued during the rest of the year, with reinforcements coming after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. In October 1980, Secretary of State Edmund Muskie acknowledged that "since early 1979, the United States has had on station the most powerful naval force ever deployed to Indian Ocean".\(^3\)

Decisions and actions relating to the Rapid Deployment Force moved parallel to the naval build-up. In mid-September 1979, the new Army Chief of Staff, General Edward Meyer, asserted that the "Unilateral Corps" was "well on its way toward reality".\(^4\) At this point the "Unilateral Corps" seemed very much to be an Army-dominated
outfit. This was unacceptable to other services, especially the Marine Corps which, with powerful backers in the Capitol Hill, successfully challenged its hitherto relatively low profile in the proposed rapid intervention force. Sensing that the new force promised both a major boost for the Service's budget and an upturn in its declining relevance, the Marines argued that with their unique amphibious assault capabilities and close air support, they would be better placed to fight against the armour-heavy Middle East opponents than the Army's early-arriving divisions. The Secretary of Defence was persuaded. On December 5, Major General P.X. Kelly, then Marine planning chief, was able to disclose that the Corps had been asked to form a "50,000-man spearhead" for the RDF. This "victory" for the Marines was known to be resented by the Army, despite the fact that the Marines were to function within the framework of a joint task force composed of units drawn from all the services (details in Chapter 4).

Other important initiatives to strengthen the Rapid Deployment Force undertaken in the late 1979/early 1980 period concerned the key areas of strategic mobility and access to regional military facilities. Firstly, in December, 1979, President Carter proposed a new fleet of Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) and intercontinental airlifters (CX) to be discussed in Chapter 4. Secondly, a serious effort to secure access to regional military bases and facilities was launched. The need for such access had been acutely felt when the naval forces operating in the region were found to be experiencing serious logistical difficulties. One immediate response was to expedite improvements to the Diego Garcia naval support facilities—but even this was not thought to be enough. Moreover, the
administration felt that access agreements with regional countries would be concrete evidence of its new assertive regional posture. The National Security Council debated and approved proposals to initiate negotiations with several regional states for additional access. In mid-December, a high level negotiating team was sent to Oman, Kenya, Somalia and Saudi Arabia "to feel out how those nations would receive some offer or initiative of U.S. presence". The Saudis refused but the others, according to the Pentagon, gave a "very positive response" to the US quest. Encouraged, the Pentagon followed up with a survey team in early January to look at "all facilities that have potential military usefulness" in Kenya, Somalia and Oman. Based on selections from its finding, legal and negotiating teams began working on the final agreements, which despite some setbacks with respect to Oman and Somalia, resulted in signed agreements with all the three states in the June-August 1980 period (to be discussed in Chapter 5).

3.3.3 The Carter Doctrine

As the momentum in developing the various capabilities for the RDF accelerated, the Carter administration felt the need to issue a strong policy statement announcing its new approach to protect Western interests in the Gulf region. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan proved to be the key factor behind this desire. The invasion added to the already strong domestic feelings about the "decline" of US power. The Carter administration's domestic stock, despite a brief recovery in the aftermath of the hostage crisis, was seriously threatened by accusations of indecision, naivety and lack of firmness in the foreign policy field. There was growing opposition to the policies of detente, emphasis on human rights and other tenets of Carter's
"moralism". The mood in the country, in short, was for a reversal of the so-called "Vietnam Syndrome". The continued detention of American hostages in Iran added to this shift in American public opinion. As the Strategic Survey put it, the hostage crisis reinforced "a general trend toward a narrower and tougher nationalism", and led to "a call for stronger military efforts". Public opinion polls taken around this time confirmed widespread support for an "assertive America".

In addition to such domestic pressures, the Carter administration felt that by publicly and unambiguously "drawing the line" in the Gulf, a strong policy statement could serve as the immediate deterrent to hostile actions by potential adversaries. As Secretary of State Vance wrote in his memoirs, "one of the lessons to be learned from Afghanistan is the importance of giving a clear forewarning of what we viewed as unacceptable behaviour, both as a deterrent to Soviet aggression and to prepare our allies and the American public for swift and firm counteractions". Punitive actions against the offenders, such as the freeze of Iranian assets and the grain embargo, Moscow Olympics boycott, trade restrictions and the ban on high technology transfers imposed on the Soviet Union could not convey the long-term US strategy in sufficiently strong and clear terms. Moreover, Brzezinski believed that if the US was to defend its Persian Gulf interests, then only a forceful "public commitment" would be "capable of generating the necessary budgetary support and the other decisions that are needed to implement" it. Thus was conceived the rationale for the Carter Doctrine, announced in the President's State of the Union address on January 23, 1980:
Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.95

The Carter Doctrine was received with mixed feelings in the United States. As an indicator of the general mood of the nation, a Harris opinion poll found that by a 75 to 18 per cent majority, the public supported the application of the Doctrine "if the Russians try to take over control of the Persian Gulf".96 Despite a few dissenting voices like that of Senator Edward Kennedy who saw the "unilateral and unlimited American commitment" embodied in the Doctrine as "hazardous" and "ineffective",97 there was within the Congress, as a leading member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee stated, a "general consensus for the strong position of the United States with respect to our vital interests in the Persian Gulf".98 Even some of the strongest critics of the Vietnam War took a different position on the Gulf. "The vital interests of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan in Saudi oilfields" said Senator Frank Church, a leading Vietnam War "dove" and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "would necessitate military action if our interests are threatened. If that required organization of strike forces, there would be strong support for this on Capitol Hill".99

Criticism of the Doctrine related not to the stated necessity of military force to protect US interests in the Gulf, but to whether the Carter administration had the will and ability to back the Doctrine with the requisite level of force. The President was accused of "speaking loudly while carrying a small stick". Republican members of the Congress and Democrat "hawks" alike seized the opportunity to
berate the "soft" President for all its important election year benefits. Senator S.I. Hayakawa (Republican - California) commented: "the defense part of the [State of the Union] speech was excellent, but it hardly sounded like it came from someone who cancelled the B-1 bomber, fought the Neutron bomb and who campaigned to cut the defense budget". Republican presidential aspirant Senator Robert Dole called the Carter Doctrine a "bluff" which the Soviets would be likely to call "as little more than an attempt at intimidating propaganda". Democrat Senator Henry Jackson agreed: "is it wise to send that kind of signal to the Soviet Union when there may be a real question whether our doctrine is credible?"

It was also alleged that the Carter Doctrine had not been preceeded by careful and adequate inter-agency planning. After retiring as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, David Newsom claimed that the Doctrine "grew out of last minute pressures for a presidential speech". The Doctrine was also criticised for being "very vague" about what threats would spur a US military intervention in the Gulf and at what level such response would be provided. Republican Senator Ted Stevens querrated: "Has he [Carter] put up a tripwire around the Persian Gulf? If so what are its boundaries? ... Which nations? Against what threats? Is it only a Soviet threat?" The absence of any reference to non-Soviet threats was seen as an important loophole in the Carter Doctrine. As House Foreign Affairs Committee member Stephen Solarz commented, the Carter Doctrine, by drawing the line against the Soviet threat, was "stating the obvious, but the primary threat to our interest comes in by the way of internal subversion, political instability ... the Carter doctrine is not really responsive to that threat".
The Carter administration strongly rejected such accusations. The Doctrine, senior Carter officials held, was not the idle or empty commitment its critics alleged. Defence Secretary Brown, while admitting the problems involved in countering Soviet power in the Gulf, asserted: "the United States has forces that can be moved into that area quickly. And I would urge that no one underestimate our capabilities".106 Carter later wrote that the Doctrine was a "carefully considered statement, which would have been backed by concerted action" and to this end he was "resolved to use the full power of the United States".107 In his memoirs, Brzezinski revealed that escalation options - both vertical (nuclear weapons) and horizontal (spreading the war to other threats where the US would have an advantage) - would have been considered if the Soviet conventional threat proved too overpowering.108

The administration pointed to all the measures being undertaken, or planned, which would substantially enhance the credibility of the RDF as a warfighting force. These improvements, the Pentagon contended, would make a Soviet invasion of the Gulf both costly and risky even if the RDF could not match the full weight of the offensive soldier to soldier or tank to tank. In his final report to Congress as Secretary of Defence, Brown outlined the administration's Persian Gulf military strategy:

- the presence of significant combat forces (e.g., carrier battle groups and amphibious forces);
- designated RDF combat forces with training, equipment, and doctrine suited to likely contingencies (e.g., mountain and desert warfare);
- support forces tailored for Southwest Asia and structured for time-phased deployment;
- mobility capabilities for both inter-theatre and intra-theatre movements;
overflight rights, as well as access to and improvement of enroute bases and facilities, in order to support large-scale airlift and sealift operations;

access to and improvement of regional airfields and ports to permit large-scale deployments in time of crisis;

prepositioning of stocks at regional facilities or on maritime prepositioning ships; and

secure land, air, and sea lines of communication by which to deploy and resupply our forces.\textsuperscript{109}

Upon entering office the Reagan administration not only endorsed the Carter Doctrine, it also stated much more explicitly that the US commitment to defend its Persian Gulf interests included possible military action against internally-generated threats as well. It was also to devote more money and effort to boost the capability of the RDF.\textsuperscript{110}
NOTES


5. ibid., pp.2-3.


9. ibid., p.139.

10. ibid.


17. ibid., pp.8963-8964.


19. ibid.

20. ibid., pp.3269-3270.


24. ibid.

25. ibid., p.47.


38. ibid.


48. ibid.


50. Quoted in The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture for Fiscal Year 1982, p.55.


65. Testifying before the House Middle East Subcommittee, Col. John J. Ruszkiewicz, the then US military attache in North Yemen, alleged that reports of the South Yemeni invasion had been blown out of proportion. *House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. U.S. Interests in, and Policies toward, the Persian Gulf*, 1980, pp.103-118.


74. See James Canan, "Brown Advocates a New Mideast Presence for the U.S.", Business Week (March 5, 1979): 44.


76. ibid.


74. See James Canan, "Brown Advocates a New Mideast Presence for the U.S.", Business Week (March 5, 1979): 44.


76. ibid.


92. For an analysis of the various opinion polls during this period and after, see Daniel Yankelovich and Larry Kaagan, "Assertive America", *Foreign Affairs* (America and the World, 1980): 696-713.


95. Text, *Department of State Bulletin* (February 1980): B.


CHAPTER 4

FORCE PROJECTION TO THE PERSIAN GULF REGION:
REQUIREMENTS AND REMEDIES

"Rapid (?), Deployment (?), Force (?)

Headline of a Washington Post article by the former Secretary of Defence, James R. Schlesinger (September 24, 1980): A27.

"Four years ago, if the President had directed us to send a military force to this area of the world to protect the vital interests of the United States, its friends and its allies, no one could have told you what forces would go, in what order, how long it would take them to get there, how they would be sustained or who their commander would be. Today, I can answer all of those questions."


To US military planners, the challenge of building a credible force projection capability for Persian Gulf contingencies has been a formidable one. The problem, first and foremost, is a function of distance. The Gulf is 7,450 miles from the US east coast and 8,150 miles from the west coast by the shortest air route. By sea, the Strait of Hormuz is 8,250 miles from Charleston, Virginia, through the Suez canal; 11,500 miles around Africa if the canal is closed (a reasonable assumption in the event of a US-Soviet conflict); and 11,477 miles from San Diego on the west coast.

But long logistics lines are only part of the problem. Once in theatre, American forces would have to operate in a natural and operational setting which is as unique as it is problematic. The
region is noted for its harsh and extremely varied climatic conditions: from sub-zero temperatures in the Iranian mountains to very hot and dry conditions in the deserts. As for the operational conditions, RDF officials frequently illustrate the dimensions of this problem by comparing the theatre conditions in the Gulf with that in Europe. As General Kelly testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee:

- There are sizable U.S. forces in-place in Western Europe - with the exception of naval forces in the Indian Ocean we have none in Southwest Asia.

- There are sizable amounts of pre-positioned supplies and equipment in Western Europe for reinforcing units - we have none in Southwest Asia.

- There is an in-place command and control system in Western Europe - we have none in Southwest Asia.

- There is an extensive in-place logistics infrastructure in Western Europe - we have none in Southwest Asia.

- There are extensive host-nation support agreements between the United States and Western Europe countries - we have none in Southwest Asia.

- There is an alliance of military allies in Western Europe - there is no such alliance in Southwest Asia.¹

Since the creation of the RDF in 1979/80, the Pentagon has made a major effort to identify requirements for military intervention in the Persian Gulf region, and to design programs fulfilling such requirements. These programs can be divided into three broad categories: (1) a force structure capable of combat in the demanding natural and operational conditions in the Gulf region; (2) a command organization to plan for potential contingencies and employ US forces if required; and (3) strategic mobility systems, including airlift, sealift and prepositioning, to support the deployment of RDF units and supplies from their peacetime locations to the Gulf region.
4.1 Force Structure and the Regional Environment: Strengths and Limitations

4.1.1 Force structure

The current RDF is based on the concept of a "central reserve" of combat and support forces from which units could be deployed to the crisis spot in accordance with the nature of the threat. A succinct explanation of the RDF force planning was provided by General Kelly soon after the activation of his task force:

Our task is to provide a capability for deploying force packages, of varying size and structure, to any region in the world. This is neither a separate nor discrete category of forces of fixed size; i.e., 50,000 or 100,000 man force. Rather, the concept calls for a central "reservoir", composed primarily of CONUS-based units from which forces can be drawn to cope with a specific contingency. Obviously, the size and composition of the force selected will depend on what is determined to be our mission. Forces could be developed capable of responding to situations ranging from minimum application of force to mid-intensity combat. One could draw a building block analogy. Phased deployments initiated with small show-the-flag forces could be built upon by other larger forces with significantly greater capabilities.

This "reservoir" of forces is now identified as the rapid deployment joint task force. It is comprised of CONUS-based Army divisions, a Marine Amphibious Force and appropriate Air Force and Navy units.... It should be noted that no new forces have been added to our force structure. Instead, forces have been identified which possess a variety of capabilities reflecting realities of geography and the nature of potential threats.2

The units comprising the force structure of the US Central Command (the successor to the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force) are given in Table 4.1. The size of the RDF has grown steadily since its creation. In 1979/80, press reports and official briefings put the RDF at about 100,000 troops with an approximately equal number of support personnel. By 1983, however, the number of military personnel
TABLE 4.1

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND

FORCE LIST

A full deployment of the US Central Command could involve nearly 300,000 personnel, including those who would operate in support of the command. A full deployment might involve the following types of forces:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Central Command Headquarters (augmented)</td>
<td>1,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Army Forces Central Command</td>
<td>130,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters, US Army Forces Central Command (Third US Army); XVIII Airborne Corps Headquarters; 82nd Airborne Division; 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault); 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized); 6th Cavalry Brigade (Air Combat); 1st Corps Support Command.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Naval Forces Central Command</td>
<td>122,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters, US Naval Forces Central Command</td>
<td>52,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Carrier Battle Groups; 1 Surface Action Group; 3 Amphibious Ready Groups; 5 Maritime Patrol Squadrons; US Middle East Force.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Marine Corps Forces</td>
<td>69,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Marine Amphibious Force including: 1 Marine Division (reinforced), 1 Marine Aircraft Wing, 1 Force Service Support Group; 1 Marine Amphibious Brigade including: 1 Marine Regiment (reinforced), 1 Marine Aircraft Group (composite), 1 Brigade Service Support Group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Air Force Forces Central Command</td>
<td>32,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters, US Central Command Air Forces (9th Air Force); 7 Tactical Fighter Wings; 4 Tactical Fighter Groups; 1 Tactical Fighter Squadron; 1 Airborne Warning and Control Wing; 1 Tactical Reconnaissance Group; 1 Electronic Combat Group; 1 Special Operations Wing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconventional Warfare and Special Operations Forces</td>
<td>3,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>290,434</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 The Army components of the CENTCOM are being expanded. A FY1985 decision memorandum from the Deputy Secretary of Defence asked the Army to give the 5th Mechanized Division a Southwest Asia mission in 1987, without giving up the option to deploy it to Europe. Also the Army plans to assign at least one of its light or High Technology Motorized Divisions (HTMD) to the CENTCOM. The most likely candidate is the 9th Infantry Division now converted to a HTMD at Fort Lewis, Washington. James P. Wootten, Rapid Deployment Force, Issue Brief No. I380027 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Update May 17, 1985): 6-7; F. Clifton Berry, "The US Army's 9th Infantry Division", International Defense Review 9(1984): 1224-1229.

2 Also included in the CENTCOM's Air Force component is the Strategic Projection Force (B-52H units) of the Strategic Air Command.

assigned to the RDJTF/CENTCOM had reached more than 220,000. This number is programmed to double by 1989. None of the RDF units has been or will be newly created. Rather they are earmarked for the RDF from the existing force structure of the services, in most cases without giving up their original missions.

The multi-service composition of the RDF was hailed in 1980 in Pentagon circles as an impressive breakthrough. As General Kelly stressed, "...it is the first time in the history of our country that we have amalgamated the combat capabilities of all four services under one headquarters in peacetime". Such a combination, in turn, affords the RDF a unique versatility and flexibility in dealing with threats across the spectrum of conflict.

The Army components of the RDF feature both light and heavy divisions. The 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) is the only heavy divisional component of the RDF, while the 82nd Airborne Division is the US Army's lightest division. While deployment of the former would be slow due to a dependence on sealift, the 82nd's air transportability would enable its lead units to be among the first US/RDF troops to reach a conflict spot. The 82nd's Division-Ready Brigade of about 4,000 troops can be sent to a contingency area within 24 hours of an alert. Along with the marines, the 82nd's paratroopers also constitute the RDF's only forcible entry capability, performing the vital task of securing key air and sea entry points for later forces.

The 101st Air Assault Division, headquartered at Fort Campbell, Kentucky and numbering some 17,900 personnel, is also a light force with a large (more than 250) contingent of attack and utility
helicopters. Although its lightness does not give it matching strategic mobility because of the bulkiness of the helicopters, the latter give it high tactical mobility. In fact, the division is almost entirely transportable within a combat theatre by helicopters - a fact which could make the 101st "exceptionally effective in road barren areas such as the Middle East/Persian Gulf region". Between them, the 82nd and the 101st are meant to:

- seize airfields and airheads;
- conduct airmobile raids far into enemy-held territory;
- conduct wide-area surveillance and denial operations;
- launch assaults in towns, forests, or mountains, where the conduct of armoured operations is extremely difficult.

The Marine component of the RDF consists of two elements. The first is a Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) (a Marine division plus a Marine aircraft wing): "... a roughly 50,000-man self-sustained, integrated air-ground team, which is fully capable of forcible entry over hostile shores". While no single MAF has been designated to serve as a RDF constituent, the RDF Commander, in consultation with the Commanding General of the I MAF at Camp Pendleton, California, can raise a MAF-sized unit from the entire Marine Corps force structure in the event of a mobilization. The second element of the Marine contribution to the CENTCOM is the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB), activated in May 1980 from existing west-coast-based units and headquartered at Twenty-Nine Palms, California. This brigade, (originally consisting of 11,000 marines but to grow eventually to 16,500), is unique in the sense that it is not meant to go into combat by amphibious assault. Rather, RDF plans call for it to be airlifted to a "benign" port area (either in friendly territory or territory
seized through airborne and amphibious assault) near the combat theatre where its troops would "marry up" with supplies and equipment brought in from Diego Garcia aboard the maritime prepositioning ships. This method, while depriving the 7th MAB of forcible entry capabilities, nonetheless makes it a more rapidly responsive unit than the normal amphibious forces.9

In a distant theatre such as the Gulf, airpower would play a vital role in US force projection missions. Airpower, whether carrier- or land-based, is the RDF's most rapidly deployable combat asset. It would be a critical prerequisite for any major RDF intervention, since local air superiority would be crucial to the ability of early-arriving RDF units to seize and defend key entry points to permit the later arrival of heavy forces and supplies. In addition, airpower can disrupt enemy airborne insertions, while early ground attack and interdiction campaigns would be essential to blunt an enemy ground offensive and perhaps deter a further advance by the enemy.10

The RDF force structure incorporates aircraft for all essential missions, including F-15s and F-4Es for air superiority/defence, F-111Ds and B-52Hs for long-range conventional interdiction, A-10s and A-7s for ground attack and close air support, EC-130s and F-4Gs for electronic warfare, RF-4Cs for reconnaissance and E-3As for airborne command and control.11 These could be complemented by carrier-based aircraft from the Arabian Sea (A-6, A-7, F-4, F-14, FA-18, E-2 aircraft depending on the configuration of the carriers operating there).

Of particular significance among the Air Force units assigned to the RDF is the Strategic Projection Force (SPF), organized by the
Strategic Air Command (SAC) at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota (57th Air Division). Consisting of 28 B-52H bombers modified to carry conventional armament, as well as contingents of KC-135s, RC-135s, U-2s, EC-135s and SR-71s, the SPF is designed to support the RDF with a package of deep interdiction, intelligence, command, control, and communication and reconnaissance capabilities. With a low altitude penetration capability and a long unrefuelled range which would enable it to stage further from the hostile fighter threat area, the B-52H bombers are slated to carry out interdiction missions "within 48 hours" of mobilization against invading enemy forces.13

4.1.2 Dual commitment

The versatality of the RDF's "reservoir" of combat units does not, however, fully compensate for some serious problems and deficiencies in its warfighting potential. These limitations are numerous and important, but an appreciation of them must begin with the realization that several of these constituent units - such as the Army's 82nd, 101st and 24th, several tactical air wings, and the naval and marine forces, are also earmarked for use, either in a primary or reinforcing role, in NATO and other strategic theatres in crisis time. The same constraint also applies to strategic lift resources. The decision to build the RDF without creating any new forces has raised the possibility of a serious problem of resource allocation in the event of simultaneous crises in multiple theatres.

In March 1983, the staff of the House Appropriations Committee, in a report on the readiness of the US military, claimed that there was a "general consensus within the Army" that it did not "have the capability (resources) to support" operations in more than one theatre
at a time. Critics have seen a classic example of "robbing Peter to pay Paul". Among those most worried are America's NATO allies who fear that they might well be "Peter" if a crisis in Europe was to coincide with a RDF intervention in the Gulf. This fear was voiced by West German Defence Minister Hans Apel in 1982:

... the political and material implications of the Rapid Deployment Force as conceived by the United States ... is closely meshed with the plans which the Alliance has adopted to assure its deterrence and defense capability within the NATO area. One need only think of the possible use of supply depots in Western Europe in support of missions of the Rapid Deployment Force. Such activities must not jeopardize the balance of forces in Europe. ... The global commitment of the United States and regional stability in Central Europe must be harmonized with each other.15

Harmonizing the traditional US commitment to NATO with the new Persian Gulf commitment has proved to be difficult. NATO's efforts to cope with the problem of a possible diversion of US resources to the Gulf has been undertaken within the framework of a "division-of-labour". According to this approach, those European NATO members unwilling or incapable of contributing to military operations in the Gulf are required to "increase their contribution to NATO in the European area to take up the slack caused by the potential diversion of US forces to SWA [Southwest Asia]".16 Meeting in December 1980, NATO defence ministers worked out a package of measures (called Post-Afghanistan Measures Phase-II) to "help fill the gap in European defense if US NATO-allocated forces were diverted elsewhere ..." These included steps to enhance allied capabilities in areas such as readiness, reserve mobilization, airlift, maritime defence and host nation support.17
By 1983, NATO had achieved some progress in implementing these measures. In the key area of strategic lift, the European allies agreed to provide 600 commercial ships and 49 long-range cargo aircraft to augment US strategic mobility resources for wartime reinforcement of Europe.\textsuperscript{18} This would release additional US lift assets for a Persian Gulf contingency. The US also concluded new Host Nation Support agreements with a number of NATO countries, including West Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. These agreements provided for additional wartime support to forward deployed or reinforcing American forces by the European host nation in areas such as logistics, transport, security, material-handling and casualty evacuation.\textsuperscript{19} NATO members such as West Germany and Italy also agreed to make compensatory naval deployments in their adjacent seas to lessen the impact of diversions of US naval units to the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{20}

But there are continuing concerns that American and allied response to a Persian Gulf contingency would leave dangerous gaps in the defence of Europe itself. In his 1982 \textit{Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense}, US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger noted that "even when fully implemented, the [post-Afghanistan] measures will only partially compensate for potential weaknesses in Alliance defenses should forces currently committed to NATO by the US and possibly other allies be deployed to a contingency in SWA [Southwest Asia]."\textsuperscript{21} In addition, the post-Afghanistan measures did almost nothing to alleviate the problem of reduced availability of US \textit{combat manpower} to reinforce NATO in the event of a simultaneous crisis in the Gulf. The dimensions of this problem were highlighted in a report by the Congressional Budget Office in 1983.
The report estimated that commitment of the current-sized RDF (about 222,000 troops) to a Persian Gulf contingency would decrease by 20 per cent the number of combat divisions available for a simultaneous NATO reinforcement during the first 60 days of a conflict. This in turn would reduce the NATO-Warsaw Pact force balance by 6 per cent against NATO; from 1:1.7 to 1:1.8. To offset such shortfalls, the report found, the US would need to create two fully supported combat divisions at a 5 year cost of about $18.9 billion. The shortfalls would increase if the current RDF force structure should be further expanded.\textsuperscript{22}

Predictably, the report caused serious anxieties in alliance circles.\textsuperscript{23} In the wake of such controversy, NATO military authorities set out to complete a "Southwest Asia Impact Study" to assess "the implications for NATO of possible USCENTCOM deployments to Southwest Asia of units otherwise designated to reinforce Europe". This study is meant to identify "civil and military compensatory measures which could, if implemented, considerably offset the most serious effects of such deployments".\textsuperscript{24} But unless such measures include the creation of additional force structure by the US and the European allies, the problem of reduced availability of American manpower to reinforce NATO would not go away. The US currently has no plans to raise additional divisions and the "strategy-force mismatch" in America's European and Persian Gulf commitments continues to be a major source of anxiety for US military planners.

\textbf{4.1.3 Ground mobility, armour and firepower}

Even if all the combat units earmarked for the RDF were made available for operations in the Persian Gulf, the Force's ability to
outfight its opponents in high-intensity combat would be questionable in view of its deficient armour, firepower and battlefield mobility. Potential Middle Eastern opponents of the RDF field significant numbers of tanks and artillery units. There are more tanks in a Soviet motorized rifle division than its US mechanized infantry counterpart. Moreover, among the regional states likely to be involved in a conflict with the RDF, the armed forces of Iraq, Iran or Syria are all heavily armour-oriented. While the utility of tanks and armoured vehicles is restricted in mountainous terrain or in jungles and cities, the tactical mobility and firepower afforded by them are indispensable assets in flat, open and spacious environments such as deserts. It is, of course, in such terrain that the crucial final battles for the control of oilfields would most likely be staged.

The basic problem with the RDF in such terrain is that its early arriving units, such as the 82nd Airborne and the Marines, are light, footmobile infantry possessing very little firepower. The 82nd Airborne Division's air-droppable light armoured reconnaissance vehicles have faced serious problems in their firepower systems. Similarly, while a Marine Division carries 70 M-60A1 tanks and a Marine Amphibious Brigade 53 of the same (the 7th MAB's equipment prepositioned aboard the NTPF near Diego Garcia contains 53 M-60A1s and 36 105mm and 155mm howitzers), this is unlikely to prove adequate against a major Middle Eastern opponent. The 101st Airborne Division, while possessed with great tactical mobility, has no tanks or light armoured vehicles.

The early-arriving RDF units are, of course, less deficient in anti-armour than armour and, as RDF officials emphasize, it does not
take a tank to kill another tank. The Egyptian experience against Israeli armour during the 1973 Middle East War has shown that infantry operated anti-tank missiles can be quite effective against tank-heavy forces. In the RDF, the Marine infantry men carry light, medium and long-range (M-72, DRAGON and TOW respectively) anti-tank missile systems, while the Marine air ground task forces (MAGTF) can wield the formidable armour-killing fire power of their fixed and rotary wing aircraft, most of which carry bombs and TOW missiles. The 82nd Airborne has jeep-mounted TOWS, DRAGONS and AH1-S TOW COBRA attack helicopters. The 101st Airmobile is similarly equipped with TOWs and DRAGONS, but with a larger helicopter attack fleet, its tank-killing potential is more lethal.

Moreover, since the RDF's formation, the DOD have modernized the firepower systems of the RDF Army and Marine units. These programs are described in Appendix 1. It is, however, unlikely that these programs can solve the RDF's problems against Soviet forces, although some measures, such as the introduction of Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV), add significantly to the ground mobility and firepower of the marine infantry forces. It should be noted that much of the RDF anti-armour resides in the attack helicopters whose ability to function efficiently in desert heat and sand in a high air threat environment is subject to doubt. Past experience, especially the ill-fated Iranian hostage rescue mission in 1980, demonstrated the problems sand can cause to helicopters.

The Army's decision to field a High Technology Motorized Division (HTMD) represents a significant improvement in the anti-armour capabilities of its rapidly deployable forces. The HTMD is "oriented on mid-intensity conflict theatres, open terrain, and a
heavily armored threat". Since 1981, the 9th Infantry Division has been undergoing this transition at the High Technology Test Bed at Fort Lewis, Washington, and is currently available for deployment in its new form. The HTMD concept seeks to combine the strategic mobility and sustainability of a light division with the tactical mobility, firepower and survivability of a heavy division. It does so by incorporating new technology, organization, equipment and training. According to press accounts in 1984, the division has a personnel strength of 14,500. It is transportable by using the C-141 aircraft rather than the C-5, and requires about 1,400 C-141B sorties as compared to the more than 1,500 sorties for a standard infantry division. It is to fight under the Army's new firepower-intensive Air Land Battle doctrine, and its anti-armour capability is claimed to be "sufficient to meet more than two enemy armoured divisions". From available indications, this division is to have a Southwest Asia mission.

4.1.4 Water, medical, communications and intelligence support

While enhanced firepower and battle-field mobility are essential to the RDF's ability to outfight the armed forces of the Soviet Union and many regional countries, the force also requires adequate water, medical, communications and intelligence support. Each of these are critical to the Force's ability to sustain an offensive. In an arid natural environment which characterize much of the Gulf region, water can be a decisive factor in the outcome of a combat situation. According to a Pentagon study, "a 50,000 man Marine Amphibious Force would require at least 750,000 gallons of fresh water daily". The requirement of Army units would be similar.
Medical facilities constitute another vital need for US forces operating in the Gulf. Harsh climatic conditions, extreme variations in temperature and a scarcity of fresh water supplies can lead to widespread illness among troops in any normal deployment situation. But the hospital needs of the RDF seemed especially serious after secret DOD studies established that the early-arriving units could be expected to receive very high rates of combat casualties in encounters with Soviet forces.34 The medical/hospital readiness of the RDF was rated very poorly at the outset. As a senior Pentagon official admitted in November 1980, "our present medical capability in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region is essentially non-existent".35 This was attributed to a number of factors: the general paucity of proper hospital facilities within the region, lack of guaranteed US access to whatever facilities existed in the absence of host nation support agreements, and the shortages in rapidly deployable casualty treatment and evacuation systems organic to the services.

Communications and intelligence support systems constitute yet another area in which a substantial gap exists between the RDF's requirements and capabilities. The Persian Gulf region, unlike more "mature" theatres such as Europe or Korea, has little established communications infrastructure which the RDF can use. The Force must carry almost all of its required equipment from the US. There would be little backup equipment. The distances over which the RDF units would have to communicate are considerably larger than those in Europe; the varying climatic conditions would necessitate extra care with delicate electronic equipment.36

Moreover, after the RDF was set up, the services were discomfited to realize that many of their c3 support organizations,
such as the Army Signal battalions, were never designed for such vast distances or for such widely varying topology. The Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE), a JCS organization with responsibility to provide the RDF with field communication support, is also responsible for supporting several other unified and specified commands. It was both short in personnel and equipment to carry out simultaneous assignments when the RDJTF headquarters was established in 1980.\(^{37}\)

From its inception, the RDF faced equally severe problems in having the necessary intelligence support systems. The four major categories of information required to support RDF planning both before and during contingency operations are: (1) geographical and environmental conditions in the region including both natural (e.g., weather) and man-made (such as transportation networks, bridges, ports and oilfields) features; (2) the size, composition, location and movement of enemy forces; (3) the performance characteristics of enemy weapon systems; and (4) the identification of targets that may require destruction to meet military objectives.\(^{38}\) To meet these requirements the RDF depends upon intelligence collected by satellites, airborne warning and control platforms, sensors, reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft, human agents, and other tactical intelligence gathering systems. Once collected, these varied data would need to be quickly "fused", analysed, updated and tailored to meet the needs of the RDF commander. There has been much concern that the RDF is deficient in many of these areas. In a report on the RDF, New York Times columnist Richard Halloran claimed that the Central Command "has no network of listening posts to intercept radio and telephone transmissions", no "places to put sensors that can find, through radar
or infra red detection, movements of tanks, missiles and aircraft", and no "agents to gather information that satellite photos are unable to pick up". The DOD in its FY1984 report also acknowledged that the "intelligence support for CINCCENT" was a "formidable problem".

The Pentagon's efforts to provide the RDF with adequate water supply and, medical and communications facilities is described in Appendices 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. As a result of these programs, water and medical support to the RDF have improved considerably since 1980. But communications and intelligence systems are still considered to be inadequate. Overall, the RDF can be expected to face serious problems in all these areas in a major combat operation in the Gulf. While much attention has been devoted to studying the weapon systems and other "glamorous" components of the RDF's warfighting capability, the deficiencies in the support areas described above could seriously undermine US military strategy in the region.

4.1.5 Readiness and exercises

When the RDJTF was set up in 1980, there was considerable doubt regarding the readiness of its constituent units and their ability to fight in the climatic/terrain conditions of the Persian Gulf region. The readiness problems experienced by RDF units were part of a broader phenomenon afflictng the entire US military, "attributable largely to a decade of inadequate budgetary investment in Operations and Maintenance, and to the failure of the All-Volunteer Force to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of qualified people ..." Among the services, the Marine Corps had the best readiness rating; 70 per cent of its units were rated combat ready in the Fall of 1980. Among the Army components of the RDF, the 82nd Airborne was regarded by the Army
as being combat ready, but the 101st Airborne and the 24th Mechanized Infantry were "rated not combat ready because of deficiencies in manpower, training and logistics". In addition, as the ranking Republican member of the Senate Armed Services Committee (later Chairman), Senator John Tower, alleged, 4 of the Navy's 13 aircraft carriers and 24 of the Air Force and Navy's 161 tactical air squadrons were not rated ready in September 1980.42

Equally serious, if not more, was the RDF units' lack of experience of the natural environment in Southwest Asia. American forces had not fought in a desert since World War II; much of the equipment carried by US forces, and the tactical doctrines for the employment of combat forces, were considered unsuitable for desert combat.43 Moreover, several of the Force's operational concepts such as the "match up" process for the 7th MAB, and command and control systems, to cite a few examples, needed to be comprehensively tested before the Force could be deemed to be an effective warfighting instrument.

Of these problems, that of the combat readiness of US military forces could be addressed only at the broader level through general increases in defence spending. After a hesitant start by the Carter administration in its last year in office, spending on readiness became a major priority in the Reagan administration's all-round increases in the defence budget. But the results were not very encouraging. In a report completed in March 1983 and released the next year, the Surveys and Investigations Staff of the House Appropriations Committee charged that the Army did "not have the men and material to sustain combat operations in a major contingency". A heavily "sanitized" unclassified version of this report claimed, three
years after the Carter Doctrine, that "the present combat units assigned to the Rapid Deployment Force - Army (RDF-A) have all indicated serious readiness problems".44

To test and enhance the RDF's ability to operate in the natural and operational conditions in the Gulf, the RDF authorities have devised a broad-based and intensive program of exercises. The major RDF-related exercises instituted by the RDJTF/CENTCOM are shown in Table 4.2. As General Kingston pointed out, these exercises provide the "means to: evaluate joint concepts; practice joint operations; operate forces in the environment where they could be called upon to fight; and also work on our command and control procedures".45

Of all the RDF-related exercises, the most important ones are those conducted in the command's Area of Responsibility (AOR). To cite General Kingston again, the AOR exercises have been useful by:

- Establishing US credibility with both friends and potential adversaries;
- Providing interface between the United States and host nation military personnel;
- Conducting combined operations with host nation military personnel;
- Exercising the rapid deployment of component forces;
- Testing critical communications equipment and procedures in the AOR;
- Familiarizing selected personnel and units with environmental and operational characteristics of the AOR.46

The most significant and visible RDF exercises in the Middle East region are those of the BRIGHT STAR series. The first, BRIGHT STAR '81, held in Egypt in November 1980, involved some 1,400 RDF troops, while BRIGHT STAR '82 and BRIGHT STAR '83 involved about 6,500 and 5,500 RDF personnel respectively. The latter two took place in four regional countries, Egypt, Oman, Somalia and Sudan. These
### TABLE 4.2

**SELECTED RDF-RELATED EXERCISES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Frequency/Sponsor</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description/Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gallant Knight</td>
<td>Annual/CENTCOM</td>
<td>Fort Bragg, NC</td>
<td>CPX/Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright Star&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt; or Gallant Eagle&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>SWA Region or Annual/CENTCOM</td>
<td>FTX/Brigade or United States</td>
<td>or FTX/Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt; Exercise</td>
<td>Annual/CENTCOM</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>COMMEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Deployment Readiness Exercise</td>
<td>Varies/CENTCOM</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Alert Exercise Deployed Head-quarters Elements for CINCCENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold Eagle&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Biennial/REDCOM</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>CPX; FTX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold Star&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Biennial/REDCOM</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>CPX; FTX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. "In general terms, CINCCENT plans to conduct one exercise (either BRIGHT STAR or a communications exercise) in the SWA region each year. In years when BRIGHT STAR is not held, CINCCENT will schedule a division-sized GALLANT EAGLE exercise in the U.S."

2. CPX - Command Post Exercise  
   FTX - Field Training Exercise  
   COMMEX - Communications Exercise

3. REDCOM - Readiness Command.

exercises were among the most varied ever conducted by the US in the region; providing useful tests of US airlift and sealift capabilities and giving RDF units very valuable experience of the regional environment. For example, the lead RDF Army units, the 101st and the 82nd Airborne Divisions, tested their skills in desert conditions in the '81 and '82 exercises respectively, while units from the 24th Infantry Division participated in the '82 exercise. Tactical bombers (A-7, A-10) featured in all exercises, while a major aspect of BRIGHT STAR '82 was a 30-hour non-stop round-trip mission of six B-52 bombers of the Strategic Projection Force from North Dakota. In addition, the BRIGHT STAR exercises have featured Marine amphibious landings, air defence manoeuvres, logistics training, and unconventional warfare operations by Army Green Berets and Rangers.47

The extensive range of experience gained from such regional exercises have been complemented by those conducted in the continental United States. Among the most important in this category are the Command Post exercises of the GALLANT KNIGHT series, the first one of which, held in October 1980, simulated a successful RDF defence of Iran against a Soviet invasion; and the field training exercises of the GALLANT EAGLE series, which provide some of the largest and most comprehensive tests of the RDF in desert conditions. For example, the first GALLANT EAGLE exercise, held in California deserts in March 1980, was based upon a "script" of American help to a friendly Middle Eastern country which had been attacked by a pro-Soviet neighbouring country. The major participating units included a brigade from the Army's 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) - playing the role of "aggressor", and a brigade from the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized)
- which along with a Marine Amphibious Brigade played out the defending US forces. Also involved were the 12th Air Force, the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, the Military Airlift Command, the Joint Deployment Agency and the Strategic Air Command. Most types of major combat vehicles (M-48 and M-60 tanks, M-113 armoured personnel carriers, TOW anti-tank missiles, 105mm howitzers) and combat aircraft (F-4, A-10, AV-8A Harrier, AH-1S Cobra helicopters) were used. GALLANT EAGLE 82 was larger and equally wide-ranging in scope and involved a similar "script" of US defence against a mechanized Soviet threat, but the defenders this time were 3 battalions of paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division. In all, the RDF exercises conducted in the US, while lacking the political symbolism of those held in the Middle East region, have contributed in no small way to realistically preparing the Force for large scale operations against potential adversaries.48

4.2 RDF Command Organization:

Of all the challenges encountered by US military planners in building up the RDF, few aroused as much controversy as the issue of its command organization. The initial arrangement, the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), became a source of intense inter-service wrangling, while critics outside the Pentagon dubbed it unworkable, inadequate and dangerously complicated. At one stage, these disputes and accusations clouded the future of the whole enterprise.

A Joint Task Force (JTF), according to its official definition, is a "joint force composed of assigned or attached elements of the Army, the Navy (Marine Corps), and the Air Force, or any two of these
Services, which is constituted and so designated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by the commander of a unified command, or by the commander of an existing joint task force". Unlike a Unified Command, which has a "broad continuing mission", and "which is composed of significant assigned components [component commands] of two or more services", a JTF is by definition a temporary arrangement. "It is established when the mission to be accomplished has a specific limited objective". Several JTFs have been established in the past with missions ranging from facilitating service participation in atomic testing to planning military operations in Africa and the Carribean.49

While setting up the RDJTF, the Pentagon had no immediate plans to upgrade it to a new Unified Command for the Persian Gulf region. Both General P.X. Kelly, appointed the first Commander of the RDJTF, and General Volney Warner, Commander of the US Readiness Command, agreed in official testimony before the Congress that the RDJTF was a "workable arrangement". General Kelly, more enthusiastically, dubbed the RDJTF "probably the most innovative and essential command structure" of his 30-year career.50

The RDJTF was set up in an old Strategic Air Command alert bunker at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Also housed at MacDill was the US Readiness Command, under whose operational command the RDJTF remained in all its peacetime planning, exercise, and predeployment phases in continental United States. Upon deployment to a crisis theatre, however, the RDJTF commander was to report either directly to the National Command Authorities through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or to another Unified Commander as designated by the Pentagon authorities.51
The RDJTF headquarters functioned with a permanent staff of 261 military personnel. Like its force structure, this staff had a multi-service composition. Upon deployment and employment, the RDJTF headquarters staff was to be augmented with personnel, including support elements, from the US Readiness Command and other designated forces. An important feature of the RDJTF command organization was a four-service, 19-man Washington Liaison Office, headed by an Army Brigadier General. Located in the Pentagon, the Liaison Office provided the RDJTF with the essential contact with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the individual service headquarters, and other Washington bureaucratic agencies and the Congress. 52

Despite assurances from Kelly and fellow officials that such an organization was capable of providing the necessary command and control for US forces deployed to the Persian Gulf region, critics in the Capitol Hill and elsewhere expressed strong scepticism. The enterprise was faulted on several grounds. Firstly, despite its responsibility to plan for contingencies and to actually deploy as a combat command, the RDF had no peacetime operational control over its assigned forces. The latter remained under the day-to-day control of their original commands, subject to call up by the RDJTF for exercise or deployment purposes. Secondly, the overall lines of command seemed excessively complicated, especially to critics who found that confused command lines were a major factor behind the disastrous failure of the Iranian hostage rescue mission in 1980. The RDJTF had to function under a new command channel after being pressed into a contingency operation. More important it was also devoid of any specific geographic responsibility, despite the Secretary of Defence's clarification that the Force would "focus exclusively on Southwest
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 April 1981</td>
<td>Secretary Weinberger announces that the RDJTF will transition into Unified Command status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 June 1981</td>
<td>Three component headquarters are designated and placed under the operational control of the Hq. RDJTF. These are: Rapid Deployment Army Forces (RDARFOR) Hq.: Headquarters XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, N. Carolina. Under its operational control are the 82nd Airborne Division and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Rapid Deployment Air Forces (RDAFFOR) Hq.: Co-located with the 9th Air Force at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. Rapid Deployment Naval Forces (RDNAVFOR) Hq.: Co-located with Hq. US Pacific Command, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 August 1981</td>
<td>11 tactical fighter squadrons are designated as RDF units and placed under the operational control of RDARFOR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 October 1981</td>
<td>RDJTF moves out of its subordination to the Readiness Command and is made into a separate JTF reporting directly to the NCA through the JCS. It is asked to &quot;focus primarily&quot; on Southwest Asia, though it has a capability to conduct operations worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 January 1983</td>
<td>US Central Command, &quot;the first geographic unified command created in over 35 years&quot;, replaces the RDJTF at MacDill AFB, with Gen Kingston as its first CINC. The CENTCOM has geographic responsibility over 19 countries in the SW Asia region and is responsible for all US defence-related activities in its area of responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 October 1983</td>
<td>CENTCOM assumes responsibility for administering US security assistance to the countries in its area of responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 December 1983</td>
<td>A Forward Headquarters Element (FHE) is established by the CENTCOM aboard the USS LaSalle, the flagship of the US Middle East Force stationed off the Bahrain Island in the Persian Gulf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asia contingencies.\(^{53}\) (Initially the RDJTF was given a worldwide deployment responsibility). The geographic responsibility for the Gulf/Southwest Asia region was awkwardly distributed between the US European Command and the US Pacific Command. While the former "controlled" all land west of Afghanistan, plus the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, the latter had responsibility for the Indian Ocean and the land east of the Iran-Afghan border, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. Even Pentagon officials acknowledged that the existing division was "arbitrary and nonsensical".\(^{54}\)

An equally serious problem with the RDJTF was the intense inter-service rivalry which had plagued it since inception. There were persistent press reports, some of them undoubtedly exaggerated, of "personality clashes" between General Kelly and General Warner.\(^{55}\) More importantly, problems were encountered in reconciling doctrinal differences between the service components of the RDJTF, especially between the Army and the Marine Corps. As some press accounts revealed, the Army detested the Marine's amphibious warfare doctrine, calling it "outmoded" and "unwieldy" for desert warfare. The Marine officials, on the other hand, were said to be sceptical of the suitability of the Army's "firepower-attrition" doctrine against Soviet land forces who would have superiority in troop-strength and tanks in an open desert environment.\(^{56}\) Another serious conflict erupted between the Marine Corps and the Air Force over the control of Marine air assets. The Air Force argued that, except during amphibious operations, the Marine air assets should be placed under the Air Force component commander of the RDF theatre commander so that the former could employ these assets to support all ground units, both the Army and the Marines. The Marine Corps protested strongly, contending that
separating the aviation assets from the Marine Air Ground Task Forces at any stage of its mission would violate its basic doctrine and cause a serious degradation in its combat responsiveness.\textsuperscript{57}

As a result of the uncertainties attributed to it having "too many players in the command structure" and the obvious intensity of the inter-service combat, the RDJTF came in for some heavy criticism. Senator William Cohen, the Chairman of the Seapower and Force Projection Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, denounced the RDJTF as "tangled hydra-headed". According to Cohen:

It is not clear who is in charge, and disquieting reports persist of debilitating interservice rivalry for control of ... the most significant military mission of the decade. It would seem that little has been learned from the disaster that befell the United States rescue mission in the Iranian desert last April, a disaster attributable as much to confused command as it was to technical failure.\textsuperscript{58}

The weight of such criticism forced the Secretary of Defence to make urgent efforts to resolve the issue. Several options came up for review and consideration. These included proposals to: (1) assign the RDJTF as a subordinate Unified Command of the US European Command; (2) assign the RDJTF as a subordinate Unified Command of the US Pacific Command; (3) disestablish the RDJTF and have the PACOM set up its own subordinate command for Persian Gulf contingencies; (4) maintain the existing arrangement with improved institutional mechanisms for coordination between various Unified Commands and service components who would be controlling forces that the RDJTF would need to use in the Gulf region; (5) assign the Readiness Command with the geographic responsibility for the Gulf region and place RDJTF under its operational command; and (6) create a new Unified Command for the Gulf/Southwest Asia region.\textsuperscript{59}
Before a choice could be made from among these alternatives, however, the Pentagon was confronted with another major challenge relating to, but going beyond, the issue of command organization. This was a demand by some sections of the US strategic community that the Pentagon should abolish the multi-service RDJTF and designate a single service, the Marine Corps, to take over the primary responsibility for the rapid deployment mission. Proponents of this view emphasized the Corps' longstanding history as the nation's "force in readiness", and its record of successful interventions in Third World regions. Second, they pointed to the Marines' unique amphibious capabilities, which would be especially critical given the RDF's lack of confirmed contingency access to regional ports and airfields. Third, the Marines were given credit for experimenting with the kind of doctrine which would be especially suitable against firepower-intensive and armour-heavy opponents in the Middle East. This was the doctrine of "manoeuvre warfare", as opposed to the US Army's emphasis on "firepower attrition". Finally, they argued that by assigning the Marines the primary responsibility for the rapid deployment mission, the Pentagon could remove much of the confusion and inter-service rivalry from the existing RDF command organization.60

These arguments found endorsement from sections within the Congress, including Senators Gary Hart and William Cohen. The Senate Subcommittee on Defence Appropriations also expressed strong support for the Marine-Navy RDF.61

The service Chiefs, however, were more or less united in their opposition to the idea. Such a force, they contended, would militate against efforts to build maximum flexibility into the employment of US forces in the Persian Gulf region. Since the threats facing the RDF
could be varied, multi-dimensional and complex, none of the services could be expected to possess the capability to accomplish the RDF mission" unilaterally. The Marines in particular would not be very effective in fighting the enemy beyond the first 50 miles of any beach-head. The important difference between the JCS position and that of the opposing side was that while the former believed it to be necessary to base the contingency-planning for the RDF on the "worst-case" scenario - a massive and all-out Soviet invasion of Iran - the latter found this unwarranted at least in the short term, because the "worst case" was considered to be the "least likely" of all threats. Thus to the latter "the 186,000-man Marine Corps is more than sufficient to fulfill the requirements of any Persian Gulf contingency, except those which the Corps and the Army together could not meet [e.g. a full-scale Soviet invasion of Iran]]. 62 The Pentagon, however, warned strongly against entirely "writing off" the "worst-case" threat, contending that a multi-service force, while perhaps inadequate for defeating a Soviet attack, would be able to raise the cost of such an attack to sufficiently high levels so as to discourage and deter it (discussed in Chapter 7). The Marines, however important their role might be in such joint operations, could by themselves provide neither the force-size or the capabilities essential to conduct any credible defensive operations against the Soviet forces. 63

In contrast to their nearly unanimous position against the idea of turning the RDF to the Marine Corps, the services were deeply divided in choosing between the alternatives mentioned earlier. General Kelly favoured the idea of "a separate, unified "command operating in the Indian Ocean" as the most "desirable from a military
point of view. Such a commander, in his opinion, should also possess, "direct access to the forces he would command in combat". The JCS Chairman, General David Jones, did not consider having a separate regional command land-based in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf region a feasible proposition in view of the obvious regional political sensitivities. He also opposed the idea of having the RDF Commander afloat in the sea while his component forces remained in the United States. Instead he wanted to keep the RDF headquarters at MacDill, preferably "as a subunified command under another commander", although he did not disclose who that Unified Commander would be.

Among the services, the Chiefs of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force were reportedly in favour of assigning the RDJTF to the US European Command. Stongly opposed to this proposal was Marine Commandant General Robert Barrow, who wanted the RDJTF to be placed under the US Pacific Command at Hawaii. Although Barrow denied advocating that the RDF should be an exclusively Marine "show", he nonetheless believed that the initial phase of any RDF intervention in the Gulf would be dominated by naval forces, which could then "sequentially" grow into a multi-service operation. The PACOM, which controlled most of the naval forces to be deployed to the Gulf both on routine peacetime missions and in a crisis, would be the natural choice for having the RDF under its wing.

Equally outspoken in pushing his preferences was General Volney Warner, the Commander of the US Readiness Command. He saw no need for a separate Unified Command for the RDF unless it could be headquaerated in the Gulf region. Since that possibility was unlikely, he wanted to keep the RDJTF under the REDCOM at MacDill, more or less under the existing arrangement. Later, when his view
failed to prevail, he asked for retirement and recommended that REDCOM be desestablished.\textsuperscript{68}

After a bout of such inter-service difference, attracting much adverse publicity for the RDF, the Secretary of Defence announced on April 24, 1981 that the RDJTF would evolve into a separate Unified Command.\textsuperscript{69} Initially the time table for this transition was to be between 3 and 5 years. This, however, came to be regarded as too long. The Pentagon speeded up the process to the extent that the command headquarters became functional at MacDill on 1 January 1983,\textsuperscript{70} with a staff of nearly a thousand personnel, drawn from all the services.

As a Unified Command, the US Central Command's mission encompasses a much broader range of activities and responsibilities than that of the RDJTF. Unlike the RDJTF, the CENTCOM has "its own geographic responsibilities, Service components, forces, intelligence, communications, logistic facilities and other support elements".\textsuperscript{71} The CENTCOM's area of responsibility (AOR) is shown in Map 4.1. Notable omissions from the AOR are, Israel - excluded largely on political grounds - and the Indian Ocean, which continues to be under the jurisdiction of the US Pacific Command. Although CENTCOM officials see no problem in coordinating their mission with PACOM, this leaves some room for criticism that the complications in the RDF command structure have not been fully remedied.

Within its AOR the CENTCOM is responsible for the entire range of US military activity, including contingency-planning (assessment of threats and designing of "force packages" "tailored" from its assigned "reservoir" of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine components to meet a
particular threat), joint exercises involving US and regional forces, administration of American security assistance and operational command of US forces in the theatre. The theatre forces under the CENTCOM's operational control include the US MIDEASTFOR, the American element of the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers, and the AWACS deployed in Saudi Arabia since September, 1980. As for those CENTCOM units not deployed in its AOR, i.e. the CONUS-based units, these remain under the peacetime operational control of their parent services. The CENTCOM, however, can assume their crisis-time availability "on a priority basis" for its planning, and it can exercise operational command of those units participating in its exercise program.

4.3 **Strategic Mobility Programs**

Strategic mobility is the very essence of power projection. "I must be the first to emphasize", General Kelly stated in March 1981, "that without sufficient strategic airlift, strategic sealift, and amphibious lift, there is no way to put a capital 'R' in rapid, and all the finest trained troops and most sophisticated weapon systems in the world are totally useless sitting at Fort Campbell, Ky; Camp Lejeune, N.C.; or Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, S.C." All the three legs of the mobility triad - airlift, sealift and prepositioning, have special strengths and roles, and are viewed to be complementing rather than substituting each other. Airlift offers the fastest and most flexible means of deploying forces over long distances. Typically, airlift will deliver over 90 per cent of US combat forces during the first weeks of a conflict. On the other hand, airlift is expensive and limited in the tonnage it can carry. Sealift, while not rapid, is absolutely crucial to sustaining and reinforcing the initial forces.
Sealift moves most of the heavy and bulky equipment; in an extended crisis sealift will carry more than 90 per cent of the total tonnage delivered to an overseas theatre. Prepositioning satisfies the requirements of both timeliness and adequacy in the movement of combat equipment and supplies. It is a highly cost-effective means of delivering tonnage to a pre-identified, single theatre, although for the same reason it is less flexible.76

The advent of the RDF is a major turning point in the evolution of US strategic mobility capabilities. Although US strategic mobility resources were, and still are, acknowledged to be the world's best in terms of both size and sophistication, meeting the mobility burdens of the Carter Doctrine required a substantial enhancement of its existing capacity. The following sections will examine the major elements of this enhancement effort in order to assess the progress achieved and the limitations that have persisted.

4.3.1 Airlift

The US airlift capability rests on two components. The first includes aircraft owned by the US government and operated by the Air Force's Military Airlift Command (MAC) and Air National Guard. MAC's active inter-theatre airlift capability at the beginning of the 1980s is outlined in Table 4.4. The second component is known as the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF), which consists of commercially-owned jet aircraft that can be mobilized in a crisis to augment the organic military fleet. The CRAF mobilization is achieved in three stages. Stage I, which includes about 15 per cent of the total CRAF, can be activated by the Commander of MAC. Stage II, which is meant to cater to a major contingency short of a national emergency, can be ordered
by the Secretary of Defence, while Stage III, the full mobilization of CRAF, can be activated only after a Presidential or Congressional declaration of a national emergency.\textsuperscript{77}

### TABLE 4.4

**US AIRLIFT ASSETS: 1984\textsuperscript{1}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type (Active/Reserve)</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-5</td>
<td>70/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-141</td>
<td>234/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-130</td>
<td>218/302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF)\textsuperscript{3}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaskan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-range international</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-range international (passenger)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-range international (cargo)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\textsuperscript{1} As of 1 January 1984.

\textsuperscript{2} On order are 50 C-5BS and 44 KC-10 tanker/cargo aircraft.

\textsuperscript{3} CRAF Stage III availability.

**Source:** The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *United States Military Posture for Fiscal Year 1985.*
At the beginning of the present decade, the US airlift capability was considered inadequate to meet the requirements of the country's new rapid deployment strategy. The problems were manifold. Among MAC's long-range transports, the C-141 cannot carry outsize cargo such as M-60 tanks or heavy helicopters. The C-5, the only outsize-capable transport in US inventory, had been plagued by design problems with the wing, which had forced a reduction in its payload capability and threatened to bring down its service life leading to retirement of most of the fleet by the mid-1980s.

Added to this were the problems caused by distance, enroute support requirements and the poor-quality of regional airfields. Flying to the Gulf from the US east coast, the MAC's strategic airlifters would need to be refuelled twice each time on the enroute and return legs of a round trip. Keeping in mind MAC estimates that it took over 6 tons of fuel to deliver 1 ton on cargo to Israel during the 1973 October War airlift, enormous quantities of aviation fuel at enroute and theatre airfields would be essential to support largescale airlift missions to Gulf. If local states proved unwilling to cooperate, this fuel would have to be carried from the US. And the "bare" conditions of most of the regional airfields would limit their use by most type of transport aircraft - especially those of the CRAF.

The dimensions of the airlift problem during the initial years of the RDF could be understood from a report by the Congressional Budget Office which estimated that airlifting two of the Army's lightest divisions - the 82nd Airborne and 101st Airmobile - to the Gulf, could take as long as 26 days, while air-lifting one light and one mechanized division to the same destination would take 5 weeks.
These estimates assumed the availability of all US airlift resources—full organic and full Craf—a virtually impossible prospect in view of the high probability of simultaneous conflicts elsewhere.

The Pentagon's efforts to rectify the deficiency took two forms. The first was an effort to enhance the capabilities of the existing inventory. Programs undertaken as part of this effort included, firstly, the rewinging of the C-5 plane to give it an additional service life of 30,000 flying hours and increase its load capacity by 38,000 pounds. This would keep the C-5 operational into the 21st century.82 The second was the stretching of the C-141. In the original C-141A model, the available cabin volume or floor space could be filled before the plane reached its weight limit—leading to a waste of the remaining capacity. Under this program, an additional 23 feet of fuselage was inserted, increasing the payload capacity by one-third at insignificant extra cost. In addition, an air-refuelling capability was added.83

The third program involved additional funding (over $1 billion in 1981-82) to overcome shortages in spare parts which had previously limited the utilization rates of these two aircraft. The usage rates for the C-141 would increase from 10 hours a day to 12.5 hours a day; of the C-5A from 6 hours a day to 12.5 hours a day.84 The other major airlift program was the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (Craf) enhancement; a program under which commercial wide-bodied passenger aircraft are modified to incorporate cargo-carrying features such as stronger floors and wider doors. In peacetime, these planes would fly as normal commercial airliners. Upon mobilization, they would be converted for carrying military cargo. The DOD would compensate the owner for the modification as well as the additional operational
expenses incurred as a result of the new cargo features. By FY1985, the DOD had signed contracts for 20 planes under the Craf Enhancement Program, including a contract with Pan Am involving options to modify 19 Boeing-747s.

The second part of the DOD's effort to increase its airlift capability involved procurement of new aircraft. Initially, the centrepiece of this program was to be the CX (cargo experimental). The program basis for the CX was identified by a task force formed in November 1979 by the Air Force with Army and Marine Corps participation. The task force examined airlift requirements for hypothetical crisis scenarios in the 1985-1990 time period in five regions: NATO, Saudi Arabia, Korea, Venezuela and Zaire. The results of the study confirmed the need of a new airlifter which could form the basis of the rapid deployment program. According to the DOD, the CX concept called for an aircraft "to carry heavy, outsize cargo over intercontinental ranges into small, austere airfields". In addition, it was meant to be able "to deliver the full complement of RDF equipment directly into airfields near battle areas" thereby reducing "closure times, ground force's dependence on surface transportation and supporting equipment, and the congestion anticipated at the large, major airfields in the contingency area".

Although the CX generated much enthusiasm in the Pentagon, it got off to a poor reception in the Congress. In April 1980, the House Armed Services Committee found the Pentagon's justification of the CX unconvincing and refused to authorize the $80.7 million requested to initiate the development of the plane. The CX fared little better in the House-Senate Conference Committee, which granted $35 million for the plane but made the obligation of all but $15 million of it
conditional upon a study by the Pentagon "to determine overall United States military mobility requirements", including "an analysis of the total mix of airlift, sealift, and prepositioning of war materials required for the United States to respond to military contingencies in the Indian Ocean area and other areas of potential conflict during the decade of the 1980's". The results of this study, which came to be known as the Congressionally Mandated Mobility Study (CMMS), was to be submitted by February 1, 1981.

The CMMS formed an authoritative basis for the major mobility programs undertaken by the Pentagon to support the RDF. It evaluated mobility requirements for four scenarios: (1) a Soviet-backed Persian Gulf state attacking Saudi oilfields; (2) a Soviet invasion of Iran; (3) a NATO/Warsaw Pact conflict; and (4) a simultaneous conflict in Europe and the Gulf. The study found significant gaps between requirements and existing capability in all the scenarios, especially in the area of airlift. It established the following requirements in each leg of the mobility triad: 66 million-ton-miles per day of intertheatre cargo airlift capability; 100,000 tons of additional roll on/roll off (RO/RO) shipping; maritime prepositioning ships for three Marine brigade-sized air-ground task forces, and prepositioning of 130,000 tons of ammunition and resupply in Southwest Asia.

The DOD wanted to procure the CX to reduce the airlift shortfalls identified in the CMMS. Accordingly, the Air Force went ahead with a design competition for the CX involving three principal bidders, Boeing, Lockheed and McDonnell Douglas. In August 1981, the McDonnell Douglas entry, the C-17, won the competition although, under the terms of the competition, this implied no Air Force commitment that the plane would be built.
But in his FY1983 authorization request, the Secretary of Defence, after overruling a reluctant Air Force, cancelled the C-17 and accepted an offer by Lockheed to buy 50 modified C-5 planes: the C-5B.\textsuperscript{94} Also added to the airlift package were 44 KC-10 advanced tanker/cargo aircraft. The KC-10 is a modified version of the DC-10 with both tanker and cargo capability. With its longer range and twice as much fuel-carrying capability than the KC-135, it would substantially facilitate airlift operations into the Gulf region by reducing number of tankers needed and alleviating enroute support requirements.\textsuperscript{95} In justifying the new package the DOD stated that due to a last-minute decision to increase airlift funding for the next 5 years, the C-5 option seemed more appropriate since it could be acquired 2 years sooner than the C-17; at a lower cost ($6.5 billion to about $12-13 billion for the C-17); and at lesser risk since the C-5 production line already existed whereas the C-17 was a totally new plane.\textsuperscript{96}

The new airlift decision proved to be a highly controversial one because in obtaining Congressional approval, the DOD had to overcome a proposal\textsuperscript{97} by Boeing to supply its 747 cargo planes as a cheaper and quicker solution to the airlift problem. Although the argument was finally won by the C-5B, the legislative battle was fierce leaving behind a trail of bitterness caused by aggressive lobbying by Lockheed Corporation, in which the Air Force lent a helpful hand.\textsuperscript{98} Moreover, the C-5B decision left unrealized for the near term the technological requirements which only the C-17 could satisfy. The C-5B, with a technology almost 20 years old, compares unfavourably with the C-17 in the critical areas of dual mission capability (inter- and intra-theatre) and ability to operate from forward and austere airfields.\textsuperscript{99}
Contrary to initial indications, however, the C-17 survived as a longer-term program. The Pentagon continued to request funds to maintain research and development efforts for the plane, which is now seen as the next generation airlifter replacing some of the C-130s (in an intra-theatre role) and C-141s as they reach the end of their service lives in the 1990s. As Table 4.5 shows, all the current airlift programs, including the C-5B and KC-10, will yield by FY1988 some 48.5 MTM/D in airlift capability, which falls well short of the CMMS goal of 66 MTM/D. And the 66 MTM/D target itself, it should be noted, does not meet the requirements of any of the four scenarios examined in the CMMS: the least demanding scenario requires a 83 MTM/D capability. The Air Force's Airlift Master Plan, released after the C-5B/KC-10 decision, seeks to address the problem through the following measures: (1) procuring 180 C-17 transports beginning in 1988; (2) transferring 180 C-141s into reserve units to conserve their service life; and (3) retiring without replacement 180 C-130 tactical transports. This would enable the Air Force to meet the 66 MTM/D goal established by the CMMS.

4.3.2 Sealift, maritime prepositioning and amphibious lift

Like airlift, US sealift capabilities consist of both organic military and commercially-owned assets. The organic resources are distributed over two components: (1) the Controlled Fleet of the Military Sealift Command (MSC) which is run by the Navy, and (2) the National Defence Reserve Fleet (NDFR), which is jointly administered by the MSC and the US Maritime Administration (MARAD). The MSC Controlled Fleet, which includes ships either owned by the MSC or on long-term charter to it, carries DOD military cargo on a day-to-day
### TABLE 4.5

**STRATEGIC AIRLIFT ENHANCEMENT: REQUIREMENTS AND CAPABILITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C-5A</th>
<th>C-141B</th>
<th>CRAF Stage III</th>
<th>FY1983 shortfall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. CMMS goal</strong></td>
<td>66.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>B. FY1983 capability</strong></td>
<td>6.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-5A</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY1983 shortfall</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. FY1988 programmed capability</strong></td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-5A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FY1988 shortfall</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 The DOD's Master Airlift Plan proposes to fill the shortfall by procuring the C-17.

basis in peacetime and is readily available for a contingency. The
NDRF, on the other hand, consists mostly of VICTORY-class ships of
World War II vintage with an average capacity of below 3,000 tons.
While the NRDF normally would take 2 to 3 months to mobilize in
response to a national emergency, the most modern and capable ships in
it are kept at a higher stage of readiness under the Ready Reserve
Force (RRF) program jointly administered by the MSC and the MARAD.
The RRF ships are required to mobilize within 10 days of an alert, and
are meant to be the first line reinforcement for the MSC Controlled
Fleet.102

The organic sealift resources apart, the Pentagon can draw upon
the US Merchant Marine - its largest single source of strategic
sealift. The Merchant Marine is available in two ways. The first,
the Sealift Readiness Program, covers ships built and operated with
federal subsidy or otherwise under contract with the DOD for
transporting its peacetime cargo. These ships are bound by a
requirement to be available for use in contingencies short of a
national emergency and can be called up through joint agreement
between the Secretaries of Defence and Transportation. The rest of
the Merchant Marine can be requisitioned or purchased by the Secretary
of Transportation in the event of a national emergency under the
Merchant Marine Act of 1936, which also authorizes requisitioning of
US-owned ships registered under foreign "flags of convenience".103

Sealift shortfalls were widely predicted when the RDF was
activated in 1980. US sealift assets had gone through a period of
extensive decline since the Vietnam War. This was largely
attributable to two factors. Firstly much of the US military planning
since Vietnam focused on a short war in Europe which in effect meant
heavy reliance on airlift and land prepositioning. Sealift requirements were further "masked" by the availability of some 400 NATO pool vessels for ferrying US reinforcements to Europe in a war.\textsuperscript{104} The second factor was the rapidly declining ability of the US Merchant Marine to contribute to military sealift needs. The number of US merchant ships had more than halved since 1950, while in 1950 the US Merchant Marine was the largest in the world and carried 42 percent of the country's foreign trade, in the early 1980s, it ranked eighth in size and carried less than 4 percent of the US foreign trade.\textsuperscript{105} Additionally, the general shift from breakbulk to container ships undermine the Merchant Marine's capability to transport military cargo, much of which cannot be containerised. Besides, the container ship, while faster and commercially more attractive, is not optimized for austere combat conditions. It is not self-sustaining, depending instead on full-fledged port facilities for loading and unloading.

To increase its sealift capability, the DOD undertook several programs. One of the major initiatives was the acquisition of 8 SL-7 ships and their conversion into fast logistics ships (TAKR) constituting a dedicated "surge force" for the RDF. The SL-7 ships, built in Europe in the early 1970s, are distinguished by their high maximum speed (33 knots) and fuel consumption. Prior to their purchase by the DOD, these ships were owned by an American company, Sea-Land, apparently destined for conversion for greater fuel efficiency. In their original form, these container ships were incapable of carrying the full range of military cargo and of rapid onload/offload in austere port conditions. To overcome these limitations, Pentagon decided to convert them into a partial roll-on/roll-off configuration. Following conversion, the ships would be
maintained at a reduced operational status, berthed at continental US loadout ports, ready to load and sail when a crisis situation required. Due to their large size and fast speed, the SL-7s are expected to be able to "move a heavy division plus some of its support simultaneously to ... the Persian Gulf within 14 to 16 days". 106

The second major sealift enhancement program was the planned expansion of the Ready Reserve Force. The RRF was set up in 1976 with a program goal of 30 ships; increased to 38 in 1982. But as the Merchant Marine declined further, the DOD, fearing the loss (sell or scrapping) of militarily useful ships under commercial ownership, decided to acquire them through an expanded RRF program. The RRF is now scheduled to increase to 77 ships by FY1989. Unlike in the past when the RRF ships used to be selected from the NDRF after being purchased through Maritime Administration funds, the Navy is now using its own shipbuilding and conversion money to acquire specific types of militarily useful vessels, including RO/ROs, clean product tankers, heavy lift ships and self-sustaining breakbulk ships. 107

Despite the efforts of the past years, however, sealift shortfalls are expected to remain at the end of the decade. Two years after the CMMS, a more comprehensive DOD Sealift Study, examining requirements for a Southwest Asian contingency and a global war, found that the dry cargo capabilities at the end of FY1988 would still be about 9 per cent short of the requirements of a Southwest Asia crisis response. More important, the shortfall levels in both dry and liquid cargo categories were found to be higher during the early "surge" stage (crucial to the rapid deployment concept) of a sealift operation than during "sustaining" stage. And although the Pentagon considered the 9 per cent shortfall "marginally inadequate", the study's
assumptions regarding the strength of the Merchant Marine in FY1988 was found too optimistic by the Maritime Administration. The revised estimates put the expected shortfall at between 20 to 25 per cent.108

Since sealift is slow and airlift both expensive and inadequate in terms of the lift requirements of large-scale, heavy force deployments, prepositioning is crucial to the success of any military plan involving speedy deployment of sizable combat forces. In the Gulf region, given the absence of assured land sites to preposition stocks, the DOD has turned to a major and unprecedented reliance on maritime prepositioning; a mode which also allows for greater flexibility than fixed, land-based prepositioning.

**TABLE 4.6**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dry Cargo</th>
<th>Tankers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Military Sealift Command:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nucleus fleet</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduced operational status</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. National Defence Reserve Fleet:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready Reserve Force</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remaining useful ships</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. US Flag Merchant Marine</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Effective US control ships</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 469 478 242 225

1 FY1988 projections are derived from DOD Sealift Study.

The RDF maritime prepositioning program has been undertaken in two phases. The near-term program began in the mid-1980 with the deployment of a Near Term Prepositioned Force (NTPF) of 7 ships to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Included in the NTPF were two tankers— one carrying fresh water, the other, fuel— and 5 dry cargo ships (3 RO/RO and 2 breakbulk) carrying enough equipment and supplies to support a Marine Amphibious Brigade of 11,200, along with ammunitions for “several” Air Force tactical squadrons and some Army units. But this package, which included 53 M-60 tanks, 95 armoured amphibians and 36 howitzers, could support the RDF units for only 15 days. So the DOD expanded the flotilla in two stages: first in 1981 by adding 6 ships (2 tanker and 4 breakbulk), and again in 1982 by activating 5 NDRF ships loaded with munitions. This 18-ship Enhanced NTPF (ENTPF) could support a brigade sized Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) of about 12,000 troops for about 30 days; it also carried selected sustaining supplies for some Air Force and Army units.

But the NTPF/ENTPF program had major weaknesses. The NTPF ships were mostly single cargo vessels offering little flexibility in their loads, and posing the risk that the entire mission could be jeopardised if a single ship carrying vital cargo (such as fuel) was lost. Secondly, many of these ships were common merchant-type vessels which could not unload at austere port facilities or over the beach. Recognizing these limitations, the DOD had planned to replace the NTPF with a longer term alternative, the Maritime Prepositioning Ship (MPS). The MPS (DOD technical name: TAKX) incorporates design features which, unlike the NTPF, permit it to be “spread-loaded”, to unload over the beach or at poorly equipped ports, and have some
onboard maintenance facilities. Initially the DOD wanted the TAKX to be newly built, but later switched to a mix of construction as well as conversion of existing RO/RO ships. The program involved a total of 13 ships, each about 750 feet long with a speed of up to 18 knots. They would be divided into 3 groups, each carrying equipment for a 16,500 strong MAB along with support for 30 days. According to current DOD plans, one TAKX group would be stationed in each of the three major oceans - the Atlantic (eastern), the Pacific (western) and the Indian Ocean (Diego Garcia) - although all three would be "capable of sequentially responding to a SWA contingency". Diego Garcia would receive the last group. This group would replace only those 5 NTPF ships which carried unit equipment and supplies for one MAB. The rest of the NTPF, carrying equipment and supplies for Army, Air Force or joint service usage, would continue to be stationed as before.\textsuperscript{112}

The prepositioning program holds a key place in the US military strategy for the Persian Gulf region. Firstly, it is highly cost-effective. The Pentagon estimates that the dry cargo alone aboard the NTPF at Diego Garcia equals 125,000 short tons, representing about 6,400 C-141 sorties. To airlift the amount of equipment aboard a single MPS would require 1,000 C-141 sorties over a 20 to 30 day period.\textsuperscript{113} Secondly, the DOD considers the NTPF/MPS a powerful signal of the US determination to protect its interests in the region. Moreover, the MPS, which can travel the distance from Diego Garcia to the Strait of Hormuz in about 5 days, provides the speediest means of introducing the necessary heavy combat equipment against a mechanized adversary. As such, apart from enhancing the deterrent value of the RDF, the NTPF/MPS would also be an indispensable part of a credible US warfighting strategy for the region.
On the negative side, however, critics are uncomfortable that the maritime prepositioning concept, which calls for the Marines to be airlifted to a suitable regional location and "marry up" with their equipment brought aboard the MPS flotilla, would compromise the Corps' traditional doctrine of forcible entry. Since the function of the airlifted Marines would seem hardly different from that of Army troops in a similar deployment mode, such duplication may undercut the rationale for the Corps' continued existence as a separate service.\textsuperscript{114}

Second and more importantly, the match-up process between the troops and the equipment would be an enormously demanding exercise, requiring, above all, a "benign" location near the zone of conflict. Critics find this requirement a major limitation; given, as Senator William Cohen pointed out, that it might "well be a standing invitation to hostile preemption of airfields and port facilities".\textsuperscript{115} Besides, the MPS ships are mostly unarmed, and can be a tempting target for enemy submarines and aircraft; despite the DOD's plans to offer them protection from naval warships. Critics have questioned the decision to go for the MPS instead of spending the money in modernizing the Corps' amphibious lift.

US amphibious lift resources have, of course, received increased attention since the advent of the RDF. Until then, the Corps possessed enough amphibious shipping to lift only one Marine division/wing team's assault echelon. Its inventory of amphibious ships had declined by 100 units from 1967 levels to some 63 ships in 1980, including those in overhaul. Moreover, 53 of these ships were due to reach the end of their service life between 1991 and 2002.\textsuperscript{116}
The Carter administration was insensitive to the amphibious lift shortfall problem. The Reagan administration, on the other hand, has shown much greater appreciation of the need to boost US capability in this important area. In 1981, the Navy revised its amphibious lift goals. The mid-term objective now is to provide sufficient ships to simultaneously lift the assault echelons of one Marine Amphibious Force (division plus air wing) and one Marine Amphibious Brigade. The long-term goal (1994) is to simultaneously lift the assault echelon of one MAF and one full (assault and follow-on echelons) MAB. A number of shipbuilding/service life extension programs have been undertaken to support the objective, including construction of new amphibious assault ships (CHA), landing ship docks (LSD) and air cushioned landing crafts (for details, see Appendix 3).

4.4 Assessment

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that US planning and capability for projecting military power into the Persian Gulf region has come a long way since the early, pessimistic days of the RDF. The Force now has units with substantially improved training, equipment and support systems to fight in a Southwest Asian environment. Command and control arrangements have been improved, thereby eliminating a major source of confusion and inter-service bickering. Strategic mobility systems to project the RDF have been enhanced in every important respect.

It is, of course, impossible to determine the adequacy of these initiatives in making the RDF a quicker military instrument with a substantial warfighting capability. Any such estimation would have to be related to the nature and magnitude of a specific contingency and
it cannot be said with any degree of certainty that the programs of
the past years would enable the RDF to defeat a threat of major
proportions. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to identify
the problems and shortfalls in some key areas and the nature and
extent of corrective measures undertaken by the Pentagon. It is
important to note that many of these measures, especially in the field
of strategic mobility, would have been needed and probably undertaken
irrespective of the RDF. But the latter has been a catalyst in
producing a greater awareness of the limitations of US ability to
intervene in distant areas and in creating a sense of urgency in
rectifying some of the limitations. As a consequence, while the RDF-
related programs have led to a net and visible improvement in the US
military position in the Gulf region, they have also stimulated a
major upturn in the US position as a superpower with global military
capabilities.
NOTES


10. For an excellent discussion of the CENTCOM's airpower potential, see Christopher J. Bowie, Concepts of Operations and USAF Planning for Southwest Asia, R-3125-AF (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1984).


46. ibid.


53. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture for FY1982, p.55.


59. ibid., pp.1703-1704.


65. ibid., p.1977.


71. The RDJTF Command Decision, op. cit.


94. Deborah G. Meyer, "USAF Will Fund 50 C-5Ns, 44 KC-10s; C-17 On Shelf", Armed Forces Journal International (March 1982): 20.


99. In addition, the C-17, being a smaller, more advanced-technology plane, needs significantly less taxing and turnaround space and has a lesser lifecycle cost than the C-5. Everett A. Chambers, "Airlift: Finding the Plane to Fit the Mission", Armed Forces Journal International (November 1982): 40-48.


CHAPTER 5

"SECURITY FRAMEWORK", "STRATEGIC CONSENSUS", AND GEOPOLITICAL ACCESS: US QUEST AND REGIONAL RESPONSE

"We cannot hope, nor do we plan, to defend peoples in the region who will not help defend themselves. ... [the countries] in the regions may well - and surely ought to - join in the collective defense. The kinds of assistance they would contribute would vary greatly from case to case, ranging from providing necessary access and support facilities to mobilizing forces that would stand alongside our own to deter and engage an enemy."


A key element of the US strategy in the Persian Gulf has been to seek strategic cooperation from friendly regional states. The policy framework underlying the RDF recognizes that without the collaborative involvement of friendly countries in Southwest Asia, the American regional military strategy would be neither politically nor militarily viable. Politically, an unilateral posture would, by definition, alienate regional public opinion and give credence to the already widespread impression of the RDF as the instrument to seize Arab oil fields. On the other hand, securing the cooperation of important regional states would not only legitimize Washington's strategy, it would also make it more credible before the potential adversaries.

A unilateral American strategy would also face formidable problems in strictly military terms. Regional armed forces are the first line of defence against any threat Washington may wish to
counter. More importantly, the RDF, as currently structured cannot intervene massively without using at least some military bases in the region. While Carter's Presidential Directive 18 envisaged a light, agile force capable of operating "independent of overseas bases and logistical support",1 the subsequent expansion of the size and mission of the RDF, including the decision to plan for the "worst-case threat", and the sheer logistical problems involved in projecting American power to the Gulf, soon convinced US military planners that:

The viability of this military policy depends critically on our access to facilities in the area. ... The access rights which we seek will significantly enhance the logistic structure needed to support various levels of U.S. forces operating in the region. ... Unfortunately, in the Indian Ocean, we lack the logistic facilities needed to support our military operations, especially during crises.2

Such political and practical necessities lay behind the serious drive by US policy-makers to seek the participation of regional states in American strategy in the Persian Gulf. While the Carter administration called it an effort to build a "regional cooperative security framework" the Reagan administration, during Haig's term as Secretary of State, publicized it as "strategic consensus". The two concepts bore many similarities although Haig's started on a much more ambitious note.

Firstly, the regional states whose cooperation was solicited included, in the case of both doctrines, not only the conservative regimes of the Arabian Peninsula, which is the principal focus of US strategy, but also other key pro-Western countries in the broader Middle East and North African region, especially Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey and Jordan. Under Haig, moreover, Israel was also to be a part of the "strategic consensus" framework. Secondly, both linked the
success of their efforts to their ability to exploit what they believed and publicized as a growing perception within the region of the threats to regional security posed by the Soviet Union. But once again Haig was far more optimistic in pushing this view; the Arabs, he asserted, had come to feel "equally - and perhaps as grievously - threatened" by Soviet and Soviet-sponsored activities as by the "frustrations of the Arab-Israeli problem and the threat that has historically posed". He pressed this point by claiming that "strategic consensus" was not something the US would be seeking to construct, but that such a consensus had already developed within the region as its leaders perceived Soviet actions from Angola to Afghanistan as heralding "a new phase of ... Soviet imperialism". The Carter administration, while not going this far, nonetheless emphasized the primacy of the Soviet threat which it believed would persuade the local states to cooperate more openly with its proposed security umbrella.

Thirdly, both understood that political constraints would prevent the participation by regional states in a formal alliance framework similar to the CENTO. Rather their cooperation could be best secured through bilateral and informal arrangements. Finally, both stressed that while such arrangements could provide for several types of support, the "principal focus" would be "on the need for regional states to provide access to local facilities". Since several states in the periphery of the region such as Kenya, Somalia, and Morocco, were found willing to help in this quest, they also formed part of the "regional cooperative security framework" and the "strategic consensus" doctrines.
This chapter seeks to assess the outcome of the Carter-Brzezinski and Reagan-Haig initiatives in obtaining the cooperation of regional states in US strategy for the Persian Gulf. Special emphasis is placed on the quest for regional basing facilities for the RDF. The next section outlines a general framework within which the benefits and constraints involved in an access arrangement can be analysed and the subsequent section uses this framework to analyse the role of selected countries currently forming part of the RDF's "access network". Overall, this chapter is intended to provide insights into two major aspects of the US strategy: (1) how regional support bases contribute to the RDF capability and what are the limitations and risks involved in the US use of these bases; and (2) the response of the regional states to US strategy as determined by their response to the US quest for access.

5.1 Access and Involvement: Need versus Constraints

For the US, building a basing network for the RDF in Southwest Asia involves a complex trade off between benefits and risks. In broad terms, the RDF needs basing facilities for the following five types of functions: "(1) support for peacetime force presence; (2) enroute access for closure of reinforcements; (3) rearstaging and resupply; (4) forward operating bases; (5) support for sea control operations". 7

These requirements can be explained as follows: Peacetime presence, essential to deterrence, coercive diplomacy and familiarization of the US military with its potential combat environment, is currently almost entirely focused on naval deployments. Peace-time naval presence requires access to ports and
airfields in the Indian Ocean for refuelling, resupply and repair of ships and providing rest and recreation for the crew. Enroute access bases, on the other hand, consist of ports and airfields along lines of communications between the US and the Gulf. Access to such facilities is vital in view of the long distances involved in projecting US power into the Gulf. Enroute support bases are needed especially to refuel strategic airlifters and tactical combat aircraft, as well as to preposition supplies and equipment in order to lighten the initial burden on strategic airlift.

Rear or intermediate staging bases are those where airlifted troops with their early load of light equipment can link up with either sealifted or prepositioned heavy equipment and supplies and transfer from strategic to tactical transports in proceeding to the combat theatre. Such operations ideally require a large and secure facility near the area of operations with both an airfield, a port and the necessary infrastructure to store equipment, fuel, supplies and accommodate large numbers of personnel.

Forward operating bases need not be very large, but must be within close proximity to the area of combat from which tactical air and fleet operations can be conducted in direct support of combat. Finally, sea control missions - i.e. the employment of naval forces, supported by land-based tactical air, to destroy enemy naval forces and secure vital sea lanes for use by US forces-require ports and airfields covering wide parts of the northwest Indian Ocean waters. For the RDF, a sea control capability is especially important near the chokepoints of the Straits of Hormuz, and Bab-al-Mandeb, as well as the Mozambique Channel.\(^8\)
Since the advent of the RDF, the US, as the result of an intensive effort, has secured basing and access arrangements with several countries in the region, both on formal and informal basis.9 In northwest Africa, written agreements have been concluded with Morocco (May 1982) involving the use of at least two airfields - Sidi Slimane near Rabat and Mohammed V airport outside Casablanca - and with Liberia (February 1983) involving "contingency" access to the international airport outside Monrovia. These airfields are to be used primarily for providing enroute support for US strategic airlift. The US Air Force military construction program at these sites is aimed at installing fuel storage tanks and creating additional aircraft parking space.10 Enroute support to the RDF is also available at Spanish airbases (a new agreement was signed in July 1982), and at the important Lajes airbase in the Azores. A new agreement signed in December 1983 extended US access to Lajes for another 8 years. RDF-related construction programs at the airfield have been undertaken with the goal of almost tripling its aircraft throughput capability to some 200 sorties per day, "more than enough to support any anticipated Southwest Asia contingency".11

In East Africa, the US has signed formal agreements with Kenya and Somalia allowing for naval support and sea control activities. The tiny former French colony of Djibouti permits the use of its port by US Navy ships and airfield by US maritime patrol aircraft. According to the Pentagon, the "US CENTCOM and Navy take Djibouti into consideration for their planning in support of Southwest Asia contingencies".12 A solid unwritten understanding with Egypt and a "strategic cooperation" agreement with Israel links these two most important Middle East powers into the RDF "access network".
MAP 5.1
THE RDF "ACCESS NETWORK"

The US strategic ring around the Gulf is completed when one takes notice of the possibility that the RDF may be given contingency access to airfields and port facilities in Turkey and Pakistan. At present US "base" agreements with Turkey are officially said to be strictly for NATO purposes only, but it is quite possible that Turkey may approve their use by the RDF if NATO decides to lend its formal support to US military operations in the Gulf. Turkish bases are up to NATO standard and lie close to the Soviet force structure in Transcaucasia. As American officials have testified, access to Turkish bases would "have a significant value in deterring possible Soviet expansion into the Middle East or the Persian Gulf".13

In the case of Pakistan, neither the US nor the Zia regime has publicly acknowledged the possibility of a bilateral access agreement between their countries. But press reports have told of the "Pakistani Navy ... working alongside the US flotilla in the Gulf, with Pakistani supply ships providing rations" and of "Karachi harbour, the best-equipped port in the region ... being used by US Navy's Fleet Air Arm to monitor Gulf traffic".14 US military and civilian officials have periodically surveyed the potential of Karachi and Gwadar (in Baluchistan) for providing contingency access to the RDF, a potential which had also been recognized and strongly advocated by such Americans as the former JCS Chairman Admiral Thomas H. Moorer. Given the revival of warm relations between Islamabad and Washington in the wake of the $3.2 billion dollar aid package, it would be unrealistic to rule out the possibility of the RDF using Pakistani bases for operations during a contingency.15

Finally, the US currently enjoys differing degrees of actual or potential access to facilities in the Arabian Peninsula. A written
agreement with Oman permitting use of several airfields and ports, and
an agreement with Bahrain allowing limited access to its port by the
US Middle East Force constitute that portion of this arrangement which
is officially acknowledged to the public. With Saudi Arabia, on the
other hand, the US has no formal arrangement, but US officials, as
will be seen, believe that the Saudis would permit the use of their
US-built military installations in a contingency in which American
help has been solicited by the threatened country/countries.

Before looking at the details of some of the most important
arrangements from the above-mentioned list, it is necessary to outline
in general terms some of the problems and constraints the access
network has imposed on American strategic policy in the region.
Access is not an unmixed blessing. The origin and stability of an
"access relationship" are contingent upon a range of political,
economic and strategic linkages between the host country and the US.
Linkages going much beyond what the narrow definition of the term
would suggest. If these linkages are not smoothly managed they create
important constraints on the access relationship, which in turn
undermine the viability of the overall US strategic framework in the
region.

To begin with, one may look at the use of the term "facility
access" rather than "base", by the US and the host country to describe
the type of arrangement permitting the RDF's use of the latter's ports
and airfields. US officials firmly deny that the distinction is
purely a matter of semantics. As Harold Brown stated in 1980, "It is
a difference in the way we would behave and the presence we would
have".16 For the US, the term "base" implies, according to the former
Under Secretary of Defence, Robert Komer, "formal bases of the sort we
had in the fifties where we were flying the American flag with thousands of American troops present”. 17 "Facility access", on the other hand, precludes any visible and largescale presence of American troops in the host country. Moreover, facility access means that the US is given the right to use certain ports and airfields in the host country for certain agreed purposes, but with the proviso that: (1) "host governments ... retain sovereign rights over all facilities and ownership of all real property", and (2) that the US "must 'consult' with host government on major exercises and deployment". 18 Thus Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean or Subic Bay in the Philippines are called American "bases", while in Oman, Kenya or Somalia, the US is said to have only "access to facilities".

US officials have stressed three factors in explaining why the RDF must rely on facility access rather than bases. The most obvious and important reason, of course, is that bases are impossible to obtain in the political and ideological climate that prevails in most Third World regions. Bases bring back memoirs of colonialism and compromise the non-aligned foreign policy posture with which most Third World countries, at least in a declaratory sense, like to identify. Moreover, the Arab and Islamic governments in the Middle East face an additional and far more decisive constraint stemming from the level of popular resentment against the American support for Israel.

Two other factors, though decidedly less important, also play a role. The RDF is based on the "central reserve" approach, emphasizing mobility and flexibility. It does not need "forward deployment" of large American forces in peacetime, except for naval forces. Secondly, overseas bases have become "exceedingly expensive" to build
and maintain; facilities, on the other hand are said to be more cost-effective.19

On the negative side, however, "access" agreements are by definition tenuous and uncertain. As the Senate Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee complained in 1980, many of the agreements appeared "vague about U.S. authority to utilize facilities, even after they are built or improved, and the provisions relating to consultation leave much in question".20 The possibility always looms that the host country may not honour the agreement if its strategic priorities differed from those of the US in a particular crisis. The possibility of such denial is especially strong if the crisis concerned domestic or intra-regional tensions or if a host country not directly threatened in a crisis found it prudent to avoid possible retaliatory strikes on its territory by the RDF's adversary (Soviet Union or Iran in particular). Such uncertainty, in return, makes the US reluctant to realise the full potential of bases by risking its money on the necessary construction and upgrading at a particular site. But this does not mean a net saving of the US taxpayers' money, since the uncertain availability of bases and the possible destruction of others by enemy action makes it imperative for RDF planners to allow for redundancy by negotiating as many arrangements as possible.21 The Pentagon's claim regarding the relative cost-effectiveness of "facility access" as opposed to a "base" is not sustained when one looks at the figures presented in Table 5.1.

The political problems undermining the access network relate not only to the host country's reluctance to be publicly and unconditionally involved in the US strategic policy, but also to a similar desire on the part of the US to minimise its commitments to a
### Table 5.1

**RDF - RELATED MILITARY CONSTRUCTION FUNDING:**  
**FY1981 - FY1985**  
(in millions of US dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Project/Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diego Garcia: ¹</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities expansion (Navy)</td>
<td>400.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities expansion (Air Force)</td>
<td>217.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt: RDF base (Air Force)</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya: Facilities expansion (Navy)</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco: Facilities expansion (Air Force)</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman: Facilities expansion (Air Force)²</td>
<td>255.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal: Lajes field facilities expansion (Air Force)</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia: Facilities expansion (Navy)</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (FY1981 - FY1985)</td>
<td>1130.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Figure for Diego Gracia includes funding during the FY1970 - FY1985 period.

² Further construction requirements identified, including an intermediate staging facility.

host country where close involvement could possibly embroil the US in the former's internal or external security problems that are either marginal to or incongruent with its broader strategic design. There can be two types of problems. One is if the host country is involved in an active dispute with a neighbour closely allied to the Soviet Union, in which case the ultimate risk would be a direct showdown between the superpowers. While in some cases the US may find it necessary and expedient to support its ally against its Soviet-supported rival, as in case of Oman versus South Yemen, in other cases such support may not be in its best interests. US agreement with Somalia, as will be seen, provoked fears in the Congress that it might bring the US closer to a confrontation with the Soviets, and make Ethiopia more dependent on the USSR.

The other possibility is if two host or potential host countries are antagonistic to each other, as in the case of Kenya and Somalia or Israel and Saudi Arabia. In most such cases, US interests are better served by staying out of the bilateral dispute. As US policy-makers concede, however, greater involvement becomes unavoidable as the result of access agreements.22

The usefulness of individual bases is also affected by such factors as proximity to the potential conflict theatre, variety and tactical flexibility, air/sea interface and mutual support between individual bases forming the network.23 Another factor which determines the utility of the network is the extent of existing infrastructure at individual locations. This has been an important consideration in the selection of sites because the "facility access" concept, as the Pentagon stated in 1980, sought "to make maximum use of existing national facilities and to provide improvements only as
necessary". But the $1.1 billion spent by the US in construction in various sites of the RDF access network during the FY1981-FY1985 period suggests that this objective could not be satisfactorily achieved. The total cost of RDF-related military construction in Morocco, Diego Garcia, Egypt, Oman, Kenya, Somalia and Lajes (Portugal) is projected to be over $2 billion, not including the cost of operation and maintenance once the facilities are activated. The vast sums needed to improve and maintain facilities are, therefore, a major burden associated with the facility access program.

But the economic burden goes further, because it also includes the amount of economic and military aid offered to the host country (in addition to the US improvement of their facilities) in return for access. Although the agreements are said to contain no formal guarantee of aid, such a quid pro quo has nonetheless always been the most important incentive for the host country to offer access. Moreover, aid is necessary to ensure the continuity of the arrangements, since the possibility of losing aid can act as a disincentive to the host to abrogate the arrangement, while the US failure to meet aid levels expected by a host country can undermine the latter's interest in the arrangement and increase the possibility of abrogation. After signing access agreements with the US, countries such as Oman, Kenya, Somalia and Morocco all experienced a sharp jump in US aid.

5.2 Diego Garcia

Diego Garcia, the only "permanent" US base between Naples and the Philippines, has become the hub of US efforts to project power into the northwest Indian Ocean littoral. Originally intended to be
an "austere communications facility" for the US Navy, it now houses enough infrastructure to support the widest range of functions: communications, naval support, maritime prepositioning, Strategic Projection Force (B-52) operations into the Persian Gulf littoral, enroute support for strategic airlift, maritime reconnaissance, anti-submarine warfare and space observation.  

Diego Garcia is the southernmost of a group of coral atolls forming the Chagos Archipelago, lying about 1,000 miles from the southern tip of India. It is 3,400 miles from the Cape of Good Hope, 2,600 miles from the North West Cape, Australia, 1,900 miles from Masirah Island near the Strait of Hormuz and 2,200 miles from Berbera, Somalia. The island is shaped like a horse shoe (Map 5.2) with its two land axes flanking a deep-water lagoon. The axes measure up to between one-quarter to one-half mile wide, but are suitably long and flat to permit the construction of an airfield and other infrastructure. The total land area is about 6,720 acres. The lagoon, the chief attraction of the island, is 9 miles at its widest point, and about 15 miles long. The entrance to the lagoon, at the northwestern side of the island, is ridden with reefs, but navigable through channels. The climate is hot and wet for most of the year, though relatively free from cyclonic storms. 

US access to the island dates back to an executive agreement signed with Britain in 1966, a year after the latter detached the island from its then colony, Mauritius, along with three other islands from the Seychelles, to form the British Indian Ocean Territory. This arrangement had the prior blessing of Washington which secretly paid $14 million to London to cover the detachment costs. Under the agreement, the US gained the lease of Diego Garcia for an initial
period of 50 years (until 2016) with a provision for an automatic extension for another 20 years unless either side asked for its termination within 2 years of expiry of the initial 50 years.\textsuperscript{29}

After "depopulating" the island to turn it to an exclusively military facility, the US and Britain signed a supplementary agreement in October 1974, which gave the former the "right to construct, maintain and operate a limited naval communications facility on Diego Garcia", consisting of "transmitting and receiving services, an anchorage, airfield, associated logistic support and supply and personnel accomodation".\textsuperscript{30} But even before the "US Naval Communication Station - Diego Garcia", became operational in 1973, the Pentagon was already talking of expanding it to a "naval support facility". The British withdrawal from east of Suez, the Soviet entry into the Indian Ocean, the failed US "gunboat diplomacy" during the 1971 India-Pakistan war and the 1973 Arab oil embargo contributed to this desire.

After overcoming a spirited attempt by some Senators to block the effort, new construction was undertaken at Diego Garcia to improve facilities for naval support. This included projects to dredge the harbour to 45 feet, extend the runway to 12,000 feet and build POL storage facilities, a fuel pier for loading/unloading fleet oilers, ammunition storage facilities and personnel accomodation. Upon completion of the projects funded up to 1980, Diego Garcia could "support communications throughout the Indian Ocean region, plus periodic deployments of a carrier task force into the Indian Ocean". The harbour was deep and had enough infrastructure to accomodate the largest of aircraft carriers, the fuel storage could supply a carrier task force for up to a month, and the airfield could take on the
largest US transport (C-5, C-141) and tanker aircraft, as well as P-3 maritime patrol planes and B-52 bombers without bomb loads. (The runway was long but not strong enough for a fully loaded B-52, a deficiency later corrected.)

The advent of the RDF helped Diego Garcia to complete its transition from "a communications station to a logistic support facility, to ... an operational support facility". As US naval activities in the Indian Ocean increased dramatically in response to the developments in Iran and Afghanistan, Diego Garcia was well-placed to become "the single most important facility for logistics and communications support of the Naval Task Forces ... deployed in the Arabian Sea". But the facilities in the island were found to be inadequate for the requirements of the continuous presence of two carrier battle groups, and a Marine Amphibious group - which was the US policy between the late 1979 and early 1981 period. Especially, ship servicing facilities were limited, and shore facilities to support ship crews and provide for ship maintenance and repair were almost totally lacking. Refuelling and repair had to be done by resupply and repair ships anchored in the lagoon.

Moreover, Diego Garcia needed more facilities to support the various types of contingency operations envisaged under the recently activated RDF. As the then Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Command, Admiral Robert Long, stated, US interest in Diego Garcia was focused "particularly [on] its ability to support large-scale air, ground and sea forces deploying through the Indian Ocean to the Middle East/Persian Gulf region". (emphasis added) Diego Garcia provided the anchorage for the Near Term Prepositioned Ship Force. Plans to deploy the B-52 bombers of the Strategic Projection Force to the Gulf
on conventional interdiction missions necessitated regional staging and support facilities at a relatively remote location so that the forward bases could be freed for tactical air operations. Diego Garcia was well suited for such a role. Also Diego Garcia was seen as a vital link for strategic airlift operations into the Gulf from the Pacific side: as a air-refuelling, staging or transfer point.36

In the light of these developments the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in January 1980, completed a study examining possible future uses of Diego Garcia. The study recommended that additional capabilities be developed involving the use of the "entire island" area. In early 1980, the Pentagon stated that facilities on Diego Garcia would be expanded not only "to support an increased US presence in the Indian Ocean region in both peacetime and in a regional contingency situation" but also "to increase logistic surge support for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force in a contingency role".37

Details of this expansion program: FY1981-FY1985, are presented in Appendix 4. A noteworthy feature is the strong Congressional backing the program has enjoyed. This is in sharp contrast to the emotional and heated controversy that had accompanied the original naval support facility construction program in the mid-1970s. More than half a billion dollars have been appropriated to support construction during the FY1981-1984 period, compared to less than $75 million in the FY1970-1978 period. The scale of activities in Diego Garcia can be discerned from the fact that the number of American personnel stationed in the island is programmed to reach more than 2,200 by 1988, not including either civilian or military (Seebee) construction workers.38
Diego Garcia's major drawback for the RDF is its remoteness from the Persian Gulf region. Maritime Prepositioned Ships anchored in its lagoon would take 5 - 6 days to reach the Gulf littoral. P-3 reconnaissance aircraft flying out of the island would have used up much of their endurance by the time they reached the Strait of Hormuz. Thus Diego Garcia cannot substitute for the forward-located facilities available to the RDF in Oman, Somalia, Djibouti or Egypt. It is, as the Pentagon says, "not intended as a replacement or back up" for the Omani or Somali bases, but as complimentary to them as an "integral part of the overall Middle East base network".39

An important factor affecting US access to Diego Garcia has been the controversy relating to the claim by the government of Mauritius to sovereignty over the island40 and the related issues of the demands by the island's former inhabitants for adequate compensation for their "eviction". The US has tried to keep out of the controversy by claiming that the issues are "a political matter between the UK and Mauritius" to be settled between those two countries.41 After several rounds of negotiations, Britain and Mauritius reached an agreement42 in March 1982 in which the former agreed to pay 4 million pounds (in addition to US$1.43 million paid in 1968) to subsidize the resettlement costs of Diego Garcia's former inhabitants. While the agreement was described as "full and final", the fact remained that the displaced inhabitants had in the past expressed a desire to return to their native islands.43 And the compensation agreement was not meant to settle the dispute over sovereignty which seemed set to worsen when a leftist coalition swept into power in the general elections in Mauritius held in 1982. While the defeated prime minister, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam had pressed the sovereignty claim to
gain greater compensation, and he offered to lease Diego Garcia back to the US after regaining it from the British, the new government, especially radical coalition leader Paul Berenger, seemed intent on demanding the closure of the American base. The new Prime Minister, Aneerood Jagnauth, accused Britain of "cheating" over the sovereignty issue and pledged to "keep harping on about this matter". The outcome of this Mauritian campaign remains to be seen, despite the fact that the subsequent isolation of Berenger from the ruling coalition has been followed by noticeable moderation on the part of the Mauritius government on the issue.

Another controversy surrounding the US military base at Diego Garcia is the criticism it has received from the littoral countries seeking to establish a "Zone of Peace" in the Indian Ocean. The first important move on the Zone of Peace concept was a resolution passed in December 1971 by the 26th session of the UN General Assembly. The resolution specifically called for the elimination from the Indian Ocean of "all bases, military installations and logistical supply facilities, the disposition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and any manifestation of great power military presence conceived in the context of great power rivalry". The next year the General Assembly passed another resolution calling for the establishment of a 15-member (later expanded to 46) Ad Hoc Committee to study practical measures to achieve these objectives. This committee became the principal forum for subsequent consultations between the littoral states and all the big powers with an interest in the Indian Ocean. One of the committee's recommendations approved by the General Assembly was for a conference of the Indian Ocean littoral and hinterland states to decide the course to be taken to achieve the desired Zone of Peace.
Diego Garcia became a prime target of the assorted resolutions and protests engineered by the littoral states. The base was regarded as the major catalyst for an intensified superpower naval arms race in the Ocean. The US, however, strongly rejected such charges. The political pressure from the littoral countries eased when the Carter administration decided to begin bilateral Naval Arms Limitations Talks (NALT) with the Soviets in 1977. But these talks broke down following the crisis in the Horn of Africa. Thereafter, the US insisted that the Peace Zone ideal must be linked to the achievement of stability in the littoral regions. The US position was the opposite to that of the Peace Zone protagonists who argued that stability would be achieved only after the elimination superpower naval presence from the Ocean area. But in the wake of Afghanistan, the US extended this "linkage" to stability in hinterland areas as well. The "fact" that the Soviet Union had acquired new footholds so close to the Ocean was cited as necessitating a matching US build-up, including acquisition and expansion of naval facilities.

In successfully negotiating "facilities access" agreements with Oman, Somalia or Kenya, the US also took full advantage of the fact that many of the littoral countries, were only paying lip service to the Peace Zone ideal. As one writer noted, "for some of its advocates, the Zone of Peace amounts to an expedient, good for public consumption and the moral metabolism, no obstacle to the pursuit of anybody's national interests". Furthermore, and as a result of their preoccupation with local rivalries, the littoral states had at no stage been able to achieve agreement on what constituted a "Peace Zone" or what were its priorities. In view of this predicament, fresh appeals by their leadership, such as a July 1980 OAU declaration
calling US activities in Diego Garcia as a "threat to the whole of Africa" sounded empty and went unheard. The planned Indian Ocean conference is yet to materialize.49

5.3 Northeast Africa: Kenya and Somalia

The US strategy in the Persian Gulf has had considerable impact on its strategic involvement in eastern Africa, primarily due to bilateral access agreements with Kenya and Somalia. The US-Somali agreement is by far the most controversial of the two; it is also potentially the more useful for the purposes of the RDF. The agreement, signed on August 22 1980, grants the US the right to upgrade and use airfield and port facilities in Berbera and Mogadishu.50

Of the two, Berbera is regarded as more attractive because of its relative proximity to the Gulf and strategic location dominating access to the chokepoint at Bab el Mandeb. Also, US access to Berbera "offsets" Soviet access to Aden and Ethiopia, which are in close proximity, although, for the same reason, Berbera is vulnerable to hostile attacks. The Pentagon plans to use Berbera for three major purposes: (1) to "support sea control and maritime air [P-3] operations in proximity to ... Bab el Mandeb"; (2) "to support urgent resupply (and refuelling) efforts, as a transshipment point, to [naval] task forces operating in the vicinity"; and (3) to "make emergency [fleet] repairs by deploying a repair ship whenever it is necessary".51 The airfield and port at Mogadishu, the Somali capital, is to be used primarily to support "naval air operations" and as a transit point for the Air Force but, in a contingency, Mogadishu can also support other operations such as "sea control or, in a larger
theatre of operations, as a base to provide air cover for naval operations".52

Contrary to the alarming claims made by the Pentagon in the 1970s, the Soviets built the airfield and port at Berbera "to a very low degree of quality", as US officials testified in 1981. Moreover, when the Soviets left, they took with them most of the movable items. The most useful facility the Soviets could not carry was the 13,500-feet runway, long enough to accommodate B-52 bombers and C-5 strategic airlifters. The Soviets also built fuel storage tanks, bunkers for a dozen fighter aircraft and a limited number of general operations and support buildings. But there was no electricity or water supply at the Berbera airfield and the port was equally austere, with only two berths and very limited auxiliary support systems.53

The US Navy's construction program to improve Somali facilities has been delayed due to political controversy. Projects at Berbera airfield include improvements to the runway and the parking area, a parallel taxiway, and storage and pipeline for fuel. The Berbera port construction project is designed to extend the wharf, build fuel storage facilities and pumping stations and dredge the harbour and the turning basin. Construction at Mogadishu airport has been undertaken for runway and taxiway improvements, maintenance and storage buildings and utilities.54

Access to Somali facilities apart from its importance in relation to contingency force deployments also serves as a direct symbol of the US security commitment to Saudi Arabia. It is a counter to Saudi sensitivities about the Eastern bloc presence in Ethiopia. The US-Somalia access agreement is also the "most flexible" offered by
any state in the vicinity of the region. It requires the US to notify Somalia only 24 hours prior to a deployment (which can be waived in urgent circumstances). There are "no Somali restrictions on US presence or construction projects in Somalia". Unlike Kenya or Oman, Somalia "clearly would welcome large numbers of American Armed Forces and would allow extensive, high-visibility use of Somali facilities".55

But the US-Somali agreement aroused a great deal of controversy. The primary issue relates to Somali irredentism, involving Mogadishu's desire to reunite Ethiopian-ruled Ogaden, Kenya's Northern Frontier District and the sovereign state of Djibouti - all inhabited predominantly by ethnic Somalis - within a Greater Somalia. This has led to direct military conflicts between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1964 and 1977-78 and isolated Somalia regionally and internationally, especially within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) whose stand on the inviolability of colonial frontiers Somalia has flouted and Washington endorsed.56

Disagreement with Somali designs and fear of an Angola-type entanglement in the Horn rivalry had earlier led the Carter administration to shy away from an incipient security relationship with Somalia after the latter expelled the Soviet in 1977 and openly wooed Washington. The policy did not change, even after Somalia's offensive into Ogaden was comprehensively repulsed by Ethiopia with strong support from Cuban troops and Soviet advisors. Thus when the Carter administration decided to offer Somalia arms and security aid in exchange for facilities, this caused some serious apprehension, especially in Congress. The latter was concerned that US aid might encourage Somalia to mount a fresh offensive in Ogaden, strain
America's relations with other African states and involve the US in a potential conflict in the Horn, the ultimate consequence being a confrontation with the Soviet Union, whose presence and stakes in Ethiopia had increased significantly since the 1977 Ogaden war. These concerns were not assuaged when Ethiopia mounted a diplomatic campaign against the US-Somali agreement, calling it an "act of provocation" which could "draw the United States into a war situation". Critics of the agreement also feared that in a future Ethiopia-Somalia war, the US might have to take military steps to protect its personnel and installations at Berbera, located only 120 miles from the Ethiopian border.

The administration sought to reassure Congress by stating that military aid to Somalia would be given on the condition that American weapons would be used "only for the legitimate defense of the internationally recognized territory of Somalia" and that the US would not "provide equipment to replace items used or transferred by Somalia for use against the territory of any neighboring state, or to permit Somali equipment to be diverted to such use". But Congress refused to approve any military aid to Somalia unless it received "verified assurances that all regular Somali forces have been completely removed from the Ogaden". Although in early September 1980 Somalia issued a statement denying any intention to "drag the United States into a local conflict" and denying a presence inside the Ogaden, the CIA had briefed the House Africa Subcommittee in August that elements of three Somali regular battalions and up to 1,000 other Somali troops were still inside Ethiopia.

Such controversy and Congressional pressure seriously affected the working of the US-Somali agreement. Although Congress imposed no
restrictions on RDF-related construction at Berbera and Mogadishu, the projects moved at a very slow pace with only minor airfield improvements completed at Berbera before 1985. Similarly, while the Congressional restriction on military sales to Somalia was lifted in early 1981 following a visit to Somalia by Chairman Charles D. Long of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee (Long was satisfied with the "verified assurances" he received with respect to Somali presence in Ogaden), no arms deliveries to Somalia were forthcoming. The delay caused both dismay and disillusionment in Mogadishu, whose principal interest in the agreement lay in recieving such aid. While the US was wondering whether the benefits of gaining access to Somalia were worth the risk of embroilment in the Horn conflict, Somali leaders must have had similar feelings: whether the delayed and limited aid received in exchange for access to the US had been worth the risks of aggravating nationalist, anti-regime sentiments at home and provoking more hostile response from Ethiopia. Indeed, it took a combined offensive into Somali territory by Ethiopia and an allied Somali opposition group, Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF), in July 1982 to prompt Washington to make the first delivery of the promised arms package. Heavy equipment such as tanks or fighter aircraft was, however, still refused.

It should be noted that apart from Somali irredentism, the US hesitation to consolidate its strategic ties with Somalia stemmed from the shaky domestic position of the Siad Barre regime. Barre's regime had been actively opposed by groups such as SDSF and the Somali National Movement. A takeover by such groups could well doom Somalia's access agreement with the US. The leadership of the SDSF has reportedly said as much.
In contrast to Somalia, Kenya has traditionally maintained close ties with the US. The access agreement of June 26, 1980, was the culmination of a long-standing Kenyan policy of allowing overflight and landing rights to US military aircraft and port call rights to US Navy ships. The agreement formalized US access to port (Kilindini harbour) and airfield (Moi international airport) facilities in Mombasa, and airfields at Nairobi and Nanyuki.66

Distance limits the role of Kenyan bases in supporting US military deployments to the Persian Gulf. The Nanyuki airbase is about 1,900 airmiles from the nearest Gulf shore, while ships sailing from Mombasa will take about 4 to 6 days to cover the 2,700 mile journey to the Persian Gulf.67 Nonetheless, Kenyan facilities, especially Mombasa, are planned to support a number of useful purposes.

Firstly, Mombasa can be an ideal staging point for sea control operations near the Mozambique channel, whose strategic importance will magnify enormously if, as likely, the Suez canal is closed during a major contingency.68 Kenyan airfields also allow for redundancy in support or staging points for P-3 patrol missions. Secondly, Mombasa, eastern Africa's largest and best-equipped port, is to provide logistics support to deployed US naval units in the region. Although congestion caused by the port's use by several other African states (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi) restricts the US Navy's access, Mombasa can and has been used for resupply, refuelling, maintenance and small-scale repair of US naval vessels.69

Third, one of Mombasa's chief attractions for the US Navy concerns crew rest and recreation. "Mombasa is one of the few ports
on the Indian Ocean littoral with both the facilities and political
will to welcome U.S. sailors."70 Finally, Nairobi airport has been
used by the US Air Force as a regular transit point (3 to 4 times a
week) for C-141 airlifters carrying supplies to Diego Garcia.71

Construction work undertaken by the US (Navy) to upgrade Kenyan
facilities included a new air cargo terminal and extension of the
existing partial taxiway to the full length of the runway at Moi
airport. At the nearby Kenya Navy Base a communications centre was
built, along with an ammunition magazine and a general purpose
warehouse for storage purposes.72 But the major construction work was
done at the Kilindini harbour which previously could not take aircraft
carriers. Such vessels had to anchor 3 to 5 miles off the harbour,
often in wind and wave conditions too severe to permit safe boat
operations. A dredging project provided a 45-foot deep entrance
channel along with a 1,500-foot radius turning basin in the harbour;
permitting ships of the largest size to enter.73

The US-Kenya access agreement, unlike the one involving Somalia,
has caused no major political difficulties for either side. For
Kenya, the deal is worth it for its economic benefits including money
spent by US sailors on shore leave, the expenditure incurred by the US
Navy in buying supplies and services from the local market, and the
increased US military and economic aid.

Kenyan leaders have shrugged off suggestions that by granting
facilities to the US, they have compromised the stand of the OAU and
the non-aligned bloc against superpower presence in the region. As
the Kenyan Weekly Review pointed out in October 1981, the agreement
"could make Kenya suspect in the eyes of certain African countries,
but the minimal troop presence involved makes the offer pale in a
continent replete with foreign troops of all shades and intentions".74

Kenya, of course, has been concerned about possible effects of
large-scale American military presence on its soil. Although US
officials have testified that Kenya "will allow almost any level of US
military presence as long as it is temporary",75 Kenya has urged the
US to keep to a minimum the number of American staff stationed on a
regular, "permanent" basis. This helps the Kenyan regime in
minimizing domestic discontent and preserving its official nonaligned
status, but it should hardly affect known US objectives or operations
involving the use of Kenyan bases.

On the other hand, a potentially more severe problem for the US
is posed by the state of Nairobi's alignment with its two feuding
neighbours in the Horn of Africa. A shared fear of Somali irredentism
had, despite their ideological divergence, brought Kenya and Ethiopia
into a sort of alliance sanctified by a mutual defence pact in
1979.76 Kenya was highly sceptical, though not overly bitter, about
the wisdom behind the US decision to sell arms to Somalia as part of
the access deal.77 Shortly after the Somali deal was signed, tensions
between America's two regional friends were aggravated as Kenya openly
and unreservedly accused Mogadishu of instigating riots in its north
eastern province. As the troubles mounted, the Ethiopian head of the
state paid a visit to Nairobi, leading to a communique reaffirming the
close ties between the two countries, and warning Somalia to abandon
its irredentist claims.78

Kenya of course did not, and is not likely to, cool off its
strategic links with the US in order to put pressure on the latter on
the issue of military aid to Somalia. Apart from Kenya's need for American aid, Washington has been sensitive to Kenya's concern, which was certainly one of the factors that led the US to postpone arms deliveries to Somalia. Moreover Washington worked hard, along with Saudi Arabia, to persuade both sides to improve relations, and this seemed to yield results when Siad Barre met Kenyan President Moi after attending the OAU summit in Nairobi in June 1981. Barre made a significant public statement that "Somalia is not seeking any territorial gain from Kenya".79

But the extent of this compromise remained in doubt, nor could it fully resolve the essential dilemmas facing the application of "strategic consensus" to the Horn. Pending a final and comprehensive abandonment of Somali irredentism, Washington's strategic ties with Somalia are likely to remain a complicating factor in US-Kenyan relations. Firstly, Kenya might welcome the prospect of better ties with Mogadishu but not necessarily at the expense of its ties with Ethiopia. For Kenya, such ties had been a principal deterrent to past Somali threats to its north eastern province, and it could not afford to leave itself fully exposed in the event Somalia revived the claim at some point in future. Secondly, a complete isolation of Ethiopia through Kenya-Somalia entente may not serve US strategic interests, since it could push Ethiopia more firmly into the Soviet Camp, and delay the fulfilment of some hopes in the State Department that Addis Ababa, like Mogadishu before, would throw the Russians out and return to the Western fold.80
5.4 The Outer Ring: Egypt and Israel

Egypt's role in the RDF came into the limelight when, the day after American forces used an Egyptian airbase (Qena) to mount the ill-fated hostage rescue attempt, President Sadat declared: "I have promised the American people that I shall give facilities for the rescue of the hostages and for the rescue of any Arab state on the Gulf. This is my policy". This policy was subsequently reaffirmed by his successor, Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian offer, however, was not unconditional. First, it ruled out the establishment of "permanent American bases" on Egyptian soil, allowing instead "temporary" access for the duration of a crisis. This, however, did not prejudice American right to preposition equipment at selected sites. Second, Egypt refused to formalise the offer by entering into a signed agreement with the US. Third, Egyptian officials made a point of stressing that the use of the facilities would be "conditional upon a request by any Arab or Islamic country for help in the event it is subjected to a threat of invasion", thereby leaving in doubt whether access would be permitted for "uninvited" or coercive intervention or against domestic threats. Finally, the Egyptian offer specifically excluded the Israeli-built airfields in Sinai, which the latter was to evacuate in accordance with the Camp David accords. This move disappointed some American officials who envisaged important roles for these two ready-made, excellently-built, bases in the RDF access network.

The conditional Egyptian offer of access did not, however, deter the Pentagon from welcoming it with considerable enthusiasm. Of all the sites on offer, most interest was focused on Ras Banas on the Red Sea coast. Another location, the modern military airfield at Cairo
West, was considered unsuitable for regular and large scale use due to its proximity to Egypt's major population centre and its lack of an air/sea interface. These constraints did not apply to Ras Banas where an American base could, given its proximity across the Red Sea to the Saudi cities of Jiddah and Yanbu, be a symbol of American support for the Saudi regime without provoking resentment from the Saudi populace.84

But Ras Banas in its existing state was an "extremely austere" facility lacking almost everything except a 8,500-feet runway in a state of serious disrepair and a nearby port pier which could take only very shallow draft vessels.85 The Pentagon's initial proposal to develop Ras Banas was highly ambitious. If fully carried out it would have made it the most important installation supporting the RDF. The idea was to make Ras Banas a "primary rear staging facility" for RDF Army troops deploying to the Gulf. According to this concept, these troops would have flown from their peacetime locations to wait at Ras Banas pending further developments in a crisis situation. This "preemptive" deployment was expected to deter any further action by the enemy.86 If RDF troops were actually employed in combat (if deterrence failed), then Ras Banas would have staged additional Army troops and Air Force tactical fighter units flying in from the US. The prepositioned equipment and supplies at Ras Banas would have greatly reduced the burden on strategic lift, and the base would have provided extensive command, control and communications facilities to the RDF. It would also have been used to stage B-52 bombers of the strategic projection force.87 To support these varied functions, construction would have been undertaken at an estimated cost of over $500 million (more than $800 million if the cost of prepositioned equipment/fuel/munitions was included).88
The plan fell through, as the result of Congressional unwillingness to provide such vast amounts of money in the absence of a written agreement between the US and the Egyptian government. After refusing any funds for FY1982, Congress agreed to appropriate $91 million for FY1983 on the following conditions: (1) the provision of "further written assurances" from the Egyptian government on the availability of Ras Banas along with a clarification from the US Defence Secretary on "how, when and for what purposes the government of Egypt will allow the United States to use the Ras Banas facility"; (2) a certification from the Secretary of Defence that the US was negotiating with its NATO and Japanese allies to obtain their direct or indirect financial contribution to the RDF military construction program; and (3) a total spending at Ras Banas limited to $350 million. But on the first and most important condition, the Mubarak regime once again refused to comply, further than confirming a letter from the late President Sadat, dated July 27, 1981. The Reagan administration was willing to proceed with the construction on the basis of this confirmation, but Congress found it insufficient.

Further negotiations between the US and Egypt not only failed to resolve the differences over the Congressional conditions, but also reported a deadlock over such issues as which side would control the base and manage the construction program. The talks were called off in May 1983 and the Pentagon, faced with certain Congressional refusal, withdrew its entire FY1984 request for Ras Banas construction funding. In the FY1984 appropriations, Congress also rescinded the $91 million appropriated for FY1983. Instead it approved $49 million for a subsequent DOD proposal to build a drastically scaled down version of the originally-proposed staging facility, with the
condition that the Egyptian government would match the US contribution with a similar amount. The US-funded portion of the construction program would make Ras Banas an "austere rear staging area" for the RDF by building POL support facilities, water desalination/distribution systems, airfield improvements and warehouses.92

The problems encountered in the development of Ras Banas were indicative of the problems affecting US-Egyptian ties as they related to the former's hope for a "strategic consensus". Egyptian reservation against a formal treaty can be explained by a variety of factors. Egyptians, both the ruler and the ruled, have bitter memories of foreign domination, whether Turkish, British or Soviet.93 Egyptian leaders are also aware that giving unrestricted access to the RDF could give the radical Arab regimes additional excuse to frustrate their efforts to bring Egypt back to the Arab mainstream. Moreover, in the aftermath of Sadat's assassination, no Egyptian regime could afford to ignore the increasingly restive nationalistic, anti-Western and Islamic fundamentalist forces within the country which have collectively denounced their government's "separate peace" with Israel and demanded Egypt's return to the Arab fold. Anti-American sentiments within the Egyptian population have been fueled by the government's decision to grant facilities to the US. In May 1981, for example, Cairo paper Ash-Sha'b denounced the proposed US facility at Ras Banas as a "threat to our independence and sovereignty".94 The former Egyptian foreign minister, Mohammed Riad, also argued that the RDF was "contrary to the aspirations and inspirations of the Arab people".95

The prospects for a radical deterioration of US-Egyptian relations should not, however, be exaggerated. Such an outcome is
unlikely unless the present regime, or its chosen successor (like Sadat's choice of Mubarak as his successor), are overthrown in a revolutionary upheaval and replaced by a more radical fundamentalist regime. The Mubarak regime, despite its sincere efforts to improve ties with the Arab world, has in the past stated that it's return to the Arab mainstream would not be at the expense of ties with the US and Israel.96 This position is unlikely to be significantly revised as long as Egypt continues to receive massive and desperately-needed American aid. Averaging over $2 billion annually since Camp David, it now ranks second only to US aid received by Israel. The importance of this aid is highlighted by the fact that prior to its peace treaty with Israel, Egypt was receiving only about $500 million annually in economic assistance from its Arab brethren, whose oil revenues have fallen sharply since then. Moreover, Egyptian leaders have found that the leading pro-Western Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Oman are willing to assist its effort to return to mainstream Arab politics even if it maintains close relations with the US and indeed Israel.97 Despite the problems over Ras Banas, the Mubarak regime has continued to fully cooperate with the RDF. Egypt played host to BRIGHT STAR exercises in 1980, 1981 and 1983 and its offer of contingency access to the RDF at Ras Banas, Cairo West and at another "secret location" still stands, as indeed do US plans to use them in a crisis.98

While Egypt's involvement in US Persian Gulf strategy has been hindered by certain political reservations on its own part, the problems relating to Israel's role in the RDF have been quite the reverse. It is the United States which, in the interest of its ties with the Arab world, has sought to make the Israeli involvement as
discreet and low-key as possible, despite Tel Aviv's strong interest in a more concrete role. This is, of course, less true of the Reagan administration than its predecessor. The state of US-Israeli cooperation on Persian Gulf security during the Carter administration was summed up in the report of a Congressional staff delegation after a visit to Israel in November 1980:

Israeli officials are perplexed that the United States has not already taken advantage of Israel's willingness for greater cooperation; and their surprise over this fact is only deepened, they point out, as they consider the magnitude of the resources at stake, the variety of the military assets they are prepared to offer, and the tight constraints that already exist on U.S. military capabilities.99

Under the Reagan administration, this Israeli desire for recognition as a "strategic asset" to the US with specific reference to the RDF has been redeemed to certain extent, although the process of this recognition has been tortuous and has demolished the myth of "strategic consensus" which Haig hoped might bring the pro-Western Arabs and the Jewish state together in forming a common, though informal, front against the Soviet Union. As noted earlier, Haig had predicted this outcome by informing the world of his view that, in the Arab mind, the Soviet threat had superseded the Israeli threat so much so that they would tolerate having Israel on their side as part of a comprehensive American security umbrella.100 While this view was greeted with predictable contempt from the Arab side, the Israelis too, after great initial enthusiasm, disassociated from it when it became apparent that "strategic consensus" meant making concessions to the US desire for a better understanding of the Arab viewpoint.

Nothing illustrated the contradictions in the Haig policy more clearly than the "AWACS controversy" of 1981. Washington's decision
to supply a $5 billion early warning and air defence package to Saudi Arabia provoked a bitter debate between the advocates of Saudi and Israeli strategic interests in which the government of the two countries fully participated. The Reagan administration had sought to project, fairly convincingly, the AWACS sale as a major breakthrough in its effort to prove US credibility to the Arabs, and enhance their and its own capability to repel Soviet or Iranian threats to Gulf oil producers (the strategic implications of the AWACS sale are discussed in Chapter 7) while leaving Israeli security interests safely untouched (thanks to the conditions attached to the sale regarding the basing and surveillance zones of the AWACS). But Israel and its formidable American Jewish backers were not only unimpressed by such strategic reasoning, but launched one of the most powerful lobbying efforts in Capitol Hill's recent history to defeat the sale. Prime Minister Begin actively contributed to this campaign by castigating Saudi Arabia as an enemy state and the AWACS sale as presenting "one of the most serious dangers to the Israeli population". Washington's dilemmas concerning the sale aggravated as the Saudi leadership, indeed the entire official opinion in the conservative Gulf states, thoroughly provoked by the pro-Israeli lobbying, informed the Reagan administration that they viewed the passage of the sale as the key test of its sincerity in improving ties with the Arab friends, and that failure to deliver the package could gravely jeopardise its Persian Gulf strategy. Although the sale was finally approved, to the great satisfaction of Saudi Arabia and the Reagan administration, after some strong lobbying by the President himself, the contradictions between Israeli and Saudi security interests were too evident to permit any further mentioning of the term "strategic consensus".
Yet while Israeli enthusiasm to play an active role in US regional policy within the framework of a "strategic consensus" was thoroughly dampened by suspicions that the US might be using it as a cover to secure Israeli acquiescence with its efforts to solidify military and political ties with Saudi Arabia (by supplying advanced weapons and lending cautious approvals to the Fahd peace plan), subsequent developments involving Israeli action in the Middle East made Washington a lot less willing, at least in public, to seek such a role from Tel Aviv. US-Israeli relations suffered a period of chill as Washington felt obliged to mollify moderate Arab opinion by criticising Israel for such actions as the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June 1981; the annexation of the Golan Heights in December 1981 as well as refusal to cooperate with the administration's own Middle East peace plan. It accused the Begin government of being insensitive toward American strategic interests in the Gulf by taking too many actions for which Washington, being Israel's chief source of support, could not escape the blame in the Arab eyes. While this might have been precisely one of the major Israeli objectives in undertaking the offending actions, they made Tel Aviv's isolation from US Persian Gulf strategy imperative for the US in its efforts to seduce Arab support.

This process of excluding Israel was reflected in Washington's treatment of the "strategic cooperation" agreement signed by the Israeli Defence Minister and the US Defence Secretary on November 30, 1981. Such an accord had been sought by Israel since the advent of the Reagan administration, but its fulfilment did not come until the US accepted the idea as a compensation for the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia. Negotiations leading to its conclusion revealed substantial
differences between the two sides on how closely Israel should be
involved in America's regional military strategy.

The Israeli proposals were ambitious, calling for such
provisions as Israeli air cover for US aircraft bringing equipment and
supplies to support the RDF in a regional conflict and prepositioning
of US combat aircraft and heavy army equipment on Israeli soil for use
by the RDF. But the US chose to delete these items from the
agreement, which in the end contained no specific agenda on which
bilateral cooperation could be developed.104 Also the US rejected
Israeli requests to sign the treaty at the highest levels of
government and to have the document carry an explicit American promise
to reciprocate Israel's cooperation by supporting it against all types
of threats, Soviet or non-Soviet, including the threat posed by the
"confrontation" Arab states. A few days after signing the accord,
then Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon claimed that this goal had
been achieved and the agreement envisages "measures to deter the
Soviet Union from endangering Israel's existence in a direct or
indirect manner or by interceding alongside with Arab countries,
should they force a war upon Israel".105 But the text of the
agreement seemed incompatible with Sharon's claim (as US officials
were keen to point out). Article (I) depicted the agreement as
"designed against the threat ... caused by the Soviet Union or Soviet-
controlled forces from outside the region introduced into the region",
and "not directed at any State or group of States within the
region".106 (emphasis added)

The ambiguity surrounding the "strategic cooperation" agreement
had a clear message: while the chief US interest in it was to gain
additional, if discrete, muscle for its Persian Gulf strategy, the
chief Israeli interest was to reap benefits for its own defence capability against the "confrontation" states. Israeli leaders saw a "strategic cooperation" agreement as the best way to secure a boost in American aid and technology transfer and hoped that the prepositioned US equipment on Israeli soil could be made available to the Israeli Defence Force. As it turned out, however, these objectives were then incompatible with US efforts to sell its regional strategy to its Arab clients. Thus, when Israel annexed Golan Heights, the "strategic cooperation" agreement was "suspended" by Washington.

But the "crisis" in US-Israeli relations proved to be short-lived, just as Washington's efforts to reconcile the differing security concerns of its Arab and Israeli clients within its regional military strategy remained intractable. At no time, however, did the US seek to develop its ties with the moderate Arab regimes at the expense of its bilateral relations with Israel in a real, long-term sense. The concession to the Saudi quest for sophisticated arms was not extended to Kuwait or Jordan, nor did the Reagan administration make any effort to force Israel to make the slightest concession on the basic issue of Palestinian self-determination. Its so-called "sanctions" against Israel, such as halting the delivery of some F-16 planes for a brief period after the Iraqi reactor raid, were more symbolic than real. Some analysts have even claimed that the US knew about and probably approved of Israeli plans to invade Lebanon. Similarly, with a vociferous renewal of the Jewish lobby campaign projecting Israel as a "strategic asset", it seemed inevitable that the suspended "strategic cooperation" agreement would be revived.

It soon was. In December 1983, the first visit to Washington as Prime Minister by Yitzhak Shamir secured for Israel exactly what it
actually sought in 1981: an agreement with the US that carried strictly bilateral obligations and did not entangle Israeli interests in a broad set of relationships involving the "moderate" Arab regimes and requiring Israel to make some concessions on the issue of arms sales to the Arab states. This time Israel was asked "nothing".\textsuperscript{110}

This, in turn, ensured that none of the real problems hindering Israeli participation in the US Persian Gulf strategy could be alleviated by the new US-Israeli agreement. To be sure, the agreement envisages "joint" contingency planning, prepositioning of US equipment in Israel, provision of Israeli medical facilities for wounded American medical personnel and joint exercises.\textsuperscript{111} These could have major implications for the RDF. But it is hard to see how the US could actually put them into use during a contingency leading to RDF intervention in the region without provoking loud protests from the Arab states. It is noteworthy that recognition of such political difficulties led to Israel's exclusion from the Central Command's geographic area of responsibility. The American search for a realistic modus vivendi to reconcile the contributions of the pro-Western regimes and Israel to its Persian Gulf strategy has proved elusive, and is likely to remain so pending a satisfactory resolution to the Arab-Israeli problem.

5.5 The Core: The Persian Gulf Monarchies

The Persian Gulf monarchies face conflicting pressures in determining their response to American strategy. On the one hand, they share a number of common objectives with the US, the most important of which is their own survival as independent entities. On the other hand, the Gulf monarchies face powerful constraints in
collaborating too closely and openly with the American strategy. These constraints relate to their own, genuine dislike for the US position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, their doubts and suspicions regarding American objectives in the region, and perhaps most importantly, their fear of provoking the radical, anti-Western, nationalist and religious fundamentalist forces which abound the region.

As a result of such contradicting impulses, the attitude of the GCC states toward US strategy has been marked by considerable ambivalence. US officials have consistently proclaimed that the Gulf monarchies "have privately welcomed the demonstration of American determination to resist Soviet aggression in the region, including the development of a U.S. rapid deployment force and an over-the-horizon presence". (emphasis added) In contrast, a survey of their public statements reveals a completely different picture. A very representative example of such public pronouncements may be the following extract from the Final Statement of the first summit meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council states held on 25-26 February 1981. In it, the leaders:

reaffirm that the region's security and stability are the responsibility of its peoples and countries ... They call for keeping the entire region free of international conflicts, particularly the presence of military fleets and foreign bases ... They declare that guaranteeing stability in the Gulf is linked to the achievement of peace in the Middle East, and this underlies the need to achieve a just solution for the Palestinian question - a solution that safeguards the Palestinian people's legitimate rights, including their rights to repatriation and the establishment of an independent state, and ensures Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, the foremost of which is Jerusalem."
The contradictions between the feelings expressed in this statement and the claims by US officials that the RDF is "privately" welcomed by the GCC regimes certainly makes the task of assessing the response of Gulf monarchies to the US strategy immensely difficult. Instead, the position of the GCC regimes can be better determined by comparing their public statements with their actions and by examining the genuineness of the objective constraints (such as the Palestinian problem) which determine the nature of both statement and action.

As indicated earlier, the most important indicator of regional support for US strategy is the provision of basing or access facilities to the RDF. Currently the United States enjoys some form of access in three GCC countries, Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, although only Oman has agreed to conclude a written agreement formalising the use of its bases by the RDF. On June 4, 1980, the US and the Omani regime of Sultan Qaboos signed an access agreement which gave the former the right to improve and use facilities in at least six locations: airfields at the Masirah Island, Muscat (Seeb international airport), Thumrait, and Khasab and port facilities at Salalah (Port Rasyut) and Muscat (Port Qaboos).\textsuperscript{114} Important because of their proximity to the most probable area of conflict, these Omani facilities are planned by the Pentagon to be used for four major purposes: "extending sea control, basing tactical aircraft, and staging ground forces during regional contingencies, as well as for supporting U.S. naval forces".\textsuperscript{115}

The key Omani facility for the purposes of the RDF is the barren and rocky Masirah island. Its airfield provides an ideal staging point for sea control and tactical air operations near the entrance to the Gulf, which is about 500 miles distant. Additionally, it can be
used as a stop over point for long range maritime patrol aircraft and as a point of transfer from strategic airlift to small cargo planes which make onboard deliveries of supplies to the US fleet. Masirah's remoteness from Omani population centres makes it safe against sabotage or seizure, and politically suitable for use by the US, especially for peacetime presence and exercise purposes. But the island's major drawback is the weather. The island gets temperatures around 130°F between May to October, but, more important, monsoon conditions make it unreachable by ship for 4 months a year. Thus large quantities of POL, water and other supplies need to be stored in the island to meet peacetime or unexpected contingency requirement for this period.

The RDF military construction program at Masirah is the most expensive among all Omani sites. Work has been undertaken to make improvements to the airfield and utility systems and build concrete "igloos" for storing ammunition, facilities for POL storage and new operational and personnel support structures.

The major and more modern airfields on the Omani mainland, Seeb and Thumrait, are intended to serve varied purposes - most importantly as forward bases for tactical air operations. Following the scaling down of the proposed rear staging base at Ras Banas, the DOD also proposed to build an Army "brigade staging facility" at Thumrait, which like Masirah is also very isolated (in Dhofar province). The Seeb international airport has been used to support P-3 and naval resupply operations. Khasab is a small airfield at the far end of the Musandam Peninsula whose proximity to the Strait of Hormuz makes it suitable for supporting mine clearing operations. Varying degrees of construction have been undertaken to improve all three locations.
A $3 million project to improve the runway at Khasab has been completed. Programs at Seeb and Thumrait have concentrated mostly on building facilities to stockpile POL, ammunition and war readiness material, although some money has also been spent on improving operational, maintenance and initial personnel support facilities. The Omani construction program is ongoing, with plans to add more facilities in the future.121

US access to Bahrain has shrunk considerably in the last decade. Bahrain used to be the homeport for the US Middle East Force (USMIDEASTFOR), stationed in the Gulf since the end of World War II. An agreement signed on December 23, 1971 between the US and the newly independent state of Bahrain continued the arrangement after the British withdrawal. But American support for Israel during the 1973 Middle East War provoked the Bahraini regime into serving notice on the agreement, although the threat was not carried out after the Arab bloc pressure eased following the cessation of hostilities.122

The status of "homeporting" was, however, terminated under the terms of a new agreement carried out by an exchange of diplomatic notes in June 1977. The new agreement provided for a DOD "Administrative Support Unit (ASU) ... to carry out administrative functions, including support of ship and aircraft visits". It also extended the Status of Forces Agreement covering the US personnel resident in Bahrain for purposes related to the ASU. US fleet access to Bahrain was limited to "non-exclusive use of berthing space for not more than three vessels per visits for periods totalling 120 days in each 12 month period". It also provided for landing rights for the aircraft of the ASU, "aircraft attached to ships visiting the port of Bahrain", and aircraft of the US Military Airlift Command (MAC landings not to exceed 36 flights per quarter).123
The arrangements continued after the creation of the RDF, with the ASU still employing 65 "military station-keepers" and undisclosed number of officers to manage communications links as well as the affairs of the MIDEASTFOR. The DOD also continued to operate a large school of over 700 students, characterized as "one of the best of all DOD schools". The importance of the MIDEASTFOR increased after the fall of the Shah, when its strength was raised from 3 to 5 ships, and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, when its 4 frigate/destroyers became the most regular and forward deployed (apart from the AWACS) forces belonging to the RDJTF/CENTCOM. Although the military value of these ships was insignificant, their presence was regarded by US officials as a very important symbol. Later the CENTCOM set up its Forward Headquarter Element aboard the flagship La Salle, thereby enhancing the MIDEASTFOR's importance further.

In any major RDF operation involving the conservative Gulf states or Iran, access to Saudi military installations would be a very critical requirement for success. The Saudi government has consistently refused to join the RDF "access network" even if it only meant granting "facilities access" and not "bases". But the reality of the US-Saudi military relationship suggests that a formal peacetime agreement between the two countries is not an essential requirement if the RDF is to use the Saudi bases for contingency purposes. In most cases, peacetime access becomes a necessity if facilities could not be used without improvements and if material essential for the conduct of contingency operations needed to be prepositioned at the sites to permit quick operations. In case of Saudi Arabia the first requirement is fully and the second almost fully met.
Almost all important Saudi military bases (see Map 5.3) and other support installations have been built by the US to NATO specifications. This, plus the large contingent (more than 500, although the exact number is not revealed) of US military officials "permanently stationed" in Saudi Arabia in connection with arms sales and training, ensures that the US retains full knowledge of the types of facilities available at various Saudi air and naval bases.125

American arms sales to Saudi Arabia have also been to some extent used to overcome problems of prepositioning. This is especially true in the case of air defence systems, which are central to the RDF's contingency operations during the earliest phases of an intervention. US equipment transferred to Saudi Arabia such as F-15 fighter/interceptors, AWACS early warning planes, Sidewinder air-to-air missiles or Stinger surface-to-air missiles, are all frontline systems used by the US military and therefore fully interchangeable with the RDF equipment. In some cases the equipment has been "oversold" just as bases have been "overbuilt". Visiting Saudi Arabia in July 1984, a Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staff delegation reported that "the Saudi airbase in Dhahran could supply, support, and shelter several squadrons of USAF F-15s in addition to Saudi aircraft now stationed there".126 (emphasis added) During the "AWACS controversy", the DOD revealed that "three years of spares for F-15s and AWACS, which would be compatible with U.S. equipment, would be stockpiled in Saudi Arabia". RDF Commander General P.X. Kelly told Senate Armed Services Committee:

It is our view that if the Government of Saudi Arabia perceived a serious threat to the Kingdom, the Government of the United States would be invited into Saudi Arabia ... In this scenario, the Saudis would make available for our use any spare parts, bases,
MAP 5.3
Major Saudi Military Installations

Source: Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.
munitions, facilities ... and support equipment, quite possibly even to the detriment of their own fighting capability.127 (emphasis added)

The foregoing survey of access arrangements in the Arabian Peninsula clearly shows that some GCC member states have been less than faithful in adhering to the spirit of their collective protestations against superpower presence and access in the region. The extent of this breach, however, should not be overstated. The limitations on US access relationships with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, as discussed in the preceding section, are self-evident. In each case, host country intentions in granting access cannot be confirmed until actual clearance is received at the onset of a particular crisis. Even in case of Oman, the GCC member most sympathetic to the US strategy in the region and the only one in need and receipt of American military and economic aid, US discretion in using the facilities is limited and uncertain. For example, there is some doubt as to whether Oman would approve the use of its bases by the RDF in the event of the latter's intervention in a non-Soviet contingency. The aforementioned Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staff report found that the US-Omani "agreement was predicated on assisting the United States in meeting a potential Soviet threat to the region. Oman did not commit itself to United States use of these facilities to meet threats originating from within the region".128

The uncertainty regarding the availability of Omani bases was highlighted when Oman reportedly threatened to cut off ongoing negotiations on its access agreement with the US when the latter admitted having used Masirah island to stage the Iranian hostage rescue mission without giving prior notice to Muscat.129 Part of the reason for Omani reservations is the attitude of some other GCC
members, especially Kuwait, who have publicly regretted Oman's decision to sign the agreement. Similarly, Iraq has strongly condemned the US-Omani agreement as "actual steps to entrench the imperialist presence in the region. To mollify its critics and to minimise the dangers of arousing domestic protest, Oman has insisted on a very low profile for US personnel at the facilities.

The hesitant manner in which even the most forthcoming among the GCC states have accommodated to the US strategy is characterized by US analysts and officials as reflecting their desire that the RDF should stay "over-the-horizon" unless and until called in to help out a friendly regime in time of distress. But while an over-the-horizon presence may be politically ideal, it is a poor way to send any signal to the regional adversaries the RDF is designed to deter and counter. The uncertainties and limitations associated with the access relationships with Oman or Saudi Arabia weaken the credibility of the US strategic posture in the Gulf.

Washington's efforts to elicit greater cooperation from the Gulf monarchies have not been successful. Several factors are responsible for this failure; although the most important ones revolve around the issue of US policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. The GCC regimes have consistently attributed their reservations regarding strategic cooperation with the US to the latter's blatantly one-sided support for Israel. Such a failure has been the source of genuine revulsion among all Arab peoples, including the Gulf regimes, given the supreme importance of Jerusalem to the Islamic religion and the return of Palestine to Arab sovereignty to the ideology of Pan-Arabism. In a more practical sense it has made open strategic cooperation with the US extremely risky for the conservative regimes. The Palestinian
issue, as one writer puts it, has been "the single most important legitimating and delegitimizing factor" in Arab politics and no regime can afford to be seen as being less than fully committed to the cause of the liberation of the Holy City and the Arab homeland from Israeli rule. Any hint of collaboration with Israel's main backer would be an act of suicide and this explains the so-called "moderate" Arab regimes' keenness to publicly dissociate from the US strategy.

To the GCC states, US security postures underlying the Carter Doctrine, the RDF and the "strategic consensus" all miss the central issue affecting Gulf security. While the American strategies are geared primarily towards the Soviet threat, the GCC regimes generally believe that the more important long-term threat to the region is posed by the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is not to say that the Soviet threat has been totally disregarded. There are wide differences on this point, however, between the Kuwaitis, who have dismissed the existence of such a threat; the Omanis who have viewed it as especially serious; and the Saudis, who have, at least in public, taken a middle position but leaning more toward the Omani viewpoint. Moreover, the GCC states do not view the stalled Palestinian issue as the sole non-Soviet threat to the region; they also recognize the severity of intra-regional security problems such as the one posed by the Iran-Iraq War. But, contrary to the claims made by some pro-Israeli writers, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been one of the most wideranging challenges to regional stability for the Gulf monarchies.

Firstly, the Arab-Israeli conflict is seen as the most important catalyst of Soviet position and influence in the Arab World. As Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince (later King) Fahd put it in the context of the
Carter Doctrine, "if we want to contain communism and alien influences, we should solve the Palestinian question justly and comprehensively, so that no one will find himself compelled to seek assistance from those [the USSR] whom we fear may influence our principles".\textsuperscript{136} Secondly, the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict has sustained the legitimacy of the radical regimes in the "confrontation" Arab states, some of which have also threatened the survival of the conservative Gulf regimes. Thirdly, and at a broader level, the plight of the Palestinians has been a major source of radicalism within the native population. While such radicalism is primarily targeted against Israel and the US, it has also been exploited by groups seeking the overthrow of the conservative regimes. Fourthly, the presence of expatriate Palestinians in the Gulf is a potential source of instability, especially if the rulers are seen as neglecting the national cause. Finally, as R.K. Ramazani points out, "it is difficult to envisage a future Arab-Israeli war that would not quickly spread to the Gulf area as a result of Saudi Arabian arms transfers to the Arab confrontation states, or an Israeli preventive or preemptive attack on Saudi Arabia".\textsuperscript{137} If the Saudis were to resist such involvement, then their internal stability could be jeopardised.

Given the magnitude of the threats posed by the continuing stalemate over the Palestinian issue, the Gulf states believe that a satisfactory resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict would enhance their security and enable them to cooperate with US strategic designs more meaningfully. But they find US-sponsored Middle East peace initiatives less than sincere in working for a resolution that would do justice to the Palestinian quest for self-determination. The Camp
David accords were rejected by all GCC states except Oman as nothing but a "separate" deal between US and Egypt. Later, Haig's attempts to project a "strategic consensus" was seen as an even more cynical effort to bypass the Palestinian issue. For example, on the eve of Haig's trip to the Middle East to sell the "strategic consensus" in 1981, a Manama newspaper commented that Haig's efforts to "concentrate on the Soviet threat to the region and the need for a joint action by the United States, Arab countries and Israel to stave off this threat" was "bound to fail" because what the Arab governments really wanted was for "Haig to tell them what his government intends to do to resolve the Middle East crisis, which is the principal source of instability in the region and which - if we want to refer to the Soviet threat - opens the way for foreign threats and intervention".139

Apart from the Arab-Israeli problem, there are certain other factors inhibiting the GCC states from cooperating with the US strategy. These factors are important because they would explain why even a satisfactory solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict would still leave some gap in the strategic understanding between Washington and the GCC capitals. Firstly, the GCC states, much like other non-aligned nations with whom they generally identify, fear that an American military build-up in the Gulf would provoke a countermove on the part of the USSR, and that by openly cooperating with the RDF, they would bring the "cold war to their doorsteps"140 and even become special targets for Soviet propaganda campaigns and subversion. The Secretary General of the GCC espoused this perspective forcefully:

It is not out of shyness that we have not publicly stated that we are in favor of the Rapid Deployment Force of the U.S. We believe that the Rapid
Deployment Force of the U.S. would directly or indirectly invite the intervention of the Soviet Union to find footholds in the area. ... We want no military offers from the Western bloc or the Eastern bloc, because if we accept an offer from either side, we will be portrayed as subservient to that side or collaborators with it.\textsuperscript{141}

Another major factor impeding strategic cooperation between the GCC states and the US is the formers' doubts regarding whether the US would faithfully and efficiently come to their rescue at the time of crisis. The question of US "credibility", as noted in Chapter Two, has been a major legacy of the American treatment of the Shah during his last months in power.\textsuperscript{142} But it also feeds from doubts as to whether the US would be able to provide the kind of help that would be effective against a particular threat. In case of a domestic threat the presence of the RDF may further destabilize the situation. In the case of an all-out Soviet attack, which few in the Gulf view as likely, the ability of the RDF to defeat such a threat is all the more suspect.\textsuperscript{143} Consideration of the dubious benefits of open cooperation with the US, when balanced against its very real and significant risks, act as disincentives to the GCC regimes in opting for anything more than a discreet and low-key relationship.

Last, but not the least, the ambivalent attitude of the GCC states toward US strategy is partly explained by their misgivings about the motives underlying the establishment of the RDF. Memories of Western colonial exploitation have been further reinforced by the more recent memories of the threats of possible seizure of Arab oilfields issued by the Ford administration. The RDF is widely seen in the Gulf, both at a popular, and to a lesser extent official, level as the latest and most sophisticated instrument designed to carry out the threat if the need arose.\textsuperscript{144} Such fears are also regularly
reflected in the local Gulf press, which is invariably officially-controlled. For example, commenting on the reports about the formation of the RDF and its first field exercises in the Californian deserts, Kuwaiti paper *As-Siyasah* noted: "the Pentagon has begun to implement part of a plan prepared by military experts for invading the Arab oil fields".\(^{145}\)

Gulf citizens have also been subjected to official and press comments from several anti-Western countries in the broader region: South Yemen, Ethiopia, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Algeria, which have regularly referred to the RDF as hostile to Arab interests and popular aspirations and the instrument to gain control of Arab natural resources.\(^{146}\) It should, perhaps, be noted that such fears are not entirely unfounded. They have, in part, been stimulated by statements and leaked Pentagon documents indicating the broad and comprehensive nature of the RDF's contingency planning which includes intervention without an "invitation" from the regional states. American propensity to seize oilfields would be severely restricted by the immense operational constraints and consideration of the adverse political fallouts. Besides, US officials since the Carter administration have publicly ruled out use of force to break embargoes.\(^{147}\) Yet it is not unrealistic to postulate scenarios which in extreme circumstances could lead to such action; whether to retaliate against an embargo or to prevent oilfields from falling into hostile, especially Soviet, hands.\(^{148}\)

The combination of these factors has led the Gulf monarchies to shun close alignment with the RDF in favour of mutual security cooperation under the Gulf Cooperation Council, whose inaugural summit was held in Abu Dhabi in May 1981.\(^{149}\) Although in its early stages
the GCC emphasized cooperation in fields other than security, it was not long before the latter became its primary focus. Several initiatives have been undertaken to boost security cooperation and the results have not been unimpressive for a region historically noted more for its myriad inter-dynastic and inter-state rivalries (discussed in Chapter 6).

These initiatives are, of course, unlikely to make the GCC members totally self-reliant in providing for their security. Against major threat, the conservative Gulf states are likely to seek help from Western or Western-oriented regional sources (e.g. Jordan, Pakistan). Thus in some instances, the RDF may be welcome and given all the facilities it needs to protect the GCC from threats which are beyond its, or its regional friends', ability to counter. RDF officials, as General Kelly's statement with respect to Saudi bases reveals, undoubtedly count on such access and invitation and they are probably not wrong. But the main thrust of the GCC's approach to security will be to minimise dependence on outside help, especially the RDF. This has become increasingly evident in the policies adopted by the organization since its inception.
NOTES


7. Ibid., p.368.


35. Ibid.


43. For details, see John Madeley, "Diego Garcia: An Indian Ocean Storm Centre", The Round Table (July 1981): 253-257.


75. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Military Construction Authorization Fiscal Year 1982, p.188.


95. Interview with Mohammed Riad, "Plugging the Gap", South (March 1983): 17. Former Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi's criticism can be found in Cairo Ash-Sha'b, in Arabic, 31 December 1980, FBIS-MEA-81-004, 7 January 1981.


97. For a discussion, see Judith Tucker and Joe Stork, "In the Footstep's of Sadat", Merip Reports (July-August 1982): 4.


100. Department of State, Secretary Haig: News Conference, Current Policy No.310 (Washington, D.C.: September 10, 1981). For Israeli official enthusiasm for "strategic consensus", see Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir's interview, Tel Aviv, IDF Radio, in Hebrew, 1605 GMT, 10 April 1981, FBIS-MEA-81-070, 13 April 1981. Among the Israeli notables who were deeply sceptical of the concept from the outset was former Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, see his article in Tel Aviv, Yedi'ot Aharonot, in Hebrew, 18 September 1981, FBIS-MEA-81-182, 21 September 1981.


111. ibid., p.39; Green, "Strategic Asset", op. cit., pp.51-52.


134. These impressions are described in a report by Senator Charles Percy, who visited all the GCC capitals during a tour of the Middle East in December 1981 - January 1982 as the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. See Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. The Middle East: A Report (1982), pp.28-30. In its general policy statements, Oman has often described the Soviet Union as posing "the principal and realistic threat to the region ... either directly or indirectly". Kuwait, KUNA, in Arabic, 0728 GMT, 19 October 1981, FBIS-MEA-81-201, 19 October 1981. In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Kuwait's Foreign Minister, asked whether the USSR threatened the Gulf, replied: "Not at all. We are not afraid of any action of Russia. This is something we are 100 per cent sure about". "U.S. Aid Not Needed in Gulf, Kuwaiti Says", Washington Star (February 19, 1980): A5.


Manama, Akharbar Al-Khalij, in Arabic, 4 March 1981, FBIS-MEA-81-044, 6 March 1981.


A good example of such propaganda is the reaction to the November 1981 BRIGHT STAR manoeuvres by the press in Kuwait, South Yemen, Libya, Algeria, Ethiopia, Iraq and Syria, all of which can be found in FBIS-MEA-81-220, 16 November 1981.

This aspect is discussed in the section on preemption in Chapter 8.


CHAPTER 6

STRATEGY FOR INTERNAL AND INTRA-REGIONAL CONTINGENCIES

"The RDJTF plans for contingencies ranging from a show of force for an intra-regional threat to a full-scale Soviet invasion."

Department of Defence Testimony, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations, for Fiscal Year 1988, Part 3, p.354.

6.1 "Worst-Case" versus "Most Likely"

Planning for internal and intra-regional contingencies such as domestic instability, coup, subversion on inter-state armed conflict has been one of the major areas of debate in the current US strategy in the Persian Gulf region. Although such contingencies are regarded as the most likely threats to US regional interests, the central basis of the RDF's contingency planning has been the scenario of a large-scale Soviet invasion. The focus on the latter, the so-called "worst-case threat", has raised a great deal of controversy. To begin with, it is the "least likely" of all contingencies that may threaten US interests in the Gulf. The huge investments necessary to develop a capability to counter the "worst-case" threat would, therefore, constitute a waste of resources. In addition, a RDF geared to meet the "worst-case" threat, projecting a greater visibility in terms of the required network of regional facilities and prepositioning sites, could become a destabilizing factor in the regional strategic situation. It is also inconsistent with the desire of the friendly local regimes whose political vulnerabilities have led them to accept only an "over-the-horizon" US capability.
Furthermore, critics have argued that focus on the "worst-case threat" undermines the RDF's ability to cope with the more likely lesser threats. The Pentagon's logic - "if we have the capability of posing a credible deterrent to that worst case, then we believe that we have the capability of meeting lesser contingencies"⁴ - has been viewed to be unrealistic and dangerous. A force designed primarily for use against the Soviets would need to be "massive, firepower-oriented, logistically cumbersome, and land-dependent".⁵ Such a force is hardly suitable for countering intra-regional enemies who are most likely to remain dispersed and elusive.⁶ To defeat local threats, the US would require a light and highly mobile force logistically independent of land bases.

But the Pentagon has responded to such criticisms with the following arguments. Firstly, while the threat of a direct Soviet invasion is unlikely, it is so only in a relative context and cannot be regarded as absolutely improbable.⁷ Secondly, emphasis on the worst-case threat also makes political and strategic sense in so far as regional and Soviet perceptions of American power and credibility are concerned. These perceptions - so critical to deterring the Soviet threat and to generating a greater degree of regional acceptance of an American presence and role in the Persian Gulf - are influenced positively by a desire and capability to balance Soviet power. A military strategy that "writes off" the Soviet threat and focuses exclusively on domestic and intra-regional contingencies could, in the Pentagon's view, increase the risk of Soviet miscalculation, give credence to suspicions that the RDF is designed primarily to interfere in the domestic affairs of the regional states and create a poor image of American power in the region. "It is only
when those countries feel that they have a sufficient guarantee of security against the worst case scenario that we are likely to make substantial progress in other (obtaining their cooperation in) scenarios".8

Thirdly, the Pentagon has rejected arguments that its current focus on the Soviet threat undermines the RDF's military ability to counter lesser contingencies. "The 'big scenario' is needed for planning and programming of force structure because it is the big scenario that stresses our capabilities as opposed to our operational planning".9 The latter is not driven by any one scenario, but designed for flexibility.10 The RDF, contends the Pentagon, is addressed to the "entire threat spectrum" and is geared to meet "threats of any magnitude, from internal subversion to a large-scale Soviet aggression".11 Such flexibility stems from the adoption of the "building-block principle" which would enable it to "tailor forces so as to respond to minor as well as major contingencies".12 Elaborating on this approach, RDF Commander P.X. Kelly has stated:

Our task will be to develop a number of force packages, each with its own political signals and each with its own combat capabilities. At one end of the spectrum, we will have a light package that could deploy to any crisis spot in the world in a matter of days. On the other end will be the entire rapid deployment force. Simply stated, our force packages will be tailored to what is required for a specific crisis.13

6.2 The "Reagan Corollary" to the Carter Doctrine

Availability of contingency options, however, is not the same as the policy governing their employment. The role of the military establishment is to provide options to political decision-makers who then would decide whether and under what conditions such options would
be used. So far as "non-Soviet" contingencies are concerned, the policies of the Carter and Reagan administrations have differed in terms of clarity and - possibly - intent. The former's position on these threats was, to say the least, ambivalent. The Carter Doctrine was silent on threats other than those posed by "an outside power". In a subsequent explanation of the President's intent, Secretary of Defence Harold Brown stated that the Carter Doctrine "is not the same thing as saying that we're going to determine what happens in the internal political evolution of various governments" "Military force", he added, "is not a very effective or an acceptable way for us of doing that".14 At the same time, the Under Secretary of Defence Robert Komer, expressed US opposition "to outside-influenced coups, subversion, in the area, just the same as we are opposed to overt attack". He announced the US resolve "to prevent adverse developments of that sort".15 Komer also did not rule out American involvement "if Iraq invades Saudi Arabia, or if South Yemen invades Saudi Arabia".16

The Reagan administration has been much more consistent and forthcoming in acknowledging its desire to defend friendly Gulf states from "non-Soviet" threats. The most important statement in this respect is President Reagan's declaration, at a press conference on October 1, 1981, that the US would not "permit" Saudi Arabia "to be an Iran". This was quickly dubbed the "Reagan Corollary to the Carter Doctrine".17 Elaborating on the President's remarks, Defence Secretary Weinberger, appearing in the CBS News Face The Nation program, stated that the US would intervene "if there should be anything that resembled an internal revolution in Saudi Arabia ...". "We would not stand by", he added, "in the event of Saudi requests, as we did before with Iran, and allow a government that has been totally unfriendly to the United States and to the Free World to take over".18
The administration's policy regarding "non-Soviet" threats was confirmed by the Assistant Secretary of Defence, Francis West, in 1982. West told a Congressional subcommittee that it was US policy to:

Support moderate states (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan, Egypt) against overt attack by radical states;
Support moderate states against the spillover of regional conflicts and subversion aided and directed by outside powers.\(^{(19)}\)

It is, of course, not difficult to identify the "radical" states - considered by Washington to be likely threats to the political and territorial integrity of the "moderate" Gulf states. To borrow words from the administration's testimony before Congress on the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia, the moderate Gulf states like Saudi Arabia need a "strong defense against potential military threats from unstable, revolutionary Iran; from radical Iraq; and from Marxist South Yemen."\(^{(20)}\) Although Iraq no longer ranks high in the list of "radical" states, all three in the past years have threatened their "moderate" conservative neighbours. It should be noted that a domestic Iran-type upheaval in Saudi Arabia is regarded by Washington as the "worst case" but "less likely" among the non-Soviet threats, while the "most likely" intra-regional threat since late 1980 has been the possibility of a spillover of the ongoing regional conflict involving Iran and Iraq - a threat which has on many occasions provoked various direct and indirect military measures by the US.

6.3 **Modes of Intervention: Choosing the Alternative**

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the current US strategy in the Persian Gulf region includes the desire and capability
to intervene in non-Soviet contingencies affecting US interests. But the US has been less clear in specifying exactly what form such intervention would take. US officials have only stated that a decision would be made on a "case-by-case basis", and that it could vary from indirect assistance to direct intervention. Such a policy is understandable because non-Soviet contingencies could be so varied that it is difficult to develop any uniform criteria governing the application of force. One may note, however, that in a broad and general sense, resort to direct military force is likely to be governed by two important considerations. The first is the capability equation between the threat and the RDF or the military ability of the RDF to defeat the threat. The second is a calculation of the risks versus the benefits that are expected to result from the employment of military force. Obviously, few policymakers would opt for direct military intervention while expecting their objectives to be frustrated either by the military might of the enemy or the fallouts that would work to the advantage of the enemy even if it is militarily defeatable.

With respect to the first, US officials are somewhat optimistic about the RDF's ability, in purely military terms, to cope with most intra-regional threats. As Marine Commandant General Robert Barrow claimed before Congress in 1981, "we do possess the military capability to protect our vital interests against the most likely threats". First and foremost, the very existence of the RDF is expected to deter possible moves by the domestic and inter-state opponents of the regimes who are likely to receive American assistance in crisis time. If deterrence fails, the RDF can play several likely roles in the turn of events. It has been suggested that in a
situation of internal turmoil, the RDF could be used "to separate factions or, in cooperation with the local army, protect the personages of a threatened government". Such had been the case with past American interventions in Lebanon and the Dominican Republic. The RDF could also assist its host in conducting counter-insurgency operations. The light forces of the RDF, such as the 82nd Airborne Division, could help secure at least some oil installations from organized saboteurs likely to operate in a case of domestic strife.

The RDF is also expected to prevail over the armed forces of the "radical states" if they threaten the territorial integrity of a pro-Western regional state. Planned invasions could, in many cases, be deterred by prompt action in landing RDF units in the threatened country or conducting military exercises in the vicinity. If the attack could not be prevented, the RDF should be able to project enough military power to outfight the enemy. It is obvious that none of the radical states are now in a position to pose a serious military threat to their neighbours. Neither Iran nor Iraq is to be expected to recover for a considerable time from the exhaustion from their prolonged military conflict. Even before the war Iran's once large, if untested, military establishment had been seriously weakened by desertions and purges. While this might have left Iraq as the preeminent military power in the Gulf, Iraq's poor performance in the war against Iran demonstrated that a large military force and high defence expenditures do not always guarantee an ability to fight efficiency in the battlefield.

Even if the armed forces of Iran and Iraq were restored to their former glories, the Conservative Gulf states would still enjoy some protection from their geographic insulation as well as from the
limitations on the military capabilities of the threat countries. The force structure of both Iran and Iraq is dominated by armour-heavy land forces with minimal airborne or amphibious capabilities. An Iranian armoured thrust into the Arabian peninsula would face severe obstacles posed by the intervening body of water as well as by likely Iraqi resistance. In the recent past, the Iranian Air Force has been the most credible element in its ability to directly threaten the Gulf states. But even then, purges and the US embargo on spare parts have severely depleted its ability to sustain an attack beyond a few raids. Unlike Iran, Iraq is better placed geographically to use its impressive armoured strength and its relatively well-supplied troops to overwhelm the peninsular states. But Iraqi ability to sustain an offensive is subject to doubt in view of the serious limitations on its logistics structure and its support capability. Much the same can be said of the potential of the PDR Yemen to pose a direct military threat to Oman or Saudi Arabia.26

But the RDF is likely to face several major obstacles in coping with many internal and intra-regional threats. Firstly, it might not be able to respond rapidly enough to most cases of intra-regional strife where prompt action might have been the only way to contain the situation from escalating beyond control. This is because internal and intra-regional problems are less likely to provide strategic warning.27 Warning could be completely absent in some instances, such as the takeover of the Grand Mosque in 1979. That event, which had potentially serious implications for the domestic stability of Saudi Arabia, caught the Saudi regime, not to mention the US, by total surprise. In other cases, warning indicators might be too ambiguous or uncertain to provide sufficient basis for action. The Iranian
revolution is a case in point. Even as late as in August 1978, when
many Iran-watchers were pointing to the alarming trends of strife and
unrest within a growing body of the Iranian population, the CIA was
advising the US President that Iran was "not in a revolutionary or
even a pre-revolutionary situation".28 Such intelligence failures
could be repeated only too easily in a region known for sudden and
unpredictable developments.

Even if adequate warning were available, political constraints on
both the US and the threatened regimes are likely to prevent prompt,
if any, action. Local regimes are unlikely to ask for help, for
reasons discussed in Chapter 5, unless and until the situation is well
beyond their ability to control. That could be too late. As for the
US, one important factor likely to interfere with the President's
ability to take effective action is domestic reaction. It is to be
expected that the American public and Congress would be far less
tolerant of intervention in domestic or intra-regional conflicts than
in the face of a Soviet invasion.29

American intervention in local conflicts is also likely to invite
Soviet involvement - a consideration that is bound to inhibit both the
local states from seeking US help and the US President from providing
it.30 Although the Soviets might be deterred from a direct
involvement that might escalate the conflict into superpower
confrontation, they could be expected to aid the side opposing the RDF
with arms, advisors and logistics support. Such support would, in
turn, make the success of a US intervention immensely difficult, and
the cost too high. The US might have to pay a price greater than the
gains expected from its military action.
Lastly and most importantly, most domestic or intra-regional threats in the Gulf, as indeed elsewhere, derive from complex and deep-rooted social, economic, religious, ethnic and political factors and divisions. Such conflicts do not lend themselves to military solutions. Moreover, for an external power to attempt to impose such a solution can be easily counterproductive given the resentment that the presence and intervention of foreign military forces is likely to cause within the local population. Indeed, rather than stabilizing a domestic strife, the presence of American military forces may well deprive the threatened regime of the remaining sources of its domestic legitimacy and expedite its downfall.31

These problems are likely to undermine and discourage US options to use the RDF in domestic and intra-regional conflicts in the Persian Gulf region. Indeed, the US has taken them into cognizance in formulating its approach to such threats. The US policy stresses a discrete role for the RDF, supported by a number of indirect and non-military instruments. As outlined in the Pentagon's FY1983 report to the Congress:

In most cases, U.S. support would include economic, technical, political, and security assistance programs. U.S. military participation would necessarily be affected by the political sensitivities involved and could range from the provision of training, material, and security assistance to the employment of third-party assistance or the tailored use of military force.32

From such recent statements, one can discern three major elements of US strategy for internal and intra-regional conflicts in the Persian Gulf. The first is the role of forces indigenous to the region. Local military forces are expected and required to defend against most regional threats until and unless they become serious
enough to warrant outside help. US role in this phase of the contingency is to consist mainly of security assistance - both peacetime arms transfers and training necessary to build indigenous forces, as well as emergency supplies of equipment and spares to be used by the local forces after a threat materialises.33

The second element is what the Pentagon terms as "third party assistance". This assistance may come from other Middle Eastern states - e.g., Jordan, Pakistan, Egypt - or from NATO allies such as Britain and France. In many cases, "third party assistance" can provide a convenient alternative to direct US involvement. It would certainly be less provocative to the Soviets and more acceptable to the local states.34 The US could be involved as an "expeditor", by providing transport, communications and weapons to the third party forces.

The third element of US strategy is direct intervention. The size and scope of this intervention is obviously scenario-dependent, but the important thing is to note that direct intervention has not been ruled out. Since many non-Soviet threats are likely to be small-scale, the Pentagon feels that the "United States may play a low-level role involving advisory teams, Special Forces, and logistics".35 Provision of "communication and in-country transportation" and, where necessary, "tactical air" support is also envisaged.36 Besides, the RDF may also stage demonstrative exercises in the vicinity of the region exceeding the size and scope of customary naval deployments. At the upper end of the deployment spectrum, the American response may be in the form of projecting a "relatively small RDJTF".37 Such a "force package" could include, depending on the prevailing situation, "small-scale ground forces or an increased naval presence" or Special
Force units to conduct "counter-insurgency warfare to assist friendly nations". 38

Recent American policies and actions in the Persian Gulf region have revealed the role of these three major elements of its strategy for non-Soviet contingencies. First, US response to the Iran-Iraq war, the most important source of intra-regional conflict in the Gulf since the Iranian revolution, has acknowledged the constraints on direct intervention and stressed the role of: (a) local self-defence bolstered by US arms transfers - including early-warning and air defence systems - to Saudi Arabia; (b) diplomatic and economic efforts to contain the war and avoid the negative results of a total victory by either side, and (c) "over-the-horizon" military posturing. Second, with respect to "third party assistance", the US has endorsed its efforts by NATO and some pro-Western regional allies to develop a capability to provide direct military support to the GCC states facing small-level domestic or intra-regional contingencies. Third, the US has undertaken a program of arms sales to the GCC states, Saudi Arabia in particular, with the objectives of enhancing their self-defence capability and increasing American leverage with their national as well as regional cooperative (GCC) security systems. These three aspects are examined in the following sections.

6.4 Direct Intervention: The Case of the Iran-Iraq War 1980-1984

The American military strategy for the Persian Gulf region that has evolved since the Iranian revolution is yet to be tested in a major conflict. Whether or not this is due to restraint on the part of US policymakers cannot definitely be known, since there seems to have been no real need for a direct American military intervention
since the fall of the Shah. Despite widespread initial fears, the Islamic revolution against the Shah has not repeated itself on the Arabian side of the Gulf. The domestic situation in Saudi Arabia has provided no occasion for testing the "Reagan Corollary" to the Carter Doctrine. Of the two inter-state armed conflicts affecting the security of the states of the Arabian Peninsula, the magnitude of the first, the 1979 Yemeni border "conflict", warranted neither the military alert raised by the Saudis, nor, as seen in Chapter 3, the Carter administration's "knee-jerk" response in rushing weapon deliveries to North Yemen. The second, the Iran-Iraq war, has on several occasions threatened to engulf the peninsular states but the situation has yet to produce that outcome.

As such, Washington's military response to whatever crises that have occurred has consisted of naval deployments, arms transfers, and the deployment of the AWACS early warning aircraft. The last element is especially significant since it is the farthest the US has gone in employing its own military assets (apart from some unarmed F-15 aircraft sent to Saudi Arabia in response to the 1979 Yemeni conflict) in the territory of a regional state facing a crisis situation. Besides, the AWACS deployment has been a common feature of the American response to three major crises within the Central Command's area of responsibility - the Yemeni crisis in March 1979, the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980, and the alleged Libyan-sponsored attempts to topple the Sudanese regime in February 1983. In the first two incidents, the AWACS were sent to Saudi Arabia, while on the last occasion, they were deployed to Egypt. On each occasion the US claimed that it was responding to an "urgent request" from a "threatened" state. The conformity of such deployments to US policy
on non-Soviet contingencies is evident from the characterization of
the last deployment by a US official as "a classic example of where we
had to use some American forces in order to help out in a non-Soviet
case that really happened". 39

The Iran-Iraq war has been the most serious non-Soviet threat to
Persian Gulf stability since the fall of the Shah in early 1979.
American response to this conflict calls for some reflection since it
provides a useful illustration of the constraints and considerations
that are likely to shape American intervention in an intra-regional
crisis in the Gulf.

When the war broke out in September 1980, the US found itself in
an unenviable position. Coming after successive debacles in Iran and
Afghanistan, this conflict threatened American interests further.
Looming in Washington's mind were the fears of yet another oil shock
and the possible engulfment of the remaining conservative regimes by a
spillover of the conflict. 40 Yet, while the stakes were so serious,
the US had little ability to influence the course of events. It
lacked diplomatic relations with both sides. The newly formed RDF was
irrelevant as far as the belligerents were concerned. 41 Cooperation
with the Iranian side was impossible in view of the continuing hostage
crisis. Washington's room for manoeuvre was restricted by a fear that
any help it might extend to either side could backfire dangerously by
pushing the other to Moscow, whose contacts with both sides far
exceeded Washington's. This concern was especially grave with respect
to Iran, where the revolution already appeared to have opened up
tempting opportunities for the Soviets. Finally, the US also feared
that a clear victory for either side would jeopardise its interests
even further. An Iraqi victory might have led to the disintegration
of Iran and invited Soviet intervention in that country. Besides, whichever country emerged as a clear winner would have been well-placed to extend its domination over the Arabian Peninsula and force its own brand of radical anti-Westernism on the existing pro-Western outlook of the conservative regimes.42

The shape of American policy toward the war was influenced by these considerations. The policy had four basic objectives: (1) to seek a dynamic "balance-of-power" between the two warring sides so that neither achieved victory; (2) to ensure that the Soviets did not exploit the conflict to gain a dominant position in either country; (3) to prevent the war from undermining the survival of the conservative regimes; and (4) to ensure the continued flow of oil from the Persian Gulf.43

These objectives were reflected in the actions - diplomatic, political, economic and military - that constituted Washington's response to the Iran-Iraq war. Thus, one of its major facets - the declared policy of "neutrality" - was as much a consequence of its lack of leverage over either belligerent as a move to deprive Moscow of its best excuse to interfere in the conflict. From the very outset, the US sought to obtain pledges of non-interference from Moscow in exchange for its own "neutrality". The then Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie, used a previously scheduled meeting with the Soviet foreign minister Gromyko on September 23 to convey the American position to him. He was believed to have been rewarded with a similar Soviet promise.44

At the same time, the US chose to deviate from "neutrality" when changing fortunes in the otherwise stalemated conflict threatened its
"victory-for-neither-side" policy. When the war began, Iraq appeared set for a quick and overwhelming victory. Worried about its likely repercussions on Iran's future stability, including the prospect of a Soviet intervention, Washington offered Iran a deal to release about $240 million worth of previously negotiated military equipment in exchange for the American hostages.\textsuperscript{45} Acceptance by Iran of the deal (which was not to be the case) would have served two important US goals: settlement of the hostage crisis, and enhancement of Iran's ability to resist the Iraqi offensive. Later, when Iraq faltered against heavy pressure from a rejuvenated and determined Iranian side, Washington took a number of steps to shore up the Iraqis and "forestall an Iranian victory". These steps included: lessening the economic burden on Iraq by providing it with almost $1 billion in commodity credits for the purchase of US farm and other products; an Ex-Im Bank guarantee covering 85 per cent of the $570 million in loans required by Iraq to build a new pipeline to Aqaba so that oil exports halted by the war could be increased; support for UN resolutions singling out Iran for condemnation for attacking shipping in the Gulf and; most important, a determined effort to impose an international embargo on arms deliveries to Iran. At the same time, it should be noted Washington had tolerated, if not actively encouraged, French arms supplies to Iraq.\textsuperscript{46}

Washington's policy of non-involvement was meant to apply to the belligerents only, and exceptions to this posture were conducted mostly through political, diplomatic and economic instruments. Policy did not apply to events and interests that lay outside the war zone, and the US made clear its intention to defend those interests through appropriate means, including military force. As Muskie emphasized at
the beginning of the conflict, "to be impartial is not to be inactive; to declare that we will not take sides is not to declare that we have no interests at stake". 47 His successor, Alexander Haig, echoed the perspective. Neutrality, according to Haig, "does not mean that we are indifferent to the outcome. We have friends and interests that are endangered by the continuation of hostilities. We are committed to defending our vital interests in the area". 48

One of these interests, as mentioned earlier, lay in protecting the conservative Gulf regimes. After the fall of the Shah, the Islamic regime in Tehran had threatened them with subversion through the "export" of its Islamic revolution. After the Iran-Iraq war began, the threat assumed a direct military character as well. Iran's main complaint against the Arab Gulf states' position on the war was their huge financial contributions to Iraq. By the end of 1983, this had reportedly amounted to some $30 billion. 49 One GCC state, Kuwait, had also become a principal receiving point for imported Iraqi military equipment. Tehran spoke often of retaliating against the GCC states, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, through direct (air strikes) and indirect (subversion) means. As the leading Iranian paper Kayhan pointed out in May 1984, "politically speaking, Iran has winning cards inside these two states [Kuwait and Saudi Arabia], ... Militarily speaking, they are weaker and more penetrable than they think. It would take our forces less than a few days to show up this deficiency". 50

Although there was profound scepticism in Washington about Iran's military ability to back up such threats, they nonetheless aroused concern. In May 1982, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near East, Nicholas Veliotes, spoke of the administration's "real concern that
this conflict could spill over to threaten neighboring friendly states".\textsuperscript{51} To minimize provocations to Teheran, Washington had discouraged Saudi Arabia and other GCC regimes from becoming closely aligned with the Iraqi war effort. Thus, in September 1980, planned moves by Iraq to use facilities in certain GCC states for launching attacks against Iran had prompted the Carter administration "to press the Gulf states to stay neutral".\textsuperscript{52}

In addition, the US found it necessary to assist Saudi Arabia with air defence. Although seriously depleted, Iran's Air Force still retained enough capability to create panic in the GCC states through bombing raids. The emergency dispatch of the AWACS in September 1980 and the transfer of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles in May 1984 constituted two most notable efforts by Washington to counter the Iranian air threat. Both actions followed, according to US official claims, urgent Saudi "requests". In September 1980, the Saudis, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, asked "for American military protection" on an emergency basis, including "deployment of American AWACS, enhanced air defense, and greater intelligence support".\textsuperscript{53} The Saudi request was prompted by fears of imminent Iranian air strikes (in retaliation against planned Iraqi moves to use Saudi, Omani and Kuwaiti facilities for attacks against Iran). After a brief but heated inter-agency debate, during which the State Department opposed the deployment on the ground that it would compromise US "neutrality" (at least in Soviet eyes), President Carter approved immediate deployment of 4 AWACS accompanied by 300 US Air Force crew and ground support personnel. On 5th October, the Pentagon announced plans to send another 100 personnel, this time to accompany ground radar and communication equipment.\textsuperscript{54} Although Iraqi use of GCC facilities did
not materialise, that did not prevent Pentagon officials from claiming that it was the presence of American AWACS which "discouraged the Iranians from acting out of desperation". The AWACS move was also claimed to have "demonstrated our commitment to the Saudis".55

In May 1984, when shipping in the Persian Gulf came under severe threat following repeated hits scored by both Iran and Iraq, the Saudis once again requested "immediate delivery of an unspecified number of Stinger missiles [shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles] to meet the threat".56 The Reagan administration, fearing inevitable election-year Congressional opposition, sought to bypass it by invoking the Presidential waiver. It approved the immediate transfer of 400 Stinger missiles and 200 Stinger launchers, along with the deployment of an American KC-10 tanker and accelerated delivery of 12 sets of conformal fuel tanks (purchased earlier) needed to extend the range of Saudi F-15s. Justifying the Presidential waiver before Congress, the State Department claimed that the move had "sent a signal across the Gulf to Teheran, so it ... prevented a potential emergency from getting larger". "Any lesser response would have seemed tentative, would possibly have emboldened, rather than deterred, Iran, and would have raised doubts about our determination and commitment to Gulf security".57

Although the US refrained from taking more direct measures to protect the GCC states from Iranian attacks, such moves were given consideration on a number of occasions. For example, the constant presence of US carrier battle groups in the vicinity of the region was meant, among other things, to serve notice on Tehran not to become more aggressive toward the GCC states. Beyond naval deployments, however, Brzezinski and Brown were reported, at the beginning of the
war, to have advocated sending US F-15 squadrons to Saudi Arabia along with the AWACS in order to reinforce Saudi air defence assets.\textsuperscript{58} As with the AWACS, the State Department opposed the proposal, arguing that such actions were likely to prove even more provocative to Moscow, although the AWACS deployment could at least pass as a "defensive" measure. Although US interceptors did not eventually deploy to the region, Washington was secure in the knowledge that if need arose F-14 interceptor squadrons from the aircraft carrier \textit{Eisenhower}, then operating in the Indian Ocean, could be flown to Saudi Arabia in "less than two hours".\textsuperscript{59} When the tanker war was in full swing in May 1984, the US again indicated its desire to deploy land-based aircraft from Saudi bases.\textsuperscript{60} At that time the US also had a presence of 11,500 sailors and soldiers in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea area, with all but 1,000 serving at sea.\textsuperscript{61} (See Map 6.1).

Had the Iranian attacks escalated further, they could conceivably have led to more direct US involvement in reinforcing Saudi air defences.\textsuperscript{62} The Reagan administration, however, insisted that any direct intervention on its part would require an explicit request from the threatened countries. As Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy stated, "we have made it known that we would not intervene unless asked to do so ...".\textsuperscript{63} This "reluctant bride" posture, while US warships and CENTCOM units loomed "over-the-horizon", was not surprising. It stemmed from the belief that just as in the case of the AWACS deployment, an invitation would be forthcoming if the situation became sufficiently serious. Besides, it was the line most acceptable to the NATO allies as well as the GCC states.
The final element of US policy toward the war was to ensure that it did not significantly disrupt the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf region. The overall impact of the Iran-Iraq war on the world oil market has belied the dire predictions made at the outset. The war halted a significant portion of the approximately 3.5 million barrels per day (mbd.) pre-war Iraqi exports. This was due to the virtual destruction of its Gulf export terminal and the closure of the pipeline through Syria. Iran, on the other hand, was able to maintain a healthy export rate averaging 1.8 mbd. as of mid-1984. The concern, however, was not so much regarding the export capacity of the belligerents. It was Iran's frequently issued threat to stop all Gulf exports by closing the Strait of Hormuz to shipping that, if carried out, would have had a serious impact on the world energy balance. Although by 1984 the industrial nations were considerably less dependent on Gulf oil and less vulnerable to disruptions there than in 1979, their dependency was still significant. Despite lower consumption levels, the availability of extra production capacity outside the Gulf and higher emergency stock levels, imports from the Gulf still accounted for a good part of their total import requirements. And much of this import passed through the Strait of Hormuz. In May 1984, for example, about 8-9 mbd. of the total 10 mbd. Gulf oil exports passed through the Strait. A closure would have deprived the non-communist world of about one-fifth of its oil requirements at 1983 levels. This in turn could have led to panic and a rise in oil prices. Also, by depriving the GCC states of their sole means of revenue, it could have undermined their political stability as well.
With these considerations in mind, the US threatened the use of force to keep the Strait and the Gulf open to shipping. "It is imperative that there be no infringement of that freedom of ships to and from the Persian Gulf region", declared President Carter on September 24, 1980. President Reagan reaffirmed this in more dramatic terms when, in a televised news conference in October 1983, he declared: "I do not believe the free world could stand by and allow anyone to close the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf to the oil traffic through those water-ways". The weight of this statement, to be repeated many more times thereafter, must be judged by the fact that Iran was (and is) hardly expected to have the necessary capability to mine the strait, as it had threatened to do on several occasions. Moreover, contrary to a popular belief, the Strait of Hormuz is not narrow or shallow enough to be blocked by sinking even the largest supertankers. The administration's rhetoric was also likely to have been encouraged by the uncharacteristic public acceptance by the GCC states that "defending [the Arab Gulf] is an international responsibility". (emphasis added) The willingness of the GCC, normally prone to condemn any outside interference in Gulf affairs, to tolerate an international, if not exclusively US, role in keeping the Gulf open promised the necessary degree of legitimacy to American military action.

The US sought to back up its pledge through reinforced naval deployments whenever the war appeared to escalate. Thus, 32 US ships, including the aircraft carriers Eisenhower and Midway operated in the western Indian Ocean in October 1980, along with 20 French, 2 British and 5 Australian ships. This powerful Western flotilla maintained a patrol over the Strait, ready to "sweep any mines laid by Iran, assist
tankers hit in any attack or confront any Iranian vessels that tried to harass oil ships". In June 1984, the State Department admitted having conducted "long, continuing discussions with our allies on the military aspects of keeping the straits open and assuring freedom".

On occasions, US warships escorted oil tankers in the Gulf, while Washington offered the GCC states defensive air cover for ships taking crude deliveries from their terminals. This offer, however, prompted customary public rejections by the GCC states, including Saudi Arabia. The Saudis apparently thought that the existing defences, in which the US-owned and operated AWACS directed interceptions by "Saudi-piloted" F-15s, were adequate to handle the threat. A direct US involvement was seen by the GCC states as likely to lead to further Iranian desperation. Moreover, they suspected in the US offer a move to exploit the war not only to heal the wounds of the recent Lebanon debacle, but also to gain access to their facilities. The US offer was conditional upon both an invitation and access, and granting these two conditions would have meant compromising the very basic elements of the GCC's regional security rhetoric.

Overall the US has had to-date a mixed experience in confronting the geopolitics of the Iran-Iraq war. On the one hand, political constraints throughout the conflict have restricted its room for manoeuvre, especially its unconcealed attempts at direct intervention in defence of its interests in the survival of the moderate regimes and the continued flow of Gulf oil. These constraints, as noted earlier, include not only the reluctance of the GCC states to openly solicit or tolerate such intervention, but also a concern that a direct US role could aggravate the situation by provoking Soviet
involvement and Iranian desperation. On the other hand, US military
power has not been an irrelevant factor in the conflict. It is
unlikely that the less direct methods pursued by Washington - the
AWACS in Saudi Arabia, weapons transfers and the highly visible naval
deployments backing up explicit Presidential threats - failed to
impress Teheran's calculation in carrying out its threats against the
political and economic well-being of the GCC regimes. For example,
Iran ceased air operations near Saudi air space after Saudi F-15s,
directed by the AWACS operated by US personnel, downed at least one
Iranian F-4 in May 1984. Nor is it realistic to assume that the GCC
states would not cherish the ultimate protection available from the
Central Command's "over-the-horizon" presence were the war to get to
an extreme stage. By positing the discrete but unmistakable relevance
of American power against its more obvious and recognized limitations,
the Iran-Iraq war provided a good basis to appreciate the
opportunities and constraints facing American military strategy for
non-Soviet contingencies.

6.5 "Third-Party Assistance": Pakistan, Jordan and the NATO Allies

For the US, possible sources of "third party assistance" to the
GCC states include both regional and extraregional allies.
Washington's NATO allies, Britain and France, are the most important
extraregional countries which are likely to offer such help, while two
countries belonging to the CENTCOM's Area of Responsibility (AOR)
Jordan and Pakistan could play a similar role. Egypt, the leading
pro-Western Arab military power, has also indicated, with the blessing
of the US, its desire to provide contingency support to friendly Gulf
states. But it faces strong psychological, material, and political
pressures in sending its troops outside Egypt. More important, it is doubtful that a direct Egyptian military intervention would have been welcome to a GCC regime facing a domestic politico-military threat during the immediate post-Camp David years which constitute the scope of this study. Until there is an end to Egypt's political isolation in the Arab world, Egypt's involvement in Gulf contingencies, apart from granting access to the RDF if it is involved, is likely to take the form of providing arms and limited advisory support to the threatened country. In fact, this is precisely how Egypt had supported Iraq in its war against Iran.73

Since the renewal of the US-Pakistani strategic partnership with the $3 billion aid package in 1981, there had been incessant speculation on the Pakistani role in the US strategy in the Persian Gulf. There is little doubt that the motives underlying the aid offer were broader than the objective most emphasized by the Reagan administration, which was "to create a stronger, more self-reliant Pakistan as it confronts Soviet power in neighboring Afghanistan".74 As a Senate Foreign Relations Committee report stressed later, "a common commitment to stability in the Persian Gulf" provided another "important basis" for the renewal.75 In this respect, Pakistan's expected role in US strategy seemed to centre around two possibilities. One was the provision of access to its military bases to the RDF. The other and perhaps more important was Pakistan's potential as a source of "third-party assistance" to the GCC states.76

Both Pakistan and the US have been categorical in denying that the basis for their renewed partnership involved any such quid pro quo. But a formal deal between the two countries is not essential to Pakistan's willingness and ability to play a direct security role in
the Gulf. In fact Pakistan had, and continues to have, significant military presence and involvement in the Arabian Peninsula on its own. It has for long been a major source of manpower (Baluchi) for the Omani army; the air force of the UAE has been heavily dependent on Pakistani pilots. Pakistani military advisory groups have operated in the conservative Gulf states.\textsuperscript{77} Pakistan's security ties with Saudi Arabia is especially close. As the aforementioned Senate Foreign Relations Committee report notes: "the United States and Pakistani contributions to Saudi stability are complementary - the United States is the major source of high technology Saudi weapons while Pakistan is probably the biggest supplier of personnel".\textsuperscript{78} The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies has estimated that as many as 20,000 Pakistani troops might have been deployed in the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{79} Pakistan has been extensively involved in training Saudi Air Force personnel, especially pilots.\textsuperscript{80}

Pakistan's security involvement in the Gulf, while highly complementary to US strategic designs, flows from its own national interests. Pakistan has a genuine interest in stability in the GCC countries, which are a principal market for Pakistani exports and where a large number of Pakistani workers have earned their living since the Gulf economic boom. Their remittances have been a vital factor in Pakistan's economic development.\textsuperscript{81} Moreover, Pakistan is a major recipient of Saudi aid, both economic and military. While Pakistani manpower is a key factor in offsetting Saudi manpower shortages, Saudi money plays a key role in the modernization of Pakistani military, such as the Saudi financing of Pakistani purchase of F-16 aircraft from the US.
Pakistan is well-placed, in terms of capability, to provide assistance to the conservative Gulf states. The Pakistani military establishment is large enough to spare manpower for contingency deployments to the Gulf. It is also extremely well-trained with a high degree of professionalism and ability to operate sophisticated equipment. Pakistani air defence assets, especially the F-16 fighter/ground attack aircraft purchased with American FMS credit, could be used for air defence operations in the GCC states by operating from "a string of air bases along the Gulf and in Baluchistan which could be interchangeable in a crisis". And there are indications, according to the Middle East magazine, that Pakistan may have already launched projects to develop such airbases in Baluchistan. In addition, Pakistani forces, experienced in crowd control operations at home and more apolitical (when they are in Saudi or other GCC territory) than most non-indigenous Arab personnel employed by GCC military establishments, could be particularly useful in dealing with domestic disorders - situations in which the RDF is likely to be least effective.

Of course, whether Pakistan can or will actually play such roles in support of the GCC states hinges on a variety of uncertainties. Firstly, Pakistan's non-Arab character is likely to limit its appeal as a source of direct support to the GCC states. Second, Pakistan's ability to send a large number of troops to the Gulf is currently constrained by its sensitive security posture vis-a-vis its two difficult neighbours: India and Afghanistan. If Pakistani assistance is solicited in an intra-regional contingency sponsored or backed by Moscow, then the latter can make Pakistani compliance difficult by increasing tensions in the Pak-Afghan border. Pakistan may find
itself unable to cope with an Afghan and a Persian Gulf contingency simultaneously (and remain alert to the ever-present possibility of internal unrest), especially because the bulk of its forces must, out of political as well as strategic necessity, remain on the eastern side alert to possible moves by its most formidable South Asian rival: India. 84

Third, Pakistan is likely to be unwilling to act against intra-regional threats posed, either directly or indirectly, by Iran. Khomeini's Iran has opposed Pakistan's involvement in Gulf, especially Saudi, security affairs. Given Pakistan's important economic stakes in Iran and, more importantly, the Islamic republic's ability to stir up trouble among the Shi'a or Baluchi minorities of Pakistan, Islamabad would be unwilling to add one more factor to its already difficult threat environment. 85 Fourthly, Pakistan's role as a source of "third-party assistance" within the framework of the US Persian Gulf strategy is subject to the vagaries of their bilateral relationship. It should be noted that although Pakistan may undertake a military effort to support the GCC states without being prodded by the US (i.e. on the basis of its own ties with Saudi Arabia), US assistance especially in the areas of airlift, logistics and communications, would be critical to the success of any major Pakistani force projection. Moreover, Pakistan may not dare send troops to the Gulf without an American guarantee to protect it against possible retaliatory strikes by Iran and the Soviet forces as may be the case.

Thus the state of US-Pakistan relations would be a critical factor in determining Pakistan's willingness and ability to intervene in support of the GCC states. Since the 1981 aid package, US-Pakistan
strategic coordination has been in excellent shape, but there are several factors which could disrupt this. For the US, the most important issue is the alleged Pakistani effort to acquire a nuclear capability and US officials have repeatedly warned that Pakistani proliferation would severely jeopardise bilateral relations. Other issues, such as Congressional concern over Pakistani human rights violations, the military regimes' doubts concerning US steadfastness as a security partner in the light of Washington's failure to openly support it against India in 1965 and 1971, and the US need to cultivate India's friendship, are all potential barriers to a closer security relationship between the US and Pakistan.

Jordan's potential as a source of "third-party assistance" to the GCC states flows from several factors. Like Pakistan, but to a greater degree, Jordan has considerable stakes, in both an economic and strategic sense, in the survival and stability of the GCC regimes. It is a major beneficiary of the Gulf economic boom both as an exporter of manpower and a recipient of Saudi economic and security aid. In addition, Jordan shares common Arab and Islamic values and conservative political systems with the Gulf monarchies. Like Pakistan, Jordan maintains substantial security linkages with the GCC states and Iraq "supplying officers ..., military intelligence personnel and infrastructure and training missions throughout the peninsula". In the case of Oman, Jordan can point to a "proven record" of intervention in support of a conservative regime, having assisted Sultan Qaboos in his fight against the Dhofari rebels in the early 1970s. Currently Jordan has the capability to send reinforcements from home soil in response to Persian Gulf contingencies.
Compared to Pakistan, Jordan has been far less reticent in acknowledging its desire and ability to play a contingency assistance role in the Gulf. King Hussein himself emphasized this point in 1982: "We Arabs, alone, can help each other if there is trouble ... A superpower can only intervene if another has already done so, and then it is too late". The Jordanian Chief-of-Staff stated that Jordan had the ability to send a battalion, or a brigade, of paratroops at short notice to a Persian Gulf trouble spot. The King was reported to have discussed the possibility of Jordanian contingency deployments to the Gulf during a visit to Bahrain shortly after the abortive coup attempt there in late 1981.

Jordan can provide similar types of contingency assistance (such as ground force support or air defence coordination) to a Gulf state as Pakistan, but Jordan's help is likely to be politically less disruptive. Being an Arab country, Jordan's intervention in support of a Gulf regime should be tolerated more by the local population than the Shah's self-proclaimed "policeman" role during the 70s. Although Jordan has less manpower to spare for a deployment to the Gulf, its threat environment should permit a sizeable diversion in certain key contingencies affecting the domestic stability of the Gulf states. For example, a Jordanian intervention in support of the Saudi regime against a domestic rebellion is not likely to be resisted by either Israel or Syria, Jordan's two major rivals. On the other hand, Syria is likely to be less tolerant of Jordanian support to a Gulf regime against an Iranian threat, given its close relations with Khomeini's Iran – including its support for the latter's war effort against Iraq. It is noteworthy that Jordanian support for Iraq at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war prompted tensions and a military buildup along the
Syrian-Jordanian border. (Syria may, however, take a different attitude if the Iranian threat is against the conservative Gulf states, which are its principal aid donors. Besides, an improvement in Syrian-Jordanian relations, not an unlikely possibility, can boost Jordan's ability to play a contingency role in the Gulf). Apart from Syrian reaction, Jordan would have to take into account the attitude of its Palestinian population, which can be expected to cause trouble if Jordanian troops were sent to the Gulf to suppress a domestic threat that had to do with Palestinian expatriate groups.

A strong factor enhancing Jordan's security role in the Persian Gulf is the unusual combination of Saudi and Iraqi endorsement. Iraq has already been a major beneficiary of Jordanian involvement in Gulf security, having received King Hussein's strong backing, including help from Jordanian "volunteer" troops, in its war against Iran. King Hussein's diplomatic and material support supplemented the contributions made by the GCC states in financing Baghdad's war effort. Saudi endorsement of Jordan's contingency role in the Gulf is indicated from its willingness to finance Jordanian military purchases, especially the modernization of Jordan's air defence systems. The Al-Saud and the Hashemite dynasties, bitter rivals for much of their history, have become close partners because of a shared interest in mutual survival in a complex and difficult threat environment.

While American security assistance to Pakistan was stated by both sides to be unrelated to the latter's capability to act as a source of "third-party assistance", in the case of Jordan the US undertook a specific but secret project to facilitate Jordanian intervention in the Gulf. Recognizing that the greatest obstacle to the latter would
be Jordan's lack of transport and equipment, the US initiated the Jordanian Logistics Plan (the so-called Jordanian Rapid Deployment Force). The project was said to have originated following the seizure of the Grand Mosque in 1979, although the Reagan administration gave it the real push. Under the plan, the US proposed to train 8,000 Jordanian troops (2 brigades) as a contingency force equipped with C-130 transport aircraft, TOW anti-tank missiles, Stinger surface-to-air missiles, DIVAD anti-aircraft guns and satellite communications equipment - all supplied by the US. This force would have been available to support pro-Western regimes in the Middle East, especially in the Persian Gulf. To finance the project, the Reagan administration had managed to secure Senate agreement to put about $200 million into a classified section of the FY1984 defence authorization bill.93

The project ran into trouble, however, following its disclosure to the public - Israeli radio breaking the story. Jewish groups in the US set into motion a campaign to deny the JLP Congressional approval and funding. The campaign dampened the administration's enthusiasm for the project, especially in view of the approaching Presidential elections. A subsequent rejection of a Jordanian request for stinger anti-aircraft missiles, also resulting from Jewish lobby pressures, evoked a bitter condemnation of US policy by the King, creating a crisis in the bilateral relationship. In early 1984, a desperate administration official described the JLP as a "program in search of a means of adoption".94

If the JLP is not revived, Jordan may use the C-130 transports in the Saudi fleet to ferry its troops to the Gulf. Also, the US may choose to provide contingency transportation and logistics support to
assist such a deployment. But the problems in US arms transfers to Jordan caused by the Jewish and Congressional objections are bound to detract from the latter’s long-range intervention capability; thereby weakening, from the US point of view, a relatively low-cost, low-risk, and effective alternative to its own intervention in low-intensity conflicts in the Gulf. Besides, the Jewish lobby barrier had been a principal source of political tensions between the US and Jordan and had led the latter to diversify its weapon purchases, including deals with the Soviet Union. Such diversification lessens US leverage with Jordanian contingency options in the Gulf, and undoubtedly constitutes a setback to its overall strategy for Persian Gulf contingencies.

The potential of France and Britain in providing contingency help to Persian Gulf states bears importantly on the US regional strategy. Both have considerable stakes in the continued survival of the conservative Gulf regimes, and both enjoy close security relations with a number of them. Britain continues to have a significant number of advisors and officers (seconded or contracted) in Oman. France and Britain have traditionally supplied most of the arms purchased by the smaller Gulf states - Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE. Considerable arms have also been sold to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan and Egypt. In fact, given the Jewish lobby pressures restricting US arms transfers to the Gulf states, France and Britain could well emerge as the leading supplier of weapons to the Gulf states. France is also the Western power enjoying closest security ties with Iraq. French arms sales to Iraq, estimated to be some $5 billion since the beginning of the Iraq-Iran War, have been a major factor in reducing Baghdad's dependence on Moscow and permitting Iraq to develop a more pro-Western outlook. This could be an important factor
facilitating French intervention in support of a Persian Gulf monarchy facing a crisis.

In addition both France and Britain have developed rapid deployment capabilities. The French have set up the Forces d'Action Rapide (FAR) with the mission to "deploy large conventional forces ... both in and outside Europe, within a very short time".98 The 47,000-strong FAR consists of 5 combat divisions including the 27th Mountain Infantry, the 4th Airmobile, the 9th Marine Infantry, the 11th Parachute and the 6th Light Armoured. Of these, the last three are the most likely candidates for distant power projection, while the first two are new outfits probably earmarked for operations within Europe.99 The 11th Parachute division, the equivalent of the US RDF's 82nd Airborne, is kept in a "constant alert status, and within 24 hours can proceed to the Middle East or Africa".100 The 9th Marine division adds to the FAR's assault landing capabilities, while the 6th Light Armoured division, an outgrowth of the 31st Rapid Assistance Brigade formed in August 1980, supplements the marines and paratroopers in giving France a credible and sustainable long range intervention capability.101

British long-range intervention capabilities are now more modest than France's, but not totally insignificant. In 1980, the Defence Ministry announced that a parachute battalion was available for overseas deployment at 7 days notice.102 Three years later, Britain announced the formation of a 5,000-strong "quick-strike force". The lead element of this force is the 5th Airborne Brigade, consisting of 1,800 paratroopers, an artillery regiment, a light helicopter squadron and logistics units. If necessary, this force could be supplemented by the 3rd Commando Brigade, which has a "full amphibious
capability". The British RDF project also involves the modification of half the C-130 transport aircraft fleet to increase their paratroop-carrying capacity by 50 per cent and creation of a headquarters to undertake deployment planning and execution.\textsuperscript{103}

The long-range intervention capabilities of France and Britain, while modest compared to the US RDF, could nonetheless prove extremely useful in small-scale regional contingencies. The reported French assistance to Saudi forces in flushing out the rebels occupying the Grand Mosque in December 1980, if true, would constitute a good example of such usefulness. France's record of military interventions in African conflicts and the British victory in the Falklands would suggest that there are many Third World situations which could be dealt successfully by the British and French RDFs.

But neither the French nor the British possess sufficient airlift to put sizeable combat forces into distant theatres quickly. In this respect, US role in providing the airlift would be crucial. In fact, during the second Shaba operation, the US provided such help to French troops. But there could be no certainty whether such coordination between the US and allied forces could be achieved in a future contingency in the Gulf region. There are major obstacles including France's traditional tendency to emphasize its independence from US strategic designs and the differences between the US and its European allies over a host of politico-strategic issues affecting the security of the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions. These differences have been especially manifest with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The European allies have been more sympathetic toward the Palestinian cause and endorsed the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.\textsuperscript{104} Moreover, they have criticised the
emphasis on the military instrument in the current US strategy in the Gulf and the focus on the Soviet threat in the RDF contingency-planning.  

The potential of Britain and France to provide "third party assistance" to Persian Gulf regimes is also affected by political trends prevailing within the region. Memories of their colonial domination are still fresh within the local population. Moreover, while the Arab countries do appreciate Europe's relatively pro-Palestinian stand, they view the Arab-Israeli problems as basically Western-inspired, the blame for which must be shared by all the former colonial powers as well as the US. Popular antagonism within the region toward ex-colonial powers is likely to be greater if they are perceived to be acting in concert with the US. When British Prime Minister Thatcher raised the idea of a "Western rapid deployment force", to one Bahraini newspaper, it revived memories "of the old treaties and agreements that used to exist among colonizers to distribute sovereignty and areas of influence, such as the Skyes-Picot agreement between Britain and France and the Yalta agreement among the allies who won World War II".  

6.6 Arms Transfers, Regional Self-Defence and US Strategy  

For the US, the most cost-effective and politically-sound approach to internal and intra-regional contingencies in the Gulf is to help raise the self-defence capability of the GCC states through arms sales, advisory support, training, and other forms of security assistance. Although this approach has more in keeping with the Nixon rather than the Carter Doctrine or the "Reagan Corollary", it has been an integral part of the US strategy under the latter two frameworks.
As the Pentagon stated in 1982, "U.S. security assistance is complementary to the RDJTF" and "one is not a substitute for the other". 107

Apart from being politically desirable, US-assisted regional self-defence systems are considered to be a feasible and practical solution to non-Soviet contingencies. As the DOD pointed out in 1980, while none of the conservative Gulf states "... has the capability to defend against a full-scale Soviet or Soviet-instigated invasion ... for lesser contingencies, their capabilities now range from fair to good and will improve given timely and appropriate U.S. military assistance". 108 This objective of enhancing regional self-defence capabilities against "lesser contingencies" is one of the principal factors (other objectives being access to regional facilities and "surrogate" prepositioning, as discussed in Chapter 5) behind the increased reliance on arms transfers as an instrument of US Persian Gulf strategy under both the Carter and the Reagan administrations, despite all the controversy over excessive military sales to the Shah.

In fact, restraint on arms sales to the developing countries was one of the many casualties among the Carter administrations' early foreign policy principles following the Shah's overthrow. Nowhere was this change in greater evidence than in the Gulf region. Immediately after the Shah left Tehran, Defence Secretary Harold Brown toured the Middle East to discuss the administration's desire to boost security assistance to pro-Western regional states as part of its new "regional cooperative security framework". 109 Acting on Brown's recommendation, Carter himself confirmed this policy in late February 1979. 110 After it was put to the test during the Yemeni crisis in the following month (when the administration rushed F-5 combat planes and M-60 tanks to
North Yemen to fight an alleged South Yemeni attack), the Carter administration made a substantial review of the existing policy on weapon sales to the smaller Gulf monarchies. In the 1970s, when US arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Iran rose phenomenally in accordance with the Nixon Doctrine, the smaller Gulf states had been discouraged, with minor exceptions in respect of Kuwait and Oman, from buying "offensive" or "sophisticated" weaponry - including fixed-wing aircraft. In 1977, for example, the US had turned down a UAE request for TOW missiles, offering instead the M-16 rifle. In 1980, the Carter administration made a "thorough reexamination" of policy and decided on an "enhanced defense supply relationship" with the smaller states. The list of weapons which could be sold to these states now came to include M-60 tanks, F-16 (F-20) combat aircraft, the TOW missile and Improved HAWK anti-aircraft missile systems.

The Reagan administration carried this liberalization process further in terms of both policy guidelines and actual sales; reflecting its total rejection of the early Carter policy of reducing America's conventional arms trade. Carter's half-hearted and half-pursued moralism on the issue was replaced by the new Reagan rhetoric that dubbed arms transfers as an "essential element" of US "global defense posture and an indispensable component of its foreign policy". The Reagan approach was reflected in initiatives such as the elimination of the last of the Carter restraints, including the so-called "Leprosy Letter" which had prohibited US diplomatic missions abroad from assisting American defence manufacturers in negotiating sales. It also increased by 30 per cent the US security assistance programs for FY1982 and created a Special Defence Acquisition Fund to purchase some arms in anticipation of future urgent FMS requests which
otherwise might have to wait for some time due to the long lead times involved in manufacturing. Finally, the Reagan administration raised the dollar threshold at which arms sales proposals were required to obtain Congressional approval from $7 million to $14 million for weapons and from $25 million to $50 million for other defence articles and services.114

The result of the combined efforts by the Carter and Reagan administrations to boost arms sales to the GCC states is shown in Appendix 5. The table reflects two major trends. Firstly, the US has become, for the first time, the supplier of advanced weaponry to the smaller Gulf states. The sale of F-5 fighter/ground attack aircraft to Bahrain is expected to lead the trend of future combat aircraft sales to other Sheikdoms, the UAE in particular. The FMS credit-financed transfer of M-60 tanks and Sidewinder missiles to Oman constituted a fresh start in the US defence supply relationship with the Sultanate after a 5 year break following the successful Omani suppression of the Dhofar rebellion in 1975. During the intervening period, the US had been reluctant to advance any military assistance for Oman.115 The sale of Improved Hawk ground-to-air missiles to Bahrain and the UAE supplements previous sales of these missiles to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It reflects US efforts to encourage an integrated regional air defence network centred around Saudi early warning and air defence systems.

The second trend revealed from a survey of US-GCC arms transfer agreements is the continued and overwhelming dominance of Saudi Arabia as the principal buyer of US arms. In fact, US-Saudi arms transfer relationship is the centrepiece of the US strategy involving the use of military sales to ensure the protection of the GCC regimes and
Western regional interests. While this fact emerges from an analysis of any major US-Saudi weapons deal, perhaps the most vivid and important example would be the AWACS deal of 1981, concluded by the Reagan administration in the face of stiff Congressional opposition.

6.6.1 The AWACS sale

The AWACS package (Table 6.1) was described by the administration as an "important part of a comprehensive U.S. strategy for the Southwest Asia region". Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger explained the implications of the deal:

First, it will help the Saudis defend their vital oil facilities against surprise air attacks ...

Second, it will help to rebuild confidence in the United States as a reliable partner in the region ...

Third, it will advance our goals of increasing the security of states in the Gulf region by providing a foundation for closer United States-Saudi defense cooperation and for Saudi efforts to develop cooperation with all of her Mideast neighbors in other security related areas.

Finally, it will increase the effectiveness of our own military capabilities if we were ever called upon to deploy U.S. forces to that area.\footnote{116}

Because of the lobbying and the controversy it generated, the AWACS deal was seen mostly in terms of its political implications for US Middle East policy. Less noticed was the fact that the sale constituted the clearest example of the critical and multifaceted role played by arms transfers in American military strategy and contingency planning for the Persian Gulf region to-date. The deal had three key objectives.

The first was the enhancement of Saudi capabilities. In justifying the package, the administration held that without an
# Table 6.1

**The AWACS Package: 1981**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Delivery Schedule</th>
<th>Deployment Location</th>
<th>Manpower Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-3A AWACS (including 3 years spares, technical data, support equipment and training)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$3.7 billion</td>
<td>beginning 48 months after approval</td>
<td>Riyadh for approximately 1 year, then Al Kharij</td>
<td>170 aircrew, 2 cockpit and mission crews for each aircraft; 360 maintenance crew for total 5 aircraft. This would allow one 24-hour AWACS orbit for 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground defence environment</td>
<td>22 major system elements of hardened command and control facilities, data processing and display equipment, new radars, and ground entry stations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC-707 (including 3 years of initial spares, support equipment, continental US training, 3 years of contractor aircraft maintenance and training)</td>
<td>6 with an option to buy two more</td>
<td>$2.4 billion</td>
<td>beginning 40-44 months after approval</td>
<td>Riyadh for, 1 year, later Al-Kharij</td>
<td>96 aircrew, 320 initial contractor personnel support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformal Fuel Tanks (CFTS)</td>
<td>101 sets</td>
<td>$110 million</td>
<td>27 months after contract award</td>
<td>RSAF F-15 operation bases: Dhahran, Taif and Khamis Mushayt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM-9L air-to-air missiles</td>
<td>1177</td>
<td>$200 million</td>
<td>30 months</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>9 U.S. contractor personnel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

airborne warning platform and the F-15 accessories, Saudi Arabia would be incapable of defending its vital areas from enemy air attacks, such as those threatened by Iran. Since most of its important locations - population centres, oil production and export facilities, military installations - are either on or close to the coast; early warning ground radars could not be placed in locations forward enough to provide sufficient warning time to intercept attacking aircraft. For example, low flying Iranian aircraft approaching the oilfields in the Eastern Province could not be detected by existing ground radar until under 2 to 4 minutes from the target. This warning time would be insufficient for scrambling Saudi F-15s for interception. The AWACS, on the other hand, can detect low-flying aircraft at ranges of about 200 miles, thereby giving the Saudi Air Force enough time to scramble and intercept the attacker (see Maps 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5). The AIM-9L Sidewinder missile would enable the F-15s to intercept an attacking aircraft from the front. To fire other older Sidewinder versions, the F-15s would have to manoeuvre behind the enemy - thereby allowing it to get closer to its target. The conformal tanks and the KC-707 tankers would increase the range of the F-15s and thus permit them to be based in the Saudi interior from where they would be less vulnerable to surprise attack.

The second aspect of the deal related to the administration's objective that the Saudi AWACS would set the "stage for the development, with U.S. backing, of a regional air defense system for the entire Gulf region". In such a system, the Gulf "air defense networks could be linked, data transmitted, and air defense interceptors controlled". This objective was outlined in a limited-circulation Pentagon "issue paper" designed to prepare
MAP 6.4
F-15 Intercept With Ground-Based Radar and No AIM-9L

AIR DEFENSE SEQUENCE
FROM IRANIAN F-4 TAKE-OFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>MINUTES</th>
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<tr>
<td>DETECT</td>
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<td>INTERCEPT</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL TIME</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Air times are approximate.

INTERCEPT AFTER TARGET DESTROYED

Source: Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.

MAP 6.5
F-15 Intercept With AWACS and AIM-9L

AIR DEFENSE SEQUENCE
FROM IRANIAN F-4 TAKE-OFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>MINUTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DETECT</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDENTIFY</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECISION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCRAMBLE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERCEPT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL TIME</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IRANIAN F-4 FROM BUSHEHR
18 MINUTES TIME TO TARGET

INTERCEPT PRIOR TO TARGET

Source: Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C.
administration officials for Congressional testimony. The paper noted:

Saudi Arabia has taken the lead in the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, UAE (United Arab Emirates) and Kuwait. A major objective of the GCC is to enhance the defense of the gulf [sic]. The AWACS and its ground environment system affords the capability to link the air defense networks of these states into the unified system.121

US interests in a regionwide application were obvious. Firstly, the smaller friendly Gulf states such as Kuwait and the UAE faced the threat of Iranian air attacks as much, if not more, than Saudi Arabia but lacked even a minimal capability to defend themselves. The expansion of the AWACS coverage would help them develop a credible air defence capability at an affordable cost. Secondly, a controlled regionwide application of AWACS would also expand US leverage with the GCC collective security system, with its attendant strategic and political benefits. Under the terms of the agreement with Saudi Arabia, any expansion of the AWACS cover would require American permission as well as full technical involvement. Thus, as the Pentagon noted, "the U.S. would be assured of a key role in the development of any regional air defense system and of continuing participation in its operations".122 Trends in GCC efforts to build a regional air defence network since the AWACS sale point to prospects for the fulfilment of this objective.

The third important aspect of the AWACS deal was to be its contribution to American capability for direct intervention in the Persian Gulf. As already noted in Chapter 5, the AWACS, along with the F-15 planes and other US weaponry sold to Saudi Arabia, have facilitated "backdoor access" to Saudi military bases for the RDF.
Secondly, with the AWACS and the F-15 enhancements, the US provided "an extensive logistics base and support infrastructure, including spare parts, facilities, trained personnel, and specialized test and maintenance equipment". This infrastructure would be "fully compatible" with the needs of the RDF units. The AWACS itself is meant to play a key role, especially during the early phase of a RDF intervention. As testified by General P.X. Kelly in 1981, "... the most critical period of any deployment of forces is the initial arrival, i.e. before adequate air superiority is established. The in-place AWACS aircraft could provide the RDF with an immediate air surveillance capability which would be compatible with the establishment of an effective air defense network." 

While the US strategy of boosting GCC self-defence against internal and intra-regional threats has scored some successes it also faces major challenges. Once again, much of the problem can be attributed to the pressures of the Arab-Israeli tangle. The factor that renders a direct American intervention in support of the GCC regimes a high-risk proposition for the latter also plagues the alternative strategy of increasing their self-defence capabilities through US weapon transfers. This is primarily because of the resentment generated by the Israeli ability, through the US Jewish lobby, to "veto", water down, or impose insulting conditions and restraints on major US arms sales proposals for the Arab countries. Over the years, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have become increasingly bitter and frustrated by the drama and controversy on Capitol Hill whenever a major deal sought by them came up for approval. As the Abu Dhabi paper Al-Ittihad complained during the AWACS deal, while the US law makers had "no qualms about endorsing
every arms deal with the Israeli enemy, ... they object to the sale of every rifle, gun or plane to the Arabs".\textsuperscript{125} The Kuwaiti paper Al-Qabas reacted to alleged US efforts to eliminate certain sensitive technology from the Saudi AWACS version by calling it "an absurd play and a dirty blackmail".\textsuperscript{126} Saudi Arabia often issued threats to purchase weapons from the Soviet Union if "American and European doors were closed" to it.\textsuperscript{127}

Although in the case of the AWACS sale a determined Presidential lobbying saved what could well have become a major rupture in US-Saudi relations (not the least because the Saudis would have needed to save face in the Arab world), the rejection of a related request for bomb racks for their F-15 aircraft continued to arouse Saudi resentment. Such lingering frustration could partly explain the subsequent Saudi decision to negotiate massive arms deals with European suppliers, such as a $2 billion French-built air defence system.\textsuperscript{128}

The Reagan administration's refusal, under election year pressure from the Jewish lobby, to sell Stinger air defence missiles to Kuwait in 1984 is another striking example of the problems facing US efforts to develop closer defence supply relations with the GCC states. To many critics, the refusal led to the loss of an important opportunity to demonstrate US credibility to the Sheikdom. In making the request for Stinglers, the Kuwaitis had appeared willing to soften their traditional rhetoric against US regional military policies. Kuwaiti need for such defence was even more urgent than Saudi Arabia's, since Iranian warplanes had already bombed Kuwait on several occasions. The US refusal, while granting a similar Saudi request, was thus, a "rude shock" to the Kuwaiti leadership. In a highly symbolic move, the Kuwaiti foreign minister immediately travelled to Moscow to conclude an arms deal worth over $100 million.\textsuperscript{129}
6.7 GCC Security Cooperation: Implications for US Strategy

Apart from seeking to lessen their dependence on American arms, the conservative Gulf states have sought to minimise the need for direct help from Western countries during a contingency. They have attempted to increase their self-defence potential through mutual cooperation under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council. This has major implications for US regional strategy, especially in respect of non-Soviet contingencies. Although the GCC states could not realistically hope to counter major threats to their security (e.g. external aggression) without outside help, they expect to become self-reliant in dealing with most non-Soviet threats, especially that of internal instability.

Since its formation in 1981, the GCC has launched several programs to promote security cooperation among the member states. The most publicized one is the so-called GCC "strike force". Despite its impressive nomenclature, the strike force is a modest project aimed at boosting GCC capabilities against internal threats. In fact the origins of the idea of a GCC strike force can be traced to a major domestic contingency: the failed attempt by Iranian-backed agents to overthrow the incumbent regime in Bahrain in December 1981. Soon after the incident, the Bahraini interior minister announced: "it is time to set up a rapid deployment force in the Gulf that would be capable of quickly providing assistance when needed". 130 Three months later, GCC Secretary General Abdullah Bishara spoke of an agreement among the member states on key points which could form the basis of such a force. 131 The idea continued to evolve, leading, in October 1983, to the first ever joint military manoeuvres in which contingents from each GCC member country participated. This week-long exercise
held in the Hamra desert of Abu Dhabi, codenamed Peninsular Shield, featured a combined armoured and air assault on an "enemy held" position. A year later, Peninsular Shield II brought together air, naval and land contingents of all six member nations in conducting joint exercises, marking another milestone in the evolution of the GCC's collective security initiative.

In addition to the joint exercises, the strike force project involves the creation of a joint command. During their fifth annual summit in November 27-29, 1984, the GCC heads of state agreed to set up such a command, although, as the the Kuwaiti foreign minister insisted, this would be a temporary thing. According to press reports quoting official sources, the GCC command would have a 6,000-strong force structure. It would be based in southern Kuwait, and commanded by a Saudi General. It would have a permanent headquarters, although the troops would remain with their respective national units until and unless called to serve under the joint command in crisis time or for exercises.

A second major element of the GCC's security cooperation is the coordination of the member states' domestic intelligence and internal order apparatus under the auspices of their interior ministries. Long before the GCC was formed, the interior ministers of the conservative regimes, chastened by the Iranian revolution, met in August 1980 to take notice of "the social changes which have begun to infiltrate into modern Arab societies" and organize "integral security and joint efforts to compensate for any weakness that may affect the traditional codes of conduct and any disturbance in the social edifice". In February 1981, the Saudi interior minister claimed that the Gulf monarchies were already "cooperating satisfactorily on information".
He indicated two specific areas of cooperation: "increased consultations" to minimise the threat posed by subversive elements within the migrant worker community and "joint security to prevent threats to oil wells such as sabotage and to organize the security of wells and their sites".  

The Bahraini coup attempt increased the GCC states' resolve "to strengthen the home fronts of the GCC countries". To begin with, the incident led to a Saudi drive to conclude bilateral treaties with Bahrain, the UAE, Qatar and later, Oman. (Kuwait resisted the initiative, fearing Saudi domination.) The agreements were identical in nature and focused on internal security. The Qatari-Saudi agreement, for example, provided for "cooperation between the ministries of the Interior in the two countries in all fields; the regulation of the relationship between the border guards; combating infiltration and crime; the exchange of information (intelligence) in all fields and the extradition of criminals". In addition to this, the GCC interior ministers, meeting in Riyadh in February 1982, discussed a working paper prepared by the GCC secretariat which proposed, among other things, the "establishment of a centre for security information, training of technicians and security cadres, having a special security code for GCC security bodies, [and] establishment of a police college".  

A third objective of GCC security cooperation is the creation of a common air defence network. In February 1982, the Commander of the Bahraini Defence Force was quoted as saying that the GCC members had "reached full understanding on the coordination of air defence to protect the region ... It is noteworthy that the distances between our states are so short that ariel coverage does exist ... ready for any emergency". The centrepiece of the common air-defence system was
believed to be the US-supplied AWACS, operating from Saudi Arabia and acting as a link between the modest ground radar and anti-aircraft missile systems in the smaller GCC states to help them defend against possible Iranian air attacks. This was confirmed later by the Kuwaiti foreign minister who claimed that Kuwait received the "information gathered by the AWACS ... the minute Saudi Arabia does". Both Kuwait and the UAE have launched programs to acquire the necessary air defence systems based on links with the Saudi AWACS. The US, in keeping with the objective spelt out at the time of the AWACS deal with Saudi Arabia, is reportedly assisting this effort.

The GCC states, of course, face several barriers to developing a credible self-defence capability. To begin with, the GCC regimes live in constant fear of the potential threats to their own survival that are likely to come from an expanded and modern military establishment. Haunted by the record of countless military coups in the Middle East, they try to avoid similar fate through regular purges, by relying on foreign personnel and, most notably, by creating paramilitary forces as a counterweight to the regular military. These, in turn, act as powerful constraints on the overall strength and efficiency of their armed forces.

Lack of adequate indigenous manpower is another limiting factor. Sparse native populations and poor rates of literacy have led to constant shortages of skilled and unskilled manpower in all the GCC military establishments. To make matters worse, many Gulf citizens have a tendency to abhor working in the lower rungs of the military profession, which are looked upon as "manual labour". More lucrative carrier opportunities available in the private sector also act as a major disincentive. The manpower limitations of the conservative Gulf states are especially acute when compared to the combat manpower
available to their potential opponents (see Table 6.2). The defence establishments of all the conservative Gulf states have been compelled to employ large numbers of foreign personnel. The Saudi defence establishment is said to hire, at any one time, up to 40,000 American, French, British, Pakistani, Egyptian and Jordanian military and civilian personnel. Manpower shortages are especially acute in Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar where the native population is outnumbered by expatriates. Reliance on foreign manpower, in turn, creates major problems for the Gulf military establishments. It negatively affects motivation and raises the possibility of desertions at the time of a crisis. It also breeds resentment within the indigenous population over the presence of outsiders.\textsuperscript{143}

The military capability of the GCC states is further undermined by certain other factors and attributes endemic to their societies. Lack of any viable industrial base would limit the "staying power" of military forces in actual combat. Poor levels of interaction between officials and enlisted men, high degrees of centralization of command and decision-making authority, nepotism in promotion procedures, a tendency among Gulf leaders to buy arms for their prestige value rather than military utility and the practice of buying too little equipment from too many sources are some of the most important factors that have often frustrated the attempts by Gulf regimes to acquire a measure of military strength. Finally, it should be noted that the military infrastructure that has been developed during the past decade by the conservative Gulf states remains, with the exception of Oman, untested in combat. The Omanis, who fought the Dhofarí rebels in the 1970s, required considerable assistance from British, Iranian and Egyptian troops and advisors before subduing the South Yemeni backed insurgents.\textsuperscript{144}
### TABLE 6.2

**MANPOWER DIMENSION OF PERSIAN GULF SECURITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Armed Forces</th>
<th>Major Paramilitary Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. &quot;Threat&quot; States:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Yemen</td>
<td>2,200,000</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>People's Militia 15,000; Public Security Force 30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran¹</td>
<td>42,500,000</td>
<td>555,000²</td>
<td>Hezbollahi (Home Guard) 2,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq¹</td>
<td>14,900,000</td>
<td>642,500</td>
<td>People's Army 650,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B: GCC States:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>8 - 12,000,000</td>
<td>51,500</td>
<td>National Guard 25,000; Frontier Force and Coast Guard 8,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>1,000,000 - 1,600,000</td>
<td>21,500</td>
<td>Firqats (Tribal Home Guard) 3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>1,750,000</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>National Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>Coast Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>Coast Guard - 180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Figures for Iran and Iraq are uncertain because of the continuing war and casual ties.

2 Shows only regular forces. According to The Military Balance: "Paramilitary forces recruited for specific offensives could add 200,000 - 250,000".

In addition to these constraints, security cooperation among the members has been marred by lingering political divisions and differences. While relations are no longer so much subject to territorial or inter-dynastic squabbles, cooperation has been plagued by the contradiction between Kuwaiti advocacy of a non-aligned posture (to be made credible by establishing diplomatic ties with the USSR) and the Omani preference for open security linkages with the US and the RDF. It has also been undermined by the reluctance of the UAE and Kuwait to support the idea of a collective GCC stand against Iran, as the Saudis' would have preferred on some occasions. Iraqi opposition to the GCC collective security effort has been yet another disincentive for some members in giving it greater support. Last but not least, the smaller member states led by Kuwait have resisted closer military integration out of a fear that it would legitimize Saudi regional hegemony, a prospect they dislike and distrust.

The GCC's success in overcoming these barriers and developing a viable indigenous collective security system could have mixed implications for the US strategy. On the one hand, US policy-makers would be happy to be spared the problems associated with direct intervention if the GCC is able to defend against most domestic threats while calling on the RDF against major external threats. On the other hand, a more self-reliant GCC could grow less sympathetic to US regional interests and objectives. The US, of course, could still retain some leverage with the GCC states which may not be able to forsake their dependence on US arms and advisory help completely. But harmonizing their self-defence potential with its interventionist posture would be difficult for the US unless the major political problems affecting their strategic relationship, especially the Palestinian question, are resolved.
NOTES


7. ibid., p. 1966.

8. ibid., p. 1733.


19. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1983. Part 6, p.3719. It is interesting that the qualifying phrase "aided and directed by outside powers" was something of an afterthought. It was absent in an earlier draft of his prepared statement which was distributed to the Committee members. West admitted at the hearings that he had added these words. ibid., p.3755.


30. As discussed in Chapter 5, fear of a counter Soviet buildup is one of the factors inhibiting the GCC states from openly embracing the RDF. In case of the US, this fear is reflected in its response to the Iran-Iraq War, as will be discussed in the next section.


40. These concerns were voiced by Secretary of State Edmund Muskie: *Department of State Bulletin* (December 1980): 2.


50. Cited in David Hirst, "Oil States that Could Go Up in Flames", The Guardian Weekly (May 27, 1984): 1


53. Ibid., pp.452-453.


57. ibid., pp.7,10,15.


68. These were the words of Kuwaiti foreign minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed spoken at a press conference on June 18, 1984. The minister, however, carefully made a distinction between the defence of territorial waters of the GCC states from that of the rest of the Gulf. "There is no ambiguity in the policies of the GCC when I say that they are able to defend themselves in their territorial waters. But the Arab Gulf is an international waterway; as such, defending it is an international responsibility". (emphasis added) "Extracts of Sheikh Al-Ahmed's Press Conference", *American-Arab Affairs* (Summer 1984): 152.


84. McNaugher, "Arms and Allies, op. cit., pp.520-521


96. For details see ibid.


99. ibid., pp.122-123.


117. ibid., p.5.


134. ibid.


142. See for an excellent discussion of these problems, McNaugher, "Arms and Allies", op. cit., pp.503-505; Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search, op. cit., p.495.


CHAPTER 7

STRATEGY FOR THE "WORST-CASE THREAT"

"We have a significant force projection capability. Given adequate lead time, we could deploy significant combat power into the region to demonstrate our resolve and deter a Soviet attack. Should they attack, we can confront them with enough force to make them seriously reconsider their decision. This force would also carry with it the threat of further escalation. And we may not confine our reaction to the Soviets to Southwest Asia, but elsewhere where we have a geostrategic advantage. In the end, this may be the ultimate deterrent."


7.1 Defining the "Worst-Case" Threat

The worst-case threat that has been the "primary focus" of RDF contingency planning is described as a massive Soviet overland invasion of Iran, with the bulk of the invading forces moving from their peacetime locations in the Soviet Southern Military Districts (North Caucasus, Transcaucasus and Turkestan) through northern Iran towards the oilfields in Khuzestan\(^1\). While a direct Soviet military attack on the Persian Gulf region could take several other alternative forms and the invasion several alternative routes, none are likely to be as threatening to Western interests and, at the same time, as demanding to counter.
For example, a Soviet airborne "leapfrog" into Saudi oilfields could be, from the US point-of-view, the most damaging threat to Western interests; but it could not be regarded as the most difficult to defend against. Soviet ability to project power to regions not contiguous to Soviet territory remains quite limited. Unlike an attack on Iran for example, a Soviet attack on Saudi Arabia would lack an effective overland approach. The air and sea lines of communication would be long and vulnerable to US interdiction. The Soviet airborne forces would be easy targets for destruction in the absence of tactical fighter cover and an early link up with ground forces. As a Congressional Budget Office study points out, "if the United States could begin operations against Soviet air and sea routes in the early phases of an invasion [of non-contiguous states], then expulsion of the invasion could be likely". 2

A Soviet push into northern Iran (Azerbaijan) using airborne and ground units would probably be the most difficult threat to which to respond. Enjoying overland supply routes and tactical air cover, the Soviet forces would be impossible to evict. But that threat does not affect the West's "vital" interests, which lie to the south in the oilfields. The US would have sufficient time to take control of these oilfields if a decision to that effect was reached quickly enough.

A third scenario, a Soviet naval assault from the Indian Ocean is, by itself, a negligible threat in view of the serious limitations on its navy's logistic support, amphibious capabilities and carrier-based tactical air power. Similarly, a Soviet airborne assault on the Khuzestan oilfields could not be sustained for long unless a link-up with ground forces is quickly achieved.
Another scenario for the worst-case threat status could be a ground invasion from Afghanistan. But such an invasion by itself does not appear to be more demanding than an invasion through northern Iran. The Iranian oilfields are even more distant from Afghanistan than from the Soviet southern border. There are fewer roads. The terrain through which the invasion would have to pass, especially the Khorassan desert, is at least as forbidding as that in northern Iran. The climate is extremely hot, water very scarce. The wind and dust conditions would increase the rate of mechanical breakdowns. Moreover, since the Soviet forces currently stationed in Afghanistan are dispersed and bogged down in fighting the rebels, an invasion through Afghanistan could not be launched without moving forces from their peacetime locations in the Southern and other military districts. This, however, would stretch the supply lines and give the US more warning time.  

In view of these factors, a threat can not be "worst-case" unless spearheaded by Soviet ground units moving through the northern Iranian land corridors. While such an invasion would most certainly involve participation of other services and might be complemented by a push through Afghanistan, the basic purpose of the latter would be to support the southward ground offensive which would be the mainstay of the overall threat.

7.2 RDF Strategy: "Deterrent" or "Defensive"?

Choice of an appropriate strategy to counter the worst-case threat has been the subject of a great deal of debate and controversy. Although the Pentagon has provided no definite picture of its military planning to the public, a broad outline is available from official
policy statements, Congressional hearings, leaked defence documents, and the visible military infrastructure being developed to implement the RDF concept. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to construct such an outline and analyse its merits and loopholes in the light of the debates that the issue has attracted. The analysis draws upon a broad range of sources; apart from official documents and interviews. Informed comments from non-official sources is also relied upon.

Reduced to essentials, the basis of the RDF's planning for the worst-case threat is a "defensive, warfighting" theatre strategy. This strategy "calls for a U.S. capability rapidly to deploy enough force to hold important positions, and to interdict and blunt" the Soviet attack.⁴ Such operations would not necessarily aim at inflicting an outright defeat on the Soviets, but at denying them a "cheap blitzkrieg", or, the opportunity of "presenting ... a fait accompli in terms of control of the oil".⁵ The basic goal of the RDF would be to "make Soviet movement throughout the region as difficult and costly as possible and to dissuade them from continuing their attack".⁶

Before explaining the nature and stages of actual military operations that have been envisaged to implement such a strategy, it is important to distinguish the Pentagon's current "warfighting" approach from an alternative "deterrent" or "tripwire" strategy advocated by strategic thinkers such as Kenneth Waltz.⁷ Writing in 1981, Waltz criticized the Pentagon's emphasis on a "warfighting defensive" force - one that seeks to dissuade enemy action by "preparing to resist" it and by "placing obstacles" on its way - as unrealistic and unsound. In his view, the RDF lacked the mobility,
force size, logistics support and regional facility access to successfully defend against a Soviet conventional attack on its own terms. The programs underway to enhance these capabilities could not produce results in the near term. Even when all the planned improvements materialized, the Soviets, thanks to proximity, would still have a superior capability to project power into the Persian Gulf. They would be unlikely to be deterred by the prospect of a fight with the "defensive warfighting" American RDF. At least they would be tempted to try since, if the situation got out of their control, proximity would allow them to beat a hasty retreat back across their borders.

To make deterrence credible, Waltz proposed what he termed as an "asset-seizing, deterrent" force. While not specifying its size and capability, he laid down the criteria that this force should be geared to perform both "internal police" and "external tripwire" functions. In the former respect, it would be large and powerful enough to hold out on its own against terrorists and insurgents. In a contingency involving such threats, this force could be quickly projected to seize the oilfields (Waltz argues against its use to establish "political order") and protect Western access. If the threat comes from the Soviet Union a similar seizure should be executed prior to the arrival of Soviet forces on the scene. But in this case, attempts by Soviet forces to gain control of the oilfields by evicting the Americans would be thwarted not by the conventional strength of the deployed RDF units (as would be the case with non-Soviet enemies), but by the explicit threat of strategic nuclear retaliation once the "tripwire" was snapped.8
Waltz claimed that in addition to being lighter, smaller and therefore more rapidly deployable, his "asset-seizing, deterrent" RDF would be a more realistic deterrent to a Soviet attack than the currently-planned "defensive, warfighting" RDF. The American threat to punish the Soviets with nuclear retaliation for tripping this force would, according to Waltz, be persuasive and credible because "the Soviet Union's gaining control of the Gulf area would be comparable to its seizing territory in Western Europe and Japan". Since the prospect of a nuclear retaliation constitutes an unacceptable risk, the Soviets would be less likely to test a "deterrent" force than a "defensive" force, in which case the risks might be acceptable. Waltz summed up the essence of his arguments thus:

Some deprecate the RDF by saying that "it will get there first with the least". But only that is required in order to implement a deterrent strategy against the Soviet Union. The effectiveness of a deterrent strategy depends on the credibility of threats and not on the ability to defend a position by force. Thus, the 4,500 American troops in West Berlin can not defend the city; they are there for the sake of deterrence.9

Waltz's proposed "deterrent force", however, has received little support from military analysts - inside the Pentagon or elsewhere. There are several loopholes and risks that diminish its appeal. A tripwire strategy, as some critics note, would "by definition" base American "national security strategy on bluff", for the Soviets are unlikely to be persuaded that the US would ever risk nuclear conflict to prevent the loss of access to Persian Gulf oil.10 Although American stakes in the latter are undoubtedly important, it can never match the imperative need for avoidance of nuclear annihilation. Besides, if Persian Gulf oil is really so vital to the US as to justify escalation, then reliance on a "tripwire" strategy may not be
the best way to impress that fact on the Soviets. As Kevin Lewis argues, "... in Soviet eyes, failure to resolutely commit to the defense of a region by local, conventional and direct means could reveal an apparent lack of importance of that region, or signal a priori U.S. resistance to escalate".11

Secondly, the current state of nuclear parity between the superpowers also limits the prospects of either side achieving deterrence of conventional attacks by threatening to go nuclear. Neither has the ability to get away from a nuclear conflict with an acceptable level of damage; therefore both are inhibited from launching an attack unless and until the offending side poses a direct and fundamental threat to the other's survival. Nowhere is this strategic fact more evident than in the European theatre. In Western Europe, where American stakes are regarded as higher than in the Gulf and where American response to a Soviet attack is assumed to be automatic (the same can not be said of the Gulf), the credibility of NATO's "tripwire" strategy (or "massive retaliation") became increasingly dubious as the Soviets bridged the nuclear gap. The Western Alliance has since been forced to seek a stronger conventional posture. How could a strategy lacking credibility in Europe enjoy it in the Persian Gulf?12 Waltz and fellow advocates of a "deterrent" RDF strategy have no persuasive answers.

In addition, many of the important theatre conditions and strategic assumptions that have so far sustained nuclear deterrence in Europe are absent in the Persian Gulf. In the Gulf, unlike in Europe, the US does not have a permanent, land-based military presence — destruction of which can be treated as the Soviet snapping of the tripwire. Unlike in Europe, deterrence in the Persian Gulf can not be
extended uniformly within the region - Saudi Arabia, for example, would always be regarded as more vital to the US than northern Iran.13

In rejecting the application of a "tripwire" strategy in the Persian Gulf US officials have claimed that their strategy stresses conventional capabilities, so as to make the possibility of escalation to the use of nuclear weapons "less likely". As Defence Secretary Harold Brown observed in 1980:

... a major portion of our effort in the region is devoted to improving the conventional strength we can bring to bear there. In fact, given U.S. capabilities and those of others whose interests would be threatened by Soviet aggression, given the difficulties inherent in any Soviet military actions beyond its borders in rugged terrain and hostile surroundings, and given our wide range of options both to exploit other Soviet vulnerabilities and to defend against attack, conventional deterrence and defense are feasible goals.14 (emphasis added)

The Pentagon's publicly-stated emphasis on conventional defence does not, however, mean that nuclear escalation has been totally ruled out. To cite Harold Brown again, "any direct conflict between American and Soviet forces carries the risk of intensification and geographical spread of the conflict. We can not concede to the Soviets full choice of the arena or the actions".15 However, the difference between this approach and a "tripwire" strategy lies in the fact that to achieve deterrence, the former does not rely, "by preference or necessity," on nuclear escalation at the expense of a significant conventional capability. As Francis West points out, "to leave one's escalation options open is not the same as relying upon escalation". To be sure, US officials believe that the inherent risk of escalation in any superpower engagement serves as a powerful deterrent to Moscow's military ambitions in the region. But while such escalation may come as an eventuality in the course of a
conventional conflict, it is not meant to be the starting point or the central feature of the defensive calculus.\textsuperscript{16}

In the current US strategy for the worst case threat, escalation—whether vertical or horizontal—if and when it comes, would follow two other stages. The first stage of the American response is supposed to precede the actual Soviet attack. The RDF is supposed to deploy following warning signals, in a "preemptive" mode. The second stage, which would follow if preemption failed to dissuade the contemplated attack, may be termed "defence", as it involves operations designed to harass, blunt and further discourage the Soviet advance. The difference between preemption and defence lies in the fact that while in the former speed is more important than force size, in the latter, the balance of force projection capabilities becomes the most crucial variable. These three stages, which the Pentagon refers to as "three time dimensions", have been explained in DOD testimony:

First, given warning and timely political decisions, we would move forces as close as possible to the area of potential conflict. This would signal to the Soviets that we consider vital Western interests at stake and that further movement on their part would risk war between the two superpowers. Should deterrence fail, the second dimension involves our ability to fight in the region. We must deploy forces rapidly to interdict and blunt a Soviet attack, although we would not be compelled to respond only at the Soviet point of attack. Thirdly, this strategy must take into account how we would cope with the potential for a wider war. Conflict with the Soviets may not be contained to the region and the United States would have to be prepared for a global confrontation.\textsuperscript{17}

The following sections analyse each of the three phases.
7.3 Preemption

A "preemptive attack" is generally defined as "an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent".\textsuperscript{18} In the context of the RDF, however, "preemptive strategy" has been used to denote the act of getting into the scene of conflict first, with the objective being to take positions rather than to attack the enemy before it initiates military action.\textsuperscript{19} The key principle in a preemptive deployment is the ability to become "firstest with the mostest", although the emphasis is distinctly on speed rather than force size or fire power. An official outline of this strategy is available in Secretary of Defence Harold Brown's well-known speech of March 1980 to the Council on Foreign Relations:

What is important is the ability rapidly to move forces into the region with the numbers, mobility, and firepower to preclude initial adversary forces from reaching vital points. It is not necessary for our initial units to be able to defeat the whole force an adversary might eventually have in place. It is also not necessary for us to await the firing of the first shot or the prior arrival of hostile forces; many of our forces can be moved upon strategic warning and some upon receipt of even very early and ambiguous indication.\textsuperscript{20}

US military planners see preemption as the key to their ability to meet a Soviet military threat to the Persian Gulf region. The attainment of preemption is viewed as crucial not only to deterring or defeating an enemy attack. More importantly, would be an essential part of being able to respond at all. In any superpower conflict, the risks and uncertainties are so great that they would inhibit each side from initiating an attack on the other. As such, the side that would reach the theatre second would be at a distinct disadvantage, because to continue military action it would have to remove the forces
of the other side by firing the first shot. Thus, the greatest danger of being preempted by the Soviets, as Richard Betts points out, "is not the force-multiplying edge it can give the Soviet Union in determining the outcome of battle; rather it is the danger that by being slow on the draw, Washington may be deterred from any engagement at all".21

In addition, US ability to take any retaliatory measure after being preempted by the Soviets would be undermined by what another analyst calls the "paralytic effects of a swiftly executed" preemptive attack upon the "decision-making apparatus of the opposing superpower".22 This would allow the Soviets more time to consolidate their position. Moreover, even if the US recovered quickly from the initial shock and decided on a retaliatory action, dislodging Soviet troops from occupied positions could be an almost impossible task. The Soviets would most likely have taken control of the airfields and ports which would make entry by American units immensely difficult. And the RDF "cutting-edge" forces, the light airborne and amphibious divisions, would be "too slight" to evict Soviet forces entrenched in the operational area, especially in the oilfields.23

If, on the other hand, the American forces managed the first entry, then the calculus of the crisis situation would be the reverse. The risks of counter-intervention would pass to the Soviets, who then must seriously rethink their whole plan before striking first at the forces of the other superpower. US officials are optimistic that the Soviets would be inhibited from taking the latter course. "Early arrival of even a few forces", predicts one official, "could be determinant in deterring an attack on oil producers in the first place, or in dissuading an attacker from pressing his aggression".24
Apart from deterrence, the advantages of a preemptive deployment could have two other aspects. These relate to the declared objective of a US preemptive intervention "to occupy key positions and provide air defense".25 One category of "key positions" would be the airfields and ports of the threatened country and neighbourhood. Early control over airfields and sea ports would be absolutely crucial for receiving reinforcements and supplies, because many critical RDF mobility systems carrying combat and support material, such as the strategic airlifters and the Maritime Prepositioning Ships, can not make deliveries without a "benign" environment. US military officials have admitted that if necessary, the RDF would "seize" theatre airfields and ports to facilitate reinforcement of the "cutting-edge" forces. As General Kelly told Congress: "with a parachute capability of some significance, the 82nd [airborne division] can drop into a port or beach complex or seize an airhead to allow for the uninterrupted flow of either CX aircraft or maritime pre-positioning ships". The Marine forces would also be used to make "a forcible entry to seize an airhead or landing beach". Thus, even if a preemptive intervention failed to deter the enemy advance, it would still assume critical importance for the defence and warfighting phases of the US intervention.26

The other category of positions that a preemptive force might occupy would be the oilfields. Preemption would be the best way of securing the oilfields before they are damaged by enemy attack or sabotage. Besides, such a move would ensure that even if the rest of the territory of the threatened country fell into enemy hands, the most critical parts, in which the West's vital interests are located, would remain under American control. This strategy would be
particularly appropriate for the worst-case scenario. As Admiral Stansfield Turner wrote after his retirement as CIA director under the Carter administration, the RDF's "objective in intervening" against a Soviet invasion of Iran "would not be to defeat a full and sustained Soviet drive to capture all of Iran — that would probably be impossible on the Soviets' backdoorstep — but to seize quickly the southern oil-producing portion of Iran before the Soviets could establish a viable military presence there". 27

Whether an RDF move to secure the Iranian oilfields from falling into Soviet hands would involve a "seizure" would depend on the attitude of the Iranian regime of the day. Under pressure from its traditional enemy from the north, Tehran may abandon its present anti-US posture and seek some form of American help. Current US assessments, however, are extremely pessimistic about this as long as the present leadership endures. 28 Thus US military planners appear to have geared up to the possibility of a forcible seizure, if columnist Jack Anderson's revelations are to be believed. Anderson has disclosed that US military planning has not ruled out a seizure of Persian Gulf oilfields if circumstances dictated such action, and he quotes General Kelly stating that such a move would take place "most likely in Iran". 29

Anderson's claim, if true, adds a new dimension to the old and sensitive issue of American military intervention to secure oil supplies from the Arab producers. A preemptive seizure of the oilfields in Iran, or in any other country, in the face of a Soviet or Soviet-supported attack is different from such action in response to an embargo, which had been threatened by the Ford administration. Since the Carter administration, US officials have carefully avoided
any indiscrete talk of using force to break an embargo. As Under Secretary of Defence Robert Komor told the House Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, "we have no desire" to use the RDF for "seizing the oilfields from the local owners ... What we are looking toward is simultaneously helping local states to defend their sovereignty, and our access to their oil".  

An embargo, however, is not considered by US policy-makers to be the most likely threat to access to Persian Gulf oil. The real danger is disruption generated from instability or external attack. In such situations, especially serious ones, the Gulf states are expected to ask for American assistance. Citing Saudi Arabia's request for the AWACS at the outset of the Iran-Iraq war, former JCS Chairman General David Jones claimed: "I am convinced if the threat is quite clear that we will be asked in". Yet, Jones' assertion may be too optimistic. As noted, the Gulf states face powerful political disincentives in asking for American aid. More likely, even if they do send in a request for help, it might not come early enough to be useful - that is, before the oilfields are occupied or damaged. After all, few Gulf states could be expected to host the RDF preemptively and thereby legitimize the attack contemplated by the enemy and invite hostile repercussions from home and abroad.

What would Washington do if Iran or the other Gulf states facing an imminent disruption of oil production from internal tensions or external invasion failed to invite in the RDF? The declaratory US policy asserts that "there is no intention ... to go in if we are not invited". American officials undoubtedly see merit in this declaratory posture, in view of the military and political constraints on forcible intervention. But the real question is whether the US
will adhere to such a high moral position, especially if its access to Persian Gulf oil is threatened at times of severe world energy problems or by an attempted Soviet seizure?

To insure against such possibilities, as we are told by the press accounts leaking the secret "Defense Guidance" document, US forces have been directed "to be ready to force their way in, if necessary, and not to wait for an invitation from a friendly government". General David Jones affirmed the need for forcible intervention capabilities in an exchange with Chairman William Cohen of the Senate Sea Power and Force Projection Subcommittee:

Senator Cohen: In the defense of our interests in that part of the globe, it is not really a question of defending Iran, or any other nation. It is defending our interests in that part of the world, is it not?

General Jones: Yes.

Senator Cohen: Let us suppose it is not a Soviet invasion but a lesser but perhaps more likely threat which occurs. Namely, ... subversion and ... dissidence - an Arab nation against an Arab nation. Now, you have a different situation. Suppose they don't invite you in then. Does that mean that you stay out or does it mean you develop a force that is capable of penetrating that sort of a nonbenign environment to establish your own interests?

General Jones: Clearly we need a capability to go into a non-benign environment, but I just caution against having that as your sole capability.34

While a preemptive strategy offers important advantages, its requirements are not easy to meet. The rapidity with which the RDF can project itself to the Gulf theatre depends on two inter-related conditions: (1) strategic warning and prompt decision-making, and (2) response time for force projection. The linkage between these two factors is obvious. As General Robert Kingston emphasized, "early strategic warning and a timely National Command Authority decision
requesting Congress to declare a national emergency are critical to our success in the region, and the size of force we can deploy will depend on how early that decision is made.35

Strategic warning would to a great extent offset the advantages, in terms of early force balance, accruing to the Soviets from their proximity. Besides, warning would also minimize the need for peacetime forward deployment and permit the use of the cheaper sealift to move forces and equipment to the theatre.36 US officials are optimistic that the worst-case threat would provide the most ample warning time of all types of contingencies. Unlike non-Soviet contingencies, which may often come without any notice, or a Soviet airborne surprise attack, the warning indicators of the worst-case threat are expected to be clear and discernable. This is so primarily because most of the 20-plus Soviet ground divisions stationed in the Southern Military Districts are traditionally kept at a very low level of readiness. According to most estimates, more than 60 per cent of those divisions are of category III readiness status, i.e., possessing most of their weapons (though probably not the latest models) but manned at about 25 to 30 per cent of their total strength.37 Mobilizing them to their full strength, providing them with enough trucks, and equipping and training them for their demanding mission would take time. Also the Soviets would need time to set up an extensive command and control network and logistic support system to sustain such a military attack.

Defence experts recall that indications of the Soviet build-up for the invasion of Czechoslovakia were available three months before the actual operation, and the US had prior hints of preparations for the Afghan invasion for a similar period. Yet an invasion of Iran,
unlike the Czech or Afghan instances, would require a much greater mobilization, since in this context the Soviets would be unable to count on unopposed entry. Thus, RDF officials are confident of receiving considerable warning time. General Kingston testified in 1982 that the US "would get 30 days strategic warning for the worst-case contingency ... once opposing forces had begun to mobilize". (Analysts such as Joshua Epstein find the 30 days estimate conservative, arguing that a greater period may not be an unreasonable assumption.)

Mere warning, however, would be useless if not exploited promptly and efficiently. In terms of effective response, readiness and warning are often less important than quick political decision-making. As a former US Marine general puts it, "no amount of training and rehearsal, no quantity of ships, aircraft and supplies, no level of planning – in short, not even the highest state of combat readiness will validate the RDF concept in the absence of the machinery for hard and fast decision making".

Impediments to prompt exploitation of warning are, however, many. Some are structural to the bureaucratic intelligence-gathering, analysis, and decision-making process. Others, in the special politico-strategic context of the worst-case threat, would be tied to the American policy-makers' perception of the risks and benefits associated with a US-Soviet confrontation over Iran. It is important to understand that the Pentagon's special emphasis on the worst-case threat does not mean that such a threat would be invariably opposed. An American President might find the "loss" of Iran to Soviet domination tolerable if the alternative of confronting the Soviets with the RDF seemed too risky, especially if the Soviets could achieve
strategic surprise (and entrench themselves in the Iranian oilfields). The decision to oppose the Soviets would also depend upon the attitude of local states in allowing access to RDF units, assessment of Soviet motives, and the situation in the European and East Asian theatres. Moreover, if the Soviet takeover of Iran had come as the result of an "invitation" from the dominant faction in an Iranian power struggle (similar to the situation in Afghanistan in December 1979), the US would find it difficult to justify a counterintervention (apart from the fact that the Soviets would have an enormous military advantage in such a situation). On the other hand, Washington would be more likely to acquiesce with the Soviet move if its own interests in the conservative Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, were left unaffected by the Soviet presence in Iran.

If strategic warning is available and exploited promptly, then the RDF, according to General Kelly, could "physically deploy a credible force in a relatively short period of time". Although in a preemptive strategy the size of the force would be less important than the speed of its deployment, the initial force must be large enough to carry out the essential task of establishing defences at the entry points and the oilfields. An expanded initial force size would be necessary if the RDF entered the theatre forcibly. In such a case it would have to defend not only against the Soviet Union but also against local opposition, including saboteurs. Besides, a "defensive" strategy - unlike a "tripwire" - requires an ability "to reinforce this initial deployment at a steady rate". Thus the goal of the RDF would be "rapid deployment of sufficient forces" to fight the Soviets, and not the projection of a lean force as a "sacrificial lamb".
A "typical" RDF "force package" to be deployed to a contingency situation would consist of "air defense forces followed by light ground forces and reinforced by heavy forces".\textsuperscript{44} Since the early days of the Carter Doctrine, the RDF's force projection capability has increased significantly both in respect of force size and speed of deployment. In 1980, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that 24,200 troops could be projected to the Persian Gulf within 16 days of mobilization. This figure, the CBO predicted, would be more than doubled (to 49,200 troops) when the readiness and strategic lift enhancement programs then being undertaken had been completed. This 49,200 strong force would include two Marine Amphibious Brigades, and a mechanized division (see Table 7.1).\textsuperscript{45} Another analyst predicted in 1982 that "by the latter part of 1983 the RDJTF Commander could have the capability to commit the equivalent of five divisions to Southwest Asia in less than 30 days".\textsuperscript{46} For its part, the DOD has set the official \textit{interim} goal of being able to deploy, assuming no simultaneous contingency in Europe, "a joint task force and required support forces to SWA within six weeks".\textsuperscript{47} The long-term goal is to be able to concurrently reinforce all theatres including NATO, Southwest Asia and the Pacific. Although the size and composition of this "joint task force" has not been specified in open testimony, the following picture emerges from a closer scrutiny of official as well as informed non-official sources.\textsuperscript{48}

Forces that are "prepared to go into action immediately", i.e. 24 to 48 hours of a crisis, include:

- Naval forces on station in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf, including the five-ship COMIDEASTFOR and at least one carrier battle group (more if strategic warning was available).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days from Mobilization</th>
<th>Number of Troops</th>
<th>Peacetime Base</th>
<th>Means of Transport</th>
<th>Number of Troops</th>
<th>Peacetime Base</th>
<th>Means of Transport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>1,000 (airborne)</td>
<td>Vicenza, Italy</td>
<td>Airlift</td>
<td>1,000 (airborne)</td>
<td>Vicenza, Italy</td>
<td>Airlift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1,000 (airborne)</td>
<td>Ft. Bragg, North Carolina</td>
<td>Airlift</td>
<td>1,000 (airborne)</td>
<td>Ft. Bragg, North Carolina</td>
<td>Airlift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>2,200 (Marine)</td>
<td>Afloat in Mediterranean</td>
<td>Sealift</td>
<td>14,200 (12,000 Marine)</td>
<td>U.S.-based</td>
<td>Airlift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2,200 Marine)</td>
<td>Afloat in Mediterranean</td>
<td>Sealift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixteenth</td>
<td>20,000 (12,000 Marine)</td>
<td>Okinawa, Japan</td>
<td>Sealift</td>
<td>33,000 (12,000 Marine)</td>
<td>Okinawa, Japan</td>
<td>Sealift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8,000 Army, mechanized)</td>
<td>Ft. Stewart, Georgia</td>
<td>Airlift</td>
<td>(16,000 Army, mechanized)</td>
<td>Ft. Stewart, Georgia</td>
<td>Sealift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5,000 Army, airborne)</td>
<td>Ft. Bragg, North Carolina</td>
<td>Airlift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24,200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Combat-ready marines embarked on amphibious ships as part of the carrier battle group. The US kept a Marine Amphibious Unit almost constantly afloat in the Indian Ocean during the 1980-81 period.

- Tactical air consisting of on-scene carrier-based aviation. Under the Navy's revised carrier airwing configuration, the older Midway-class carriers would each have 58 (48 F/A-18 and 10 A-6) fighter and attack aircraft. The newer John F. Kennedy-class carriers would each have 68 (20 F-14, 18 F/A-18 and 20 A-6) fighter and attack aircraft. Response time for land-based tactical air would depend critically on access to Saudi air bases and support (fuel and replenishment) facilities. With Saudi cooperation, the USAF could deploy 2 squadrons of F-15 fighters within 2 days, assuming a CONUS mobilization time of 3 days during the warning period. Deploying 2 squadrons of F-15s from "bare" bases could take as long as two weeks.

- AWACS early warning and control aircraft now operating from Saudi Arabia.

- B-52 bombers of the Strategic Projection Force (SPF).

- Airborne forces in the form of a battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division.

These forces could be reinforced by:

- A combat-ready brigade (5,000 men) of the 82nd Airborne Division from the US east coast "within 48 to 72 hours". Combat elements of the entire division (16,500 men) within "less than two weeks". Arrival of support units would take a few more days.
- One Marine Amphibious Brigade (about 12,000 men and 40 attack aircraft) whose equipment is prepositioned off Diego Garcia in about a week. Another MAB could be brought in from the Pacific in amphibious ships in about three weeks. The DOD estimates that a full Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) - a division plus air wing - could be deployed "in about four weeks".

- The 101st Airborne Division, deployed by sea but not using the SL-7 ships, could take 30-35 days to close. Deployment times could be halved if the SL-7s are used to ferry the 101st ahead of the 24th Infantry. This would be logical since helicopters, not tanks, would be effective against Soviet ground units passing through mountainous terrain. By the end of the 1980s the U.S. would probably have enough airlift to deploy both the 82nd and the 101st by air, assuming, of course, no simultaneous demand for airlift operations to other theatres.

- The 24th Infantry (Mechanized) Division could be brought in within five to six weeks, although the DOD claims that the SL-7 ships could move a heavy division to the Gulf "within 14 to 16 days" via the Suez Canal. (See Chapter 4, section on sealift.)

The above estimates are meant to provide a very rough picture, and in most cases assume best-case conditions. Needless to say, reaction times and force sizes would vary significantly depending on a number of factors apart from warning. It would depend upon the size and type of threat expected, the mix of American troops and equipment to meet the threat, access to regional facilities, and the possibility of simultaneous contingencies elsewhere in the world. A simultaneous contingency would pose the most serious constraint on the
RDF response. First, it would restrict the allocation of strategic mobility resources. In a 1983 report on the RDF, the Congressional Budget Office noted that "to deploy the current RDF [220,000 troops] in 30 days' time, all rapid airlift and sealift must be dedicated to the RDF". As pointed out in Chapter 4, even when all the currently planned airlift enhancements become available (the C-5B, the KC-10 and the C-17) there will still be a shortfall for the least demanding single Persian Gulf contingency as per the requirements identified by the Congressionally-Mandated Mobility Study (CMMS). Second, simultaneous conflicts would also restrict the availability of forces for the Persian Gulf contingency given the dual or multiple commitment of many of the RDF's constituent units.

There are several other conditions likely to undermine the RDF's response time. Delivery of troops and equipment from peacetime locations to the conflict theatre would depend critically on the level of enemy attrition of the RDF's airlift and sealift operations. Denial of en route access by allied nations would cause delay by forcing diversions. Denial of regional staging bases would render the RDF, to borrow James Schlesinger's phrase, neither rapid nor much of a force. As noted, early deployment of the F-15 interceptor from the continental United States would require Saudi cooperation in making available its inventory of spare parts and maintenance facilities. Also, since neither the SL-7 fast logistics ships nor the Near Term Propositioned Ships from Diego Garcia can unload without a benign environment, the "match up" process between equipment and troops would be delayed until suitable port facilities were secured through forcible entry.
Even assuming favourable conditions under which these constraints are kept to a minimum, it is possible to question the feasibility of a preemptive action by the RDF. The Soviets, because of their proximity to the region, their doctrinal emphasis on surprise and, most important, their operational capability for swift deployment provided by their airborne forces, possess a significant capability to execute a preemptive arrival of their own. Noted analyst Jeffery Record believes that "distant US rapid deployment forces could well arrive in the Perisan Gulf only to find their objectives already occupied by Soviet airborne forces".51 The preemptive force projection capability of the Soviet airborne divisions is significant and remarkably flexible. While this capability is not without serious limitations, its potential to present the US with a fait accompli is bound to engage the serious attention of the American military planners.52

Even if preemption were achieved, would it work? The much touted deterrent value of preemption is open to question. The Soviets would surely have taken into account the possibility of encountering a small-size preemptive RDF before actually launching their attack. Since they would have made a thorough calculation of the risks and the gains of their military action, the likelihood of the Soviet commander "bowing out gracefully" before a miniscule airborne brigade blocking their path needs careful study. John Collins believes the whole idea of preemption is "fatally flawed". A small preemptive force, in his view, would be utterly destroyed by the Soviets.53 General Volney Warner, the then commander-in-chief of the US Readiness Command, lent credibility to this view by observing that the 82nd Airborne Division, the most likely candidate for a preemptive role, would not be "too big a force to lose" to the Soviet offensive.54
Is preemption politically desirable and acceptable? The potential of the premium placed on rapid action in leading to hasty and rash decision-making should not be ignored. The constraints on time undermine the scope for careful calculation of the impending crisis situation. The imperative of a quick resort to force also necessarily restricts the scope for other instruments, such as diplomacy and economic leverage, in achieving a solution. As critics have charged, the "RDF makes it easier for the US to intervene militarily in situations which otherwise might be resolved by political and diplomatic means". A further important factor that would conflict with a preemptive strategy is public opinion. A preemptive intervention is without a precedent in US history. Since neither domestic nor international opinion would be likely to understand the significance of strategic warning, the United States is likely to be cast in the role of the "aggressor" - especially if the Soviet Union eschewed its planned offensive and joined the chorus of condemnation against preemptive intervention by US troops. Thus in terms of popular response, the US could become a victim of its own military success.

Last but not the least, it should be noted that even a preemptive intervention to secure the oilfields might not entirely succeed in keeping the oil flow intact. Whether the RDF were invited or not, some damage would be inevitable, although an invitation would reduce the extent of damage. In case of an invitation, the threat would be mostly from the Soviets and any local subversion which it could organize. If the RDF intervention were unilateral and forcible, then bands of domestic saboteurs could be expected to inflict damage. A regime might choose to implement a "scorched earth" policy if
threatened with a seizure. Stretching over large territory, the oilfields would be especially hard to defend. The fragility of the numerous sub systems of the oil production and export complexes - wells, refineries, pipelines, pumping stations - makes them especially vulnerable to even relatively ill-equipped groups of saboteurs. The problem would be compounded by the fact that a large-scale US intervention in the Gulf is likely to give such groups prior warning. Even if the Soviet Union were unable to exploit it, local forces could be expected to do better.56

Thus, even if the RDF units were the first to reach the crisis area, they might fail to achieve the objectives of securing the oil fields and deterring the Soviet attack. If one believes the current American official denials about an early resort to nuclear warfare, then the credibility of a preemptive strategy would depend upon how rapidly and substantially the initially deployed RDF units could be reinforced - in order to pose the enemy with the risks of a major and prolonged combat. In other words, the RDF's ability to deter a Soviet attack would depend upon its actual warfighting potential, which is scrutinized in the following section.

7.4 Defence

Although American global force projection capability beats that of any other nation, the power projection balance in the Persian Gulf region between the two superpowers is generally assumed to be favourable to the Soviets. The reason is simple: the Gulf lies in the Soviet "backyard", whereas for the United States it is the remotest of all major strategic theatres. The following extract summarizes the Pentagon's view of the contribution of proximity to Soviet projection capabilities in the Persian Gulf region:
Soviet power projection capabilities are ... impressive in terms of the Persian Gulf region. For example, current Soviet strategic airlift capacity is considerably less than ours, but the distance from the Transcaucasus to the northern Persian Gulf is only one-sixth of that which aircraft operating from the United States would have to travel. Further, a Soviet attack in the Persian Gulf region would not necessarily require staging through other countries and would not depend highly (although it would be helped by) airlift. The Soviets border on Iran to the north and occupy Afghanistan to the east, and they have a substantial number of divisions in varying states of readiness based in the Transcaucasus, North Caucasus, and Turkestan military districts. Soviet Frontal Aviation based in Afghanistan can reach most points in the Persian Gulf region and large portions of the Arabian Sea. Port facilities in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and Ethiopia greatly enhance the operating potential of the Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.57

But the advantages of proximity could be overstated. Firstly, there are limits to the extent that proximity can be a substitute for technology and training — fields in which the American superiority is acknowledged. Technological factors come to the fore particularly in restricting Soviet naval and airborne capabilities. Secondly, the benefits that the Soviets derive from geography do not extend to terrain. Terrain creates important vulnerabilities for Soviet land forces which otherwise present the single most difficult challenge to American forces operating in the Gulf region. Moreover, while some of the limitations on Soviet military power in the Persian Gulf theatre derive from "static", structural factors — such as technology, doctrine, equipment and support — many others can be created and aggravated through careful use of American power. To quote General Kelly, "apparent advantages or strengths of an adversary can be turned into disadvantages and vulnerabilities through careful planning and adroit use of firepower, maneuver and terrain".58

Exploitation of the static limitations and the dynamic vulnerabilities of the Soviet projection forces constitutes the
essence of American defence planning for the worst-case threat. The following sections briefly touch upon the key elements of the strengths and weaknesses of Soviet naval, airborne and land forces in the operational context of a Persian Gulf confrontation with the RDF. Wherever possible, an attempt is made to relate these vulnerabilities to American defensive capabilities in order to create a broad picture of the power projection balance. While this balance is drawn with specific regard to the Iranian scenario, many of the factors highlighted in the analysis apply also to other potential theatres within the region. At the same time, two important limitations of the following assessments must be noted. First, much of the analysis of the force projection capabilities is based upon data for the 1979-84 period. With the constant improvement of technology, it is inevitable that some of the key limitations on Soviet capabilities will disappear or at least be reduced in the not-too-distant future. Second, the main concern of this section, and indeed the chapter, is to present a range of factors that would most seriously affect the performance of both sides in a conflict situation. It is not intended here to account for all the factors or to predict the outcome of the conflict. In fact, a US-Soviet confrontation in the Gulf is fraught with so many uncertainties that for an analyst to account for all of them, and be definite about the direction in which they may evolve, appears to be an impossible task. Instead, the focus shall be on those variables that are most important and the outcomes that are most predictable.
7.4.1 *Airborne forces*

The Soviet airborne forces in recent years have emerged as a capable instrument of power projection. The Soviets possess the world’s largest airborne force: a total of seven divisions with each having about 8,500 personnel. According to the Pentagon, "the units of an eighth division are employed in operations in Afghanistan but could be relocated to meet Soviet requirements" elsewhere. The Soviet airborne divisions form an elite group and are directly controlled by the Airborne Forces Headquarters in Moscow. Six of the divisions are manned at ready levels and could be deployed at short notice.\(^59\) Soviet airborne units spearheaded the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan and would most likely be used in similar fashion in any major military attack in the Persian Gulf region.

The range to which these airborne units can be projected is determined by the strength and sophistication of Soviet airlift. The Soviet airlift fleet consists of three primary transports - the AN-12, the AN-22, and the IL-76 - distributed over both civilian (Aeroflot) and military (VTA) sectors. The performance characteristics of Soviet airlifters are inferior to those of their American counterparts (the C-130, the C-5 and the C-141, respectively) - especially in the key areas of range, payload and air-refuelling facilities. On the other hand, Soviet transports are noted for their high power-to-weight ratios, short takeoff and landing (STOL), ability to operate from improvised runways and minimal ground support and maintenance requirements.\(^60\) Overall, the Soviet airlift capability for supporting airborne force projection is significant, especially in the Persian Gulf region. Although estimates vary widely and can be rough at best, many analysts agree that in 1982-83, the VTA could transport a single
airborne division to about 1,000 miles and two divisions simultaneously to a range of 600 miles. A mobilization of Aeroflot could also enable transportation of the elements of a third division. 61 It should be stressed that the Soviet airlift capability is improving steadily with the replacement of the older, short-range AN-12 with the intercontinental jet transport IL-76 (at a rate of about 30 per year) and the recent introduction of an outsize cargo-capable strategic airlifter – the AN-400 (Condor).

Unlike most of their Western counterparts, the Soviet airborne divisions enjoy good firepower and battlefield mobility. This is due to the divisional complement of 107 airborne amphibious combat vehicles (BMD), each equipped with a 73mm main gun and a Sagger anti-tank missile launcher. 62 These capabilities greatly facilitate the mission of the Soviet airborne forces. The latter consists of a broad and varied range of functions, including "capture and retention" of "air force and naval bases, and other objectives deep within the theaters of military operations". 63 In a worst-case threat situation, one could envisage, drawing from former Pentagon analyst Dennis Ross's summation, the use of Soviet airborne forces:

to facilitate and secure the rapid movement of Soviet mechanized ground forces through potential chokepoints, to deny strategic positions to countering forces, to sow confusion and disrupt the enemy's ability to coordinate a defense, to make reinforcement or supply of enemy forces difficult, and to prevent forward enemy air bases from being used against Soviet forces, while also potentially making them available to Soviet tactical aircraft. 64

Soviet success in executing even some of these missions would create significant problems for the RDF. Their ability to do so, however, would be subject to several limitations. While the Soviets are theoretically capable of airborne deployments to anywhere within a
radius (set by the unfuelled range of AN-12 of about 2,000 miles) encompassing "the entire Middle East, the Near East, Western Europe and the northeast quadrant of Africa, from Libya to Kenya", the relatively distant operations would have to be conducted without fighter cover. The Soviet fighter aircraft operating from southern-most home bases (Kirovabad, Askhabad) or Afghanistan (Shindand) currently lack the range to provide cover for operations in the oilfields in Khuzestan, Saudi Arabia and the Strait of Hormuz. (The combat radius of the principal Soviet fighter, the MiG-23 Flogger, is 525 miles. The 970-mile radius of the SU-24 Fencer would theoretically enable it to operate near the Iranian oilfields, but the Fencer's mission is ground attack and not air combat.) Moreover, the ranges of Soviet aircraft would shrink considerably on a demanding combat mission, especially because the aircraft would have to fly low altitudes and engage in manoeuvre. Also, since most Soviet fighters are ground radar-controlled, their operational reach would be further affected by the limited range of ground radars (which would shrink even further in the mountainous terrain).

Without fighter cover, transport aircraft, being large and with little maneuvrability, would be vulnerable to hostile interceptors and even ground fire. RDF planners would hope to exploit this situation to good effect. Land and carrier-based tactical air, which could be "on-scene in a matter of hours", could intercept the airlifters and disrupt airborne insertions into many targets. At his reconfirmation hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee, JCS Chairman David Jones expressed confidence that a Soviet airborne assault into the Iranian oilfields "would be an easy operation to interdict ... A few AWACS and a few fighters could just devastate an airborne operation"
Airborne operations are also limited by their very complex and difficult requirements. If a target area is beyond the unrefuelled round trip radius of an airlifter, then availability of fuel on landing becomes critical to the feasibility of an airborne assault. Another important factor is the availability and size of theatre airfields where the transports can land. Small airfields restrict the number of planes that can operate at one time, and the alternative of airdropping is by far a much less efficient method than airlanding.

In view of the constraints on fighter cover and airlanding, it is unlikely that the Soviets would be able to resupply or sustain a major airborne offensive by airlift alone. Nor would it be possible to resupply them from sea in view of the US Navy's expected theatre maritime superiority. The regular ground force logistics units can and are meant to do the job; Soviet doctrine calls for quick link-up of airborne insertions with advancing ground units. But, the RDF plans emphasize delaying the ground forces by interdiction during their passage through mountainous terrain. Granted that such delaying operations are quite feasible, the airborne units in more distant areas could not count upon an early link-up and would risk being left weakened and vulnerable. Without the prospect of an early link-up, the Soviets would be unlikely to go for an airborne operation, unless ground attack is launched first and timed to ensure early link-up. The latter, however, would eliminate the element of surprise and preemption from the Soviet attack, making overall threat easier to defend against.

To maximize effectiveness and minimize vulnerabilities, the Soviets might choose to use their airborne forces in a two-part assault on Iran. In the first, they could be projected to seize
critical staging points in northern Iran. This would extend their
cover into the oilfields in the south, which then could be targeted
for the second part of the assault. Such a scenario would no doubt
complicate the task of the RDF. Without a direct threat to oil, the
US might find it politically difficult to respond to the first stage.
Nonetheless, the limitation of this approach is the same as one
mentioned above—any delay on the part of the Soviets in moving into
the oilfields would provide the RDF time to mobilize and get into
position in southern Iran should American policy-makers decide that on
that action with sufficient promptness.69

7.4.2 Naval forces

The potential role of the Soviet Navy in a major US-Soviet
conflict in the Persian Gulf region does not lend itself to easy
speculation. The Soviet Union, during the past decade, has
demonstrated a growing interest in blue water deployments, including a
presence in the Indian Ocean. American military officials, especially
from the Navy, have often expressed great alarm at the growing Soviet
naval threat. The former Navy Chief-of-Staff, Admiral Thomas Hayward,
even went to the extent of announcing the complete "loss" of the US
Navy's traditional "margin of superiority" over the Soviets. Yet,
while considering the Soviet Navy's increasing blue water operations,
one must distinguish the political uses of such deployments from their
potential for major and sustained combat operations. The Soviets
undoubtedly have made good progress in the former respect, especially
in projecting influence into some Third World theatres, but their
naval warfighting capabilities in distant seas are yet to seriously
threaten the dominance of the American Navy.70
The limitations on Soviet naval power are especially acute in the northwest Indian Ocean. The first major constraint stems from the distance and geographical vulnerabilities that Soviet combatants must contend with before reaching the Indian Ocean theatre. The peacetime Soviet Indian Ocean fleet, which in the past has averaged between 20 to 25 ships (of which about 7 or 8 are combatants, the rest supports), would need augmentation in order to operate in a major way in a combat situation. (The extent of such reinforcement would, however, be limited by considerations of the possibility of a geographical spread of the conflict.) These additional units would have to traverse great distances from their home fleets: 3,300 miles from the Black Sea Fleet anchorages; 8,000 miles from the Pacific Fleet; 10,800 miles from the Baltic Fleet; and 11,200 from the Northern Fleet. The likely denial of passage through the Suez Canal would increase the distances for ships deployed from the Mediterranean side. Apart from the time consumed, Soviet fleet movements to the Indian Ocean would require passage through chokepoints, such as the Greenland-Iceland-Faeroes Gap and the Malacca-Sunda-Lombok Straits. This would be a very significant vulnerability. The US Navy, helped by the warning time available, is well-placed to take advantage of the situation. It must be stressed that exploitation of Soviet vulnerabilities at critical chokepoints is a key aspect of US naval warfare doctrine. As the Navy's Director of Naval Warfare put it: "Geography does not favor the Soviet Navy and our maritime strategy applies pressure to ensure that the Soviet Navy remains bottled up at the chokepoints". Not surprisingly, therefore, Admiral Hayward claimed at a Congressional hearing in 1981 that the American Navy would have a "very significant capability to interdict the Soviet Navy's own efforts to reinforce their Indian Ocean Fleet".
Once in the theatre, the Soviet combatants would lack major options for sea control and interdiction operations. Some analysts have drawn attention to the potential for anti-ship warfare by the Soviet Navy in an Indian Ocean conflict. The latter's capability for such strikes have improved considerably in recent years. If deployed to the Indian Ocean during a crisis — by no means a certain action — a Kiev-class carrier would bring tactical air in the form of 12 to 13 YaK-36 Forger V/STOL aircraft. This would be supplemented by the growing inventory of anti-ship missiles aboard Soviet surface combatants and submarines. Major surface units carrying anti-ship missiles on board include Kiev-class carriers, Kirov-class nuclear-powered guided missile cruisers, Kresta and Kara-class cruisers, Soveremenny, Kashin and Kildin-class destroyers and Krivak-III class frigates. Submarines of the Papa, Charlie and Oscar classes also carry anti-ship missiles.

On the other hand, Soviet naval strike capabilities are limited by several factors. The sea control capability of the Kiev-class carriers is of such poor quality that their chief utility for the Kremlin appears to be in the political rather than military field. Secondly, the total number of anti-ship missiles aboard Soviet surface combatants is not great. Moreover, Soviet anti-ship weapons would be worthless if their launching platforms did not survive American attacks. In this respect, the US Navy's sea control, interdiction, and ASW capabilities — provided by the formidable combination of carrier-based tactical air, sophisticated warning and control systems, anti-ship stand off missiles and anti-submarine warfare assets — are decidedly superior in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Despite considerable efforts at improvement in the recent past, Soviet
technology for maritime defence continues to lag far behind the advances made in US naval offensive capabilities. Soviet fleet defences against American naval air is limited not only by its lack of any effective sea-based air cover, but also by the fact that less than one half of Soviet surface ships carry anti-aircraft missiles on board. Besides, the overall anti-ship warfare capability of the US Navy is increasing due to a program to distribute stand-off missiles to a greater number of surface combatants, aircraft and attack submarines. This will enhance the ratio of US stand-off offensive systems to Soviet defensive systems. The US is also acquiring new large Nimitz-class carriers and replacing the older F-4s and A-7s with the multi-role, high performance strike fighter F/A-18 Hornet. This should give it a decisive advantage over the Soviet Navy even after the latter's acquisition of the 60,000-ton conventional take off and landing aircraft carrier. (The first unit is not likely to be operational until mid-1990s.)

Finally, the US anti-submarine warfare capability retains a high degree of "qualitative advantage" over the Soviets in the fields of submarine systems, ASW sensors, acoustics and airborne ASW platforms. Soviet successes in closing this significant technology gap have been modest.

Another component of Soviet maritime power projection is the Naval Infantry. The SNI is a well-mechanized force (including a tank battalion) and its amphibious capabilities have been strengthened by a complement of air-cushioned vehicles and the introduction of Ivan Rogov-class amphibious ships. However, at a total strength of around 15,000 (divided into five regiments, two of which are assigned to the Pacific Fleet) it remains quite small, especially when compared with
its roughly 180,000-strong American counterpart. Absence of close-air support also deprives it of a capability for opposed landings. Besides, the Soviet Naval Infantry is not designed for sustained combat on its own. Lack of any organic logistics and support requires reinforcements within 4 to 5 days. For these reasons, it is difficult to see any role for the SNI in a Persian Gulf conflict.79

In a US-Soviet confrontation, the Soviet Navy's staying power in the Indian Ocean would also be limited. Compared to the US, the Soviet expertise and experience in at-sea replenishment is rudimentary. There are at best only a small number of dedicated military replenishment ships in the Soviet fleet. Dependence on the Merchant Marine would be risky given that the Soviet Navy would be unable to provide sufficient protection from enemy interdiction for unarmed civilian ships.

The Soviets also lack adequate naval support facilities in the Indian Ocean littoral capable of catering for wartime repair and replenishment needs. The Pentagon has claimed that Soviet ships enjoy "unrestricted access" to Aden, Socotra Island (both in the PDR Yemen) and to a "Soviet-constructed naval support facility" on Dhalak Island (Ethiopia). The latter is said to consist of "storage buildings, POL storage and floating dry dock". Yet US officials have indicated that Dhalak Island houses nothing more than a "minor repair facility" for the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron.80 Besides, Soviet ships operating from Dhalak Island would lend themselves to interception by Western (French or American) forces based in Djibouti and could be "rather easily bottled in narrowly confined areas by mining".81 The Iraqi base of Umm Qasr at the northern end of the Persian Gulf is unsuitable for combat support and its availability in wartime must be doubted in
view of the substantial deterioration of Soviet-Iraqi relations in recent years. In the PRDY, US officials have themselves revealed that Socotra has "rudimentary facilities sufficient only to provide for limited maritime support activity and exercises". Although the extent of Soviet access to Aden is still a matter of debate (in 1980, Under Secretary of Defence Robert Komer called Aden "more a facility than a base since the Soviets do seem to move in and out of there"), the availability of only one "base" is inherently a limiting factor - it allows no room for redundancy. Chastened by past experience in Somalia and Egypt, where costly and exclusive facilities had to be abandoned in the wake of their expulsion from these countries, the Soviets, according to the Pentagon, have tended to "minimize their capital investment in overseas facilities". Their current level of access to littoral facilities in the northwest Indian Ocean region is inadequate for wartime requirements.

The US Navy's own combat operations in defence against the worst-case threat would face two major problems. First, the US flotilla operating in the northwest Indian Ocean would have to live under the threat of the Backfire bombers of the Soviet Naval Aviation. In considering the Backfire threat, however, one should not underestimate the considerable and varied mechanisms for self-defence possessed by the US carrier battle groups. The carrier battle group "defence-in-depth" system provides a protective umbrella not only to the battle group itself but also to other amphibious forces and merchant ship convoys.

The second problem would stem from the shallowness and narrowness of the Persian Gulf. This would severely restrict manoeuvres by the large US carriers and make them more vulnerable to the Backfire. If
the carriers were forced out of the Gulf, the availability of air cover for RDF operations in Khuzestan and the Zagros mountains would be reduced.\footnote{86}

In a East-West conflict in the Gulf, the US would look for help from its Western allies who could deploy naval forces to the Indian Ocean. Britain and France have the capability to make such contribution. Since her withdrawal from "east of Suez", Britain has periodically deployed naval task forces in the Indian Ocean. A good example of British contingency deployments is the so-called "Gulf Patrol" (consisting, at its peak, of 2 surface combatants, one support ship and one tanker) organized in late 1980 in repsonse to the Iran-Iraq war for the "protection of British merchant shipping".\footnote{87} France has maintained a much more substantial presence in the Ocean, in peacetime, it has averaged 4 to 5 combatants plus a number of support ships. These have been reinforced periodically - most commonly during a crisis in the littoral.\footnote{88} At the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, for example, the French flotilla in the Indian Ocean consisted of 20 units. More important, France enjoys access and basing agreements with Djibouti, Mayotee Island and Reunion Island. In Reunion, France maintains air and naval facilities, a communication centre and about 1,200 paratroopers.\footnote{89} In 1980, when the US was desperately seeking access to facilities in the littoral, France had about 3,500 marines and legionnaires in Djibouti - "the largest Western intervention force close to the Persian Gulf".\footnote{90}

Whether France or Britain would agree to make deployments in support of US contingency operations in the Gulf could not, of course, be predicted with certainty. France has in the past opposed the idea of a joint Western fleet in the Indian Ocean. But France has
facilitated US Navy's access to Djibouti and expressed a commitment to keeping the oil routes free from enemy interdiction.\textsuperscript{91} In a US-Soviet conflict in the Gulf, participation by allied naval forces would depend upon two factors: whether such deployments would be in the best political and strategic interests of the allied country and second, the possibility of the conflict spreading to Europe. A geographical escalation of the conflict could render diversion of allied forces to the Indian Ocean risky by adversely affecting the East-West naval balance in the Atlantic.

Overall, the Soviet Navy's role in a Persian Gulf engagement with the United States would be unlikely to offset the US Navy's admittedly "substantial maritime advantage in the region".\textsuperscript{92} The best the Soviets could hope to achieve with their wartime naval deployments would be in complicating US defence planning and forcing the commitment of extra American resources to guard against the potential threat. But it is conceivable that the forward deployment of Soviet naval units, while politically useful in their peacetime show-the-flag and crisis-time "gunboat-diplomacy" missions, would probably be "expendable in time of war".\textsuperscript{93}

\subsection*{7.4.3 Ground forces}

In the worst-case threat, the Soviet ground forces would present the most difficult challenge to the RDF. The Soviets, first of all, would enjoy numerical advantage. They have 26 divisions stationed in the Southern Military Districts, excluding the 4 deployed in Afghanistan (see Map 7.1). In addition, the Soviets could draw upon the KGB border guards, about 50,000 of whom are deployed in the southern theatre. These border guards are impressively mechanized
(possessing tanks, armoured fighting vehicles and self-propelled artillery), and trained to operate outside national boundaries as well as inside (which is their primary mission). 94

Numbers apart, the Soviet ground forces would have an overwhelming superiority in firepower and armour. Although the Soviets have only one tank division in the southern districts, their motor rifle divisions carry more tanks per soldier than corresponding US mechanized divisions. A Soviet tank division contains 11,000 men and 335 tanks, while a Soviet motorized rifle division contains 14,000 troops and between 216 to 266 tanks. In contrast, the 24th Mechanized Division, currently the RDF's only "heavy punch", has a total of 216 battle tanks.

It should, however, be noted that not all the ground force divisions stationed in the Southern Military Districts are likely to be committed to an invasion of Iran. The actual size of the commitment would depend on several factors, but two would be most important. Firstly, the Soviet force structure in the Caucasus (including North caucasus and Transcaucasus military districts) is also earmarked for operations against Turkey and NATO. 95 In view of the high probability of simultaneous contingencies in the Gulf and Europe, the Soviet high command would be unlikely to divert a significant portion of these forces to an invasion of Iran. The second factor affecting the allocation of ground forces to Iran would be the Soviet ability to provide logistics support. The Soviet ground forces enjoy a poor combat to support ratio - partly owing to their traditional emphasis on armour and partly because their ground force logistics systems have been optimized for sustaining short-span blitzkrieg attacks over short distances in the European theatre. 96 An
invasion of Iran, on the other hand, would have greater logistic requirements in view of the difficult operational environment and absence of any in-theatre prepositioned material. The Soviets, therefore, could not sustain a large ground force commitment to Iran without drawing upon the logistics support structure in other theatres. According to one estimate, sustaining a 24 division force would require a draw-down of about 55 division (category I readiness) worth of trucks from other theatres. 97 Since the Soviets are unlikely to go for any such large-scale diversions in view of the possibility of simultaneous contingencies, the number of ground divisions participating in an Iranian invasion would be much below the total currently stationed in the Southern Military Districts.

A reduced commitment of Soviet ground forces would of course greatly relieve the RDF commander. This is, however, not the only problem the Soviets would face. Their greatest challenge - and the best advantage the RDF could possibly bargain for - would come from terrain. From the Soviet border the distances to the Iranian oilfields are long (some 300 miles to Teheran and 650 miles to Abadan). In covering this distance, the Soviet ground forces would have to cross two formidable mountain ranges. The first, comprising the Qareh Dagh, Elbruz and Golul Dagh ranges, lie on the Soviet-Iranian border. The second is the Zagros mountains between Tehran and the oilfields on the Persian Gulf coast. The roads that pass through these mountains are narrow and difficult, crossing bridges, running through several tunnels, and clinging to sides of many gorges. As a consequence, the Soviet forces would have to negotiate some 300 "chokepoints" - a very significant vulnerability, exploitable to great effect by a clever defender. Other problems include extreme and
inhospitable weather, scarce water supplies, and a total absence of supply depots and maintenance shops along the routes.\textsuperscript{98}

The difficult operational environment in Iran would make the advance of Soviet invasion forces slow, painstaking and decidedly vulnerable; even if it is not contested. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff note:

Soviet commanders would find it difficult to mass their forces. Iran is a big country with formidable terrain. Ground units and resupply would be moved predominantly by road over routes vulnerable to military action and natural impediments such as snow and floods. With limited frontages, long axes of attack, and the need to maintain security of the LOCs [lines of communications], Soviet forces could become strung out and separated. A large portion of the force would be absorbed in rear-area security, and mutual support between axes would be difficult; air defense would be scattered and spread thin. Soviet aircraft would be operating without low-level ground-controlled intercept radar or fast-reaction interceptor aircraft coverage and, in later stages of the conflict, would operate from minimum-capability airfields in Iran. The appearance of overwhelming numbers of Soviet forces could be dissipated in the long defiles of the Zagros Mountains.\textsuperscript{99}

The problems associated with terrain would, of course, be magnified many more times if the invasion were contested. The business of the RDF after all is to ensure that a Soviet move into the Gulf is opposed and its vulnerabilities fully exploited. As General Kelly draws attention to this aspect of the RDF's plans, the Soviet invasion route "lends itself to interdiction and delay ... The key is to arrive early enough to stop or discourage their move".\textsuperscript{100}

The Soviets, of course, could draw upon their past experience in operating within Iranian territory and the experience in mountain warfare gained from recent operations in Afghanistan. Yet never during their past incursions into Iranian or Afghan mountains have the Soviets encountered anything like the RDF. Such terrain presents some inherent advantages to the defender.
As would appear from unclassified sources, the RDF's operational plans to defend against the Soviet advance would have two aspects. The first would be an air interdiction operation, beginning early in a defensive campaign. This would be spearheaded by the F-111 all-weather attack bombers and the B-52s of the Strategic Projection Force. The latter have been given an especially important role. "In the Southwest Asia scenario the B-52s are planned to begin operations in advance of the tactical forces since they can be deployed within 24 hours and begin employment within 48 hours. Utilizing night, low altitude tactics, the B-52 will strike targets such as airfields and lines of communication."\textsuperscript{101} At a later phase, tactical bombers operating from aircraft carriers or from nearby land bases could participate in the interdiction. While interdiction might not be enough to halt a Soviet invasion permanently, it could be expected to delay their advance sufficiently to permit the build-up of a strong RDF position around the oilfields.\textsuperscript{102}

A second aspect of the RDF's defensive operations could involve the use of airborne, airmobile and Special Operation Forces in the mountains. As Army Chief of Staff General Edward Meyer pointed out, the use of "the light airborne force in restricted terrain ... presents significant advantages over the heavy, mechanized, road bound Soviet force".\textsuperscript{103} Airmobile units could delay further the Soviets. Exploitation of the chokepoints by "small detachments of troopers" of the 101st Air Assault Division, according to a former US Army General, could "bring Soviet progress to a snail's pace".\textsuperscript{104} Not to be ignored is the substantial tank-killing capacity of the same division's attack helicopters. Light infantry forces are also likely to be effective in ambushing and killing Soviet troops without suffering major losses.
One Pentagon wargame is particularly revealing: "a five-minute engagement between a US light infantry company and the point of a Soviet mechanized column ... indicates that the U.S. unit would incur minor losses while practically wiping out the opposing force".105

In addition it should be noted that the RDF is unlikely to be the only force to contest any Soviet invasion. In a US-Soviet conflict in Iran, the position of local Iranian forces - either regular troops or guerilla groups - would be an important wild card. Their participation, especially in delaying and harassment operations against the Soviets, would be a critical factor in enhancing the RDF's ability to repel a Soviet attack. While Iranian political opposition to the United States and the preoccupation of its already depleted military in the war against Iraq would make explicit US-Iranian cooperation doubtful for the time being, a change in this situation should not be ruled out. As in Afghanistan, at least some anti-Soviet Iranian guerilla groups could be expected to contest the invaders - even if operating independently of the US. While the Iranian opposition would clearly be an inadequate deterrent to a Soviet invasion, Defence Intelligence Agency analysts believe it would be "capable of slowing them down and making it more difficult for them to get to their objectives".106 Further, as a CBO analysis points out, even "small teams armed with explosives and machine guns" could "quite easily" disrupt the long and vulnerable supply lines of the Soviets.107 The potential of guerilla units in rough, mountainous terrain should not be underestimated, especially in the light of recent Soviet experience in Afghanistan. The relatively high level of casualties suffered by the Soviets at the hands of poorly-organized and ill-equipped bands of Afghan guerillas have "demonstrated that
Soviet forces can be impeded by indigenous capabilities, given determination and a knowledgeable use of difficult terrain.\textsuperscript{108} As the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out:

The size and strength of Soviet forces, although great, do not guarantee rapid success against indigenous forces, a fact borne out in Afghanistan. Operating in that country against a lightly armed but elusive opponent, Soviet forces have encountered a number of problems attributable to inadequacies in doctrine, tactics, and training. Over the years, Soviet doctrine has led to the development of ground and air forces suited primarily for intensive conventional and nuclear warfare on the modern battlefield. Soviet forces stress mobility, and Soviet troops are trained to fight from armored vehicles until forced to dismount. However appropriate these tactics are for war in Europe, they are not optimum for conditions in Afghanistan. The rugged terrain is not suitable for wheeled or tracked vehicles, and Afghan resistance fighters are quick to withdraw in the face of superior Soviet combat power.\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{7.4.4 Assessment}

Several important points can be drawn out from the above analysis of the strengths and vulnerabilities of Soviet forces with respect to the worst-case threat. First, the US would have a clear superiority in naval warfare and its capability to interdict a Soviet airborne seizure of Iranian oilfields would be quite significant. The US should also have air superiority around the oilfields, especially if bases in Oman and Turkey remained available and the Saudis granted contingency access. The invading Soviet ground forces could be subjected to considerable harassment and damage. The RDF could almost certainly delay their progress and reduce their size and firepower by killing tanks and troops. If, as US officials put it, the RDF's goal is to prevent the Soviets "from executing a lightening-like thrust into the Persian Gulf region", then one would have to rate the chances
of this objective being achieved as fairly high. It is possible to agree with the Pentagon's claim that a Soviet invasion "would not be a blitzkrieg, but rather a land war fought labouriously through narrow defiles, mountain pass after mountain pass".\textsuperscript{110}

Such a possibility, the Pentagon hopes, could be enough to deter the Soviets from continuing their advance further toward the oilfields and persuade them to terminate the conflict. There is, however, no guarantee that this would be the case. What if the Soviets were to take the losses and still persist in their attack by pouring in additional resources? While few would doubt the RDF's ability to delay and blunt the attack, serious questions remain as to whether it could also defeat and roll back a determined Soviet effort. US officials have often talked about their ability to "deter" and "dissuade", but not "defeat". As General David Jones testified:

... The Soviets would have greater difficulty than many people appreciate ... An interdiction program could give them a great deal of trouble ... I am assuming that the Soviets would be willing to rob from other parts of the world and sustain an effort in Southwest Asia ... I can see some circumstances where we could have the force to stop them. But if they made a sustained and significant effort, that would be a different circumstance.\textsuperscript{111}

US military planners expect that their capability to counter more limited forms of the Soviet threat and to raise the costs of a full-scale invasion would have improved considerably by the end of the decade. Even then, however, they have hesitated to predict victory for the RDF.

Among civilian analysts, assessments have differed but most remain pessimistic. On the one hand, analyst Joshua Epstein has come up with a sophisticated appraisal of the RDF's ability to dissuade and possibly defeat a Soviet attack by exploiting its geostrategic
vulnerabilities and technological limitations. The RDF, Epstein claims, can deter the Soviets by posing the risk that all the contemplated benefits of their invasion can be "decisively denied". Or, at least, that they would have to pay a disproportionate price for achieving it.¹¹² But such views appear to be a clear minority. At another extreme, it has been held that the RDF may never be able to match a Soviet offensive even with optimum possible enhancements to its current capability. This school views Iran as "inherently indefensible" from a large-scale and determined Soviet attack.¹¹³ This opinion is attributed largely to proximity - a strategic advantage that "neither the current capability nor the maximum achievable with the RDF" can match by itself.¹¹⁴ A third group of civilian analysts believes that the RDF's current limitations against the Soviet threat can be alleviated, but only if resources much larger than currently envisaged are devoted to the RDF.¹¹⁵

The absence of a clear agreement on the RDF's potential vis-a-vis the Soviet threat underscores the difficulties in gauging the military equation between the superpowers in the Persian Gulf. An outcome would depend on too many variables, many of which would not be known until a crisis actually broke out. The above analysis, therefore, has confined itself to studying the major factors likely to affect the capabilities of either side in a conflict situation.

If a conventional defence of Iran against the worst-case threat is beyond the current or projected capability of the RDF, then one obvious alternative for the US would be to escalate; either by resorting to nuclear weapons or by initiating attacks on the Soviets from strategic vantage points elsewhere in the globe. The issue of escalation is one of the most controversial aspects of American
military strategy in the Gulf. The following section focuses on the two escalation options for the RDF and their likely implications for American capabilities to defeat any Soviet thrust into the Gulf.

7.5 Escalation

Escalation has been a part of the RDF's strategy since the beginning. In the early stages of the RDF's evolution, when US theatre conventional capabilities in the Persian Gulf were deemed hopelessly inadequate to meet a full-scale Soviet attack, escalation was widely believed to be the centrepiece of the American ability to back the Carter Doctrine. Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, confirmed in his memoirs that he had instructed the military "to develop options involving both 'horizontal and vertical escalation' in the event of a Soviet military move toward the Persian Gulf" so that the US "would be free to choose either the terrain or the tactic or the level of our response".116 Shortly after the President's State of the Union address, official consideration of nuclear options in the Persian Gulf was indicated in leaked Pentagon documents, especially a report entitled "Capabilities in the Persian Gulf". The report, prepared in the Office of the Secretary of Defence, examined various options available to the US for countering a Soviet offensive in Iran. After detailing the mismatch between the force projection capabilities of both sides, it concluded: "To prevail in an Iranian scenario, we might have to threaten or make use of tactical nuclear weapons".117

Although subsequent developments in the RDF build-up suggest an emphasis on conventional warfighting capabilities, the force retains an ability to fight at a tactical nuclear level. The current force
structure of the RDF is equipped with weapon systems that are "dual-capable", i.e., capable of launching both conventional as well as nuclear warheads. Such systems include aircraft carriers with onboard nuclear weapons, the B-52H bomber squadrons of the Strategic Projection Force (SPF), nuclear-capable artillery pieces, howitzers and anti-submarine aircraft, plus many other tactical nuclear delivery systems integrated to the Army, Navy, and Air Force units. The SPF is an especially important RDF component with nuclear capabilities. While its declared mission is to conduct conventional long-range bombing operations, classified documents leaked by columnist Jack Anderson suggest a different possibility. Anderson claims that the B-52s are oriented to a "Limited Nuclear Option" (LNO) developed as part of the Carter administration's restructuring of US nuclear targeting policy:

Subject to the usual presidential authorization for use of any nuclear weapons, this option involves 19 nuclear bombs carried by B-52 bombers. The aim is to keep Soviet forces from invading Iran, and the weapons include both B-57 bombs with an explosive power equal to the Hiroshima bomb, and the more powerful B-61 variable yield thermonuclear bombs.

The overall purpose of this option, Anderson adds by quoting from official documents (including Presidential Decision Memorandum 51 and a directive to the Strategic Air Command from Secretary of Defence Brown), is to "significantly degrade Soviet capabilities to project military power in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region for a period of at least 30 days".

It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty under what circumstances or for what wartime objectives tactical nuclear weapons would be used in Iran. Several possibilities, however, suggest themselves. Firstly, tactical nuclear weapons could have crucial
defensive applications in the Iranian mountains, especially in blocking the invasion routes of Soviet ground forces. Atomic Demolition Munitions (ADM), as the DOD's Program Analysis and Evaluation Office notes in a study, "alone could quickly seal all avenues of approach into Iran". Nuclear weapons could also be used to destroy Soviet combat forces in Iran, the Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean, and Soviet facilities in friendly regional countries.

However, as long as conventional options to perform these tasks remain available, the US is unlikely to opt for nuclear strikes. A more likely scenario of vertical escalation by the RDF might be in the form of retaliatory strikes if and when the RDF contingents suffer unacceptable levels of destruction at the hands of Soviet forces. A "secret" Pentagon analysis, once again brought into the open by Jack Anderson, estimates that "46,000 of the emergency forces' 100,000 troops would be killed or wounded in the first 60 days of combat against a Soviet thrust into the Middle East oilfields". Casualty levels are expected by the same report to be around 66 per cent if 130,000 troops are deployed. While it is impossible for anyone to be certain about these figures in any combat situation, it is enough to note that the above estimates would not be unlikely, given the force-size and the firepower the Soviets are capable of a massing in the Iranian theatre. If such losses (or even something of a lesser magnitude) were to occur, it would effectively cripple the RDF's warfighting capabilities. This would leave the US a choice between humiliating withdrawal on the one hand and escalation into nuclear strikes on the other. As Anderson concludes, "if the Red Army overwhelmed the RDF, as it easily could, the United States would have no military option except to respond with nuclear weapons. Indeed, contingency plans are ready for just such an option".
Of course, any decision to escalate the conflict to tactical nuclear levels would have to be very carefully weighed against the risks involved. The gravest risk would be the potential for uncontrolled escalation once the nuclear threshold was crossed. This possibility is present in any scenario or theatre involving the superpowers. In the Persian Gulf, escalation control by the American side would be especially difficult in view of the possibility that the Soviet Union might enjoy theatre nuclear superiority. Noted analyst and Pentagon consultant W. Scott Thompson believes that:

The Soviet inventory of theater nuclear forces that could be brought to bear against an American theatre offensive would still be far more diverse than what the United States could use in the Persian Gulf: SS-20s, locally assigned or moved in from the Far East or northern districts, or airborne systems considerably outgun the Western potential available for the Persian Gulf, while still drawing down U.S. nuclear forces assigned to the European theatre. A Soviet theatre nuclear superiority is not conducive to escalation control, since it increases the likelihood of their retaliation in kind. The Soviets, after all, would hardly be expected to accept a humiliating withdrawal. What is more, if the Soviets elected to respond, they might well seek to destroy the sources of US strikes, especially aircraft carriers or regional bases staging B-52 operations. Here, the asymmetrical vulnerabilities of the targets of both sides should be noted. American carriers or regional bases, both of which are well within range of Soviet tactical strikes, would be easier to destroy than dispersed and concealed launching points inside Soviet territory. Besides, in striking Soviet launch points, the US would be hitting Soviet territory, whereas destroying carriers or regional staging bases would not, per se, be the same as launching nuclear strikes at the continental United States. Third, any damage
to oil production facilities resulting from a nuclear exchange would critically undermine Western, rather than Soviet, interests, in view of the latter's virtual self-sufficiency in oil.

Finally, since sunk carriers and lost regional facilities (it is possible that the mere threat of Soviet nuclear strikes would be sufficient to persuade most local states hosting the RDF to deny further access) would mean the end of the RDF's theatre conventional warfighting capabilities, the American President would be left in the unenviable position of having to choose between withdrawal or further escalation.

American first-use of nuclear weapons would have other negative repercussions as well. It would break the long standing tradition of restraint, and set an unfortunate and dangerous precedent. American willingness to use nuclear weapons in the Gulf would, in all probability, add to Soviet incentives to launch preemptive strikes against theatre nuclear launching sites in Western Europe. It would also certainly arouse worldwide indignation and anger toward the US, whereas the Soviets might receive less approbation for having retaliated. Regional reaction in the Gulf is especially likely to be hostile - the Iranian population might be permanently alienated. Further, a demonstrated effectiveness of nuclear weapons in a Third World theatre might encourage proliferation among leading Third World nations, with all its subsequent complications for world strategic stability.124

The risks associated with nuclear escalation would appear to make horizontal escalation a more attractive option. In simple terms, horizontal escalation involves taking the conflict to other geographic
theatres where the enemy is perceived to be at a disadvantage, so that his superiority in the original theatre of conflict may be offset. This strategy had considerable appeal to the Reagan administration during the early phase of its first term. Upon assuming office, the administration reaffirmed the Carter Doctrine and set out to enhance the conventional warfighting potential of the RDF beyond that envisaged by its predecessor. At the same time, it also believed that the local and conventional asymmetry between American and Soviet force projection capabilities in the Gulf could not be remedied in the near future. Until then, the DOD noted:

Soviet aggression against some of our vital interests in distant regions of the world might overwhelm some of our forces. Accordingly, we have to be prepared to launch counter-offensives in other regions and to exploit the aggressor's weaknesses, wherever we might find them. That is to say, we must be prepared for waging a conventional war that may extend to many parts of the globe, if persistent local aggression by superior forces can not be turned around.125

This strategy was codified in the classified five-year Consolidated Defence Guidance issued by the Secretary of Defence in mid-1981.126 The most enthusiastic champions of the war-widening strategy were the "maritime strategists" both inside the administration and outside. To them, the horizontal escalation concept seemed an attractive rationale for validating the requirement of a 600-Ship Navy and thereby regaining America's "lost" maritime superiority. The US Navy, not surprisingly, lent strong support to horizontal escalation. As Navy Chief Admiral James D. Watkins argued in his Fiscal Year 1985 Posture statement:

Maritime superiority ... permits us, if we choose, to take the conflict to a geographic area where the enemy does not want to fight. Our ability to seize the initiative and force diversion of Soviet resources helps to prevent them from calculating a sufficiently favorable "correlation of forces" to launch aggression.127
In operationalizing a strategy for war widening, one of the key requirements is to select a number of appropriate horizontal targets. Although no specific listing of potential targets was officially provided, a general criteria of selection was offered by Under Secretary of Defence Fred Ikle:

Our counter offensives should be directed at places where we can affect the outcome of the war. If it is to offset the enemy's attack, the counter-offensive should be launched against territory or assets that are of an importance to him comparable to the ones he is attacking.128 (emphasis added)

Accordingly, several potential horizontal targets were identified in press accounts reporting official thinking. One category of targets included Soviet "surrogates" - Cuba, Libya, Vietnam. Another option called for targeting Soviet personnel abroad or even Soviet territory - such as the Soviet "brigade" in Cuba or the Soviet Asian land mass.129 Also, some hardline "maritime strategists" advocated hitting Soviet naval targets. Before joining the Reagan administration as an Assistant Secretary of Defence, Francis West had called for "fashioning an offensive maritime strategy to destroy Soviet naval assets"130 if they attacked the Persian Gulf. Navy Secretary John Lehman was more rhetorical: the goal of US Navy, he advocated, would be "to put the Soviet fleet on the bottom if they attempt to interdict our lifelines, and nothing less".131

But it was not long before the limitations of horizontal escalation, in terms of both feasibility and risk, came to be appreciated. One major obstacle to implementing the strategy was the cost. The American force structure and equipment inventory was already stretched thinly and was clearly inadequate to support a war-widening strategy. The cost of building up the additional force
structure seemed prohibitive. The former Under Secretary of Defence, Robert Komer, cited secret Pentagon studies to the effect that putting up a force structure to support horizontal escalation strategies would require investments up to $750 billion.\textsuperscript{132} Cost considerations were a major factor in the administration's subsequent coolness toward the concept. Apart from approving the 600-ship Navy and the expansion of active and reserve land-based tactical air from 36 to 44 wing equivalents plus some additions to support forces, the Reagan administration shied away from committing itself to any major expansion of the US force structure.\textsuperscript{133}

In view of the non-affordability of horizontal escalation at its required force levels, critics could argue that whatever additional resources could be raised to strengthen US military capability were better concentrated on theatre defence. A war-widening strategy within the current or planned force levels would involve a serious diversion of the already scarce resources that had been committed to the Gulf. The consequent weakening of the US ability to defend the Gulf with conventional assets would increase the pressure toward vertical escalation, thereby eroding the very rationale for choosing horizontal escalation as a preferrable alternative to nuclear confrontation.

Furthermore, by relying on a horizontal escalation strategy, the US would seem to be risking too much without the prospect of any meaningful gain. The problem lay in choosing the right horizontal target. In selecting a target, the US would need to ensure, on the one hand, that it had sufficient strategic value for the Soviets so that if threatened, the Soviets would be induced to make concessions. Or, at the least, by punishing or destroying such targets, the US
could be compensated to an extent comparable to the loss of Gulf oil. On the other hand, the target would not have to be important enough to the Soviets that its destruction invited Soviet nuclear retaliation. Among the suggested horizontal targets, it is difficult to find one which could fully meet either criteria. None of the Soviet surrogates - Cuba, Libya or Vietnam - could be expected to enjoy greater importance in Moscow's eyes than Persian Gulf oil; and there is little reason to believe that Moscow would not "trade off" Cuba for the control of the West's lifeline. On the other hand, actions such as putting "the Soviet fleet to the bottom" or hitting Soviet territory could be exceedingly dangerous and counterproductive. Such actions might well drive the Soviets into a comparable response of using nuclear weapons to destroy the US fleet. In other words, horizontal escalation would be no guarantee that the risk of nuclear warfare could be entirely avoided.

Furthermore, a war-widening strategy could be a politically divisive factor within the Western alliance, especially if horizontal operations were to be conducted from (or close to) allied territory. Some have suggested that in the event of a Soviet attack on the Gulf, the US should open up a second front in Eastern Europe or on NATO's northern flank. But, as Albert Wohlstetter noted: "it seems improbable that the Norwegians would welcome opening up a front in the northern flank, in particular since it may seem to have no direct connection with aggression in the Gulf". Despite their greater dependence on Gulf oil, Western European allies and Japan would be unlikely to support ideas that would draw them closer to a war in their own regions. Similarly, a US decision to attack horizontal targets in the Third World is bound to evoke protest from the regional
countries proximate to the target. In other words, the political costs of horizontal escalation would also be high.

Finally, the US is not the only side with an ability to spread a conflict to other theatres. In calculating the gains of horizontal escalation, the advocates may have overstressed Soviet limitations - in terms of doctrinal inflexibility, relative lack of experience and limitations on the instruments of long-range power projection - to reciprocate. The Soviets are making rapid strides in developing efficient and powerful long-range capabilities. As John Collins notes, the Soviets, "whose large forces afford more flexibility, could sponsor several widely-separated hot spots at the same time, with assistance from allies and friends".136 The Soviets enjoy greater proximity to both Europe and the Gulf, as well as the advantages of interior lines of communications. Counter horizontal escalation by the Soviets would increase the risk of a global superpower confrontation, which would be unlikely to remain confined to the conventional level for long.

To sum up the arguments presented in this chapter, US planning to protect its Persian Gulf interests against the worst-case threat contains no easy options, but it is equally important to recognize that the RDF's current capabilities to engage, harass, blunt and thereby discourage, if not defeat, the threat is quite impressive and credible. A strategy relying on preemption alone would offer no assurance of success, while a strategy relying mainly on escalation would offer either no assurance of success or success at an acceptable cost to the US. Although, as the DOD has pointed out, the US strategy to counter the worst-case threat may incorporate all three options or stages, i.e. preemption, defence and escalation, the risks
attributable to human decisions would decrease in proportion to the degree of emphasis put on a defensive, warfighting capability. In the final analysis, the extra billions needed to boost the RDF's conventional teeth may be a good price to pay to minimise the likelihood either of a costly failure (through mere conventional preemption) or a "victory" too costly and ghastly to cause for celebration (through mere escalation).
NOTES


9. ibid., p.67.


15. ibid. The Reagan administration's declaratory policy on vertical escalation is similar to that of its predecessor. It relies on a conventional warfighting capability as the centrepiece of the strategy of deterrence, while not ruling out vertical escalation in the course of a conventional conflict. But unlike Carter, the Reagan administration at the beginning of the first term explicitly embraced horizontal escalation in order to strengthen the credibility of its conventional deterrent. See the statement by Francis J. West, Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs, Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1983. Part 6, p.3723.

16. Francis J. West, "Limited U.S.-Soviet Conflict and the RDF", Marine Corps Gazette (August 1980): 41. This article, of course, was written before West became an Assistant Secretary of Defence under the Reagan administration.


19. Long before the RDF was set up, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had told New Yorker Magazine reporter Elizabeth Drew: "We ought to contemplate getting there first, ... This is going to put a premium on preemption because who gets there first has command of the situation." Cited in Jan Austin and Banning Garrett, "Quick Strike", Inquiry (July 24, 1978): 15. He reaffirmed the need for preemption in December 1979. Patrick Oster, "Brzezinski Poses Prospect of Using Preemptive Force", Washington Post (December 20, 1979): A22.

20. Department of State Bulletin (May 1980): 65. At a Pentagon press briefing in June 1980, General P.X. Kelly was reported by the New York Times correspondent to have "asserted ... that he was ready to move troops into the Middle East or the Persian Gulf should he be ordered to launch a pre-emptive strike to seize threatened ground before the Russians got there". Richard Hallock, "Commander Says New U.S. Force Is Ready to Act", New York Times (June 19, 1980): A15.


38. For a most persuasive discussion of these aspects see Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities", op. cit., pp.139-140; see also Senate. Committee on Appropriations. Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1984. Part 6, pp.3140-3141.


41. For an excellent discussion, see Richard K. Betts, "Analysis, War and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable", World Politics (October 1978): 61-89.


56. The problems of defending oilfields with military force is discussed in Congressional Research Service, Petroleum Imports from the Persian Gulf, op. cit.; "The Oil Crisis: Is there a Military Option?", The Defense Monitor (December 1979); Bard O'Neill, Petroleum and Security: The Limitations of Military
Power in the Persian Gulf, National Defence University Research
Directorate Monograph 77-4, (Washington, D.C., October 1977);
"Rapid Deployment Forces: Reassurance or Threat to American
Security Interests?", Report of the Staff of Members of Congress
for Peace Through Law, Congressional Record (June 27, 1980):
S8704.

57. Department of Defence, Annual Report to Congress, FY1982, p.82.

58. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Department of Defense
Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1982, Part 4,
p.1758.

59. The seventh one is a "cadre division" and as such would take a
few weeks to mobilize and train. Department of Defence, Soviet

60. For discussions of the capabilities of the Soviet transport
aircraft, see Peter Borgart, "The Soviet Transport Air Force:
Aircraft and Capabilities", International Defense Review (June
pp.274-276; William Schneider, "Soviet Military Airlift: Key to

61. McNaugher, Balancing Soviet Power (manuscript), op. cit., p.20;
Congressional Research Service, Rapid Deployment Force (1985),
Although rapid changes in the composition and capabilities of the
VTA make estimates unstable, for the purpose of this chapter, it
is enough to note that the Soviets currently do have the
capability to lift at least two of their divisions to the Iranian
theatre.

62. Allard, "A Clear and Present Danger", op.cit., p.142; see also
William P. Baxter, "BMD-1: A Formidable Fighting Machine", Army

63. Marshal Sokolovskiy, cited in Allard, "A Clear and Present
Danger", op. cit., p.145.

64. Dennis Ross, "Considering Soviet Threats to the Persian Gulf",
International Security (Fall 1981): p.175. See also Department
and William P. Baxter, "The Soviet Threat from the Sky", Army


66. For a discussion of these points, see Thomas L. McNaugher, Arms
and Oil: US Military Strategy and the Persian Gulf (Washington,
Soviet Threats", op. cit., p.175; Keith A. Dunn, "Constraints on
the U.S.S.R. in Southwest Asia: A Military Analysis", Orbis (Fall

68. Barry R. Posen and Stephen W. Van Evera, "Overarming and Underwhelming", Foreign Policy (Fall 1980): 104. The Soviets do not envisage their airborne forces to be independently sustained. In fact, Western analysts voicing concern about a Soviet airlifted seizure of the oilfields (one independent of a ground offensive), often forget this aspect of the Soviet doctrine. Soviet airborne divisions enjoy a far inferior support to combat ratio than their US counterparts. The combination of support plus combat personnel in the 18th Airborne Corps - comprising the two RDF divisions, the 82nd Airborne and the 101st Air Assault - exceed that of all the 7 active Soviet airborne divisions added together by a good margin. Thus, unlike their American counterparts, the Soviet airborne divisions are not structured for sustained operations independent of ground forces. Dov S. Zakheim, "Maritime Presence, Projection and the Constraints on Parity", in Proceedings of the Fifth National Security Affairs Conference (Washington, D.C.: National Defence University, 1978): 110.


74. See for example, Raphael Iungerich, "How Real Is the Soviet Threat to the Gulf Region?", Armed Forces Journal International (October 1984): 110.


77. ibid., pp.2979,2984-2987.

78. ibid., pp.2987-2988.


85. The "defence-in-depth" concept comprises several layers of interception of enemy air attacks. First, each carrier has 4 E-2 Hawkeye early warning aircraft which can provide "around-the-clock and around-the-compass early warning of hostile air attacks and control defending fighters". The primary interceptor for the outer layer defence is the F-14 Tomcat whose integral long-range weapons/radar capability (Phoenix missile system) enables it to "successfully engage Soviet Backfire bombers at ranges which preclude the launch of missiles against our battle groups". The middle layer defence is provided by other fighter/interceptors as well as by the anti-air assets (3-D radars and Standard missiles) of the cruisers and destroyers of the carrier battle group. Finally, the innermost defensive layer - for "last-ditch" defence - has two aspects. One is "hard-kill" designed to destroy incoming anti-ship missiles in flight. This is provided by close-in defence missiles such as the Sea Sparrow and the Phalanx - which can "fire several thousand rounds per minute and tracks both the incoming missile and rounds in flight to provide a very high probability of kill". The second aspect is "soft kill"
which seeks to deceive the missile so that it misses the target. For "soft-kill", all battle group ships have been fitted with the AN/SLQ-32 electronic countermeasures (ECM) system and chaff/decoy launchers. The SLQ-32 can detect hostile missile guidance radars, which it can then jam and deceive by controlling the launch of decoys and chaffs.


98. For a detailed discussion of the operational environment in Iran, and its likely effects on Soviet invasion forces, see McNaugher, Balancing Soviet Power (manuscript), op. cit., pp.33-51.


122. ibid. See also Michael Klare, "Intervention and the Nuclear Firebreak in the Middle East", MERIP Reports (Nov.-Dec. 1984): 5-6.


135. Wohlstetter, "Meeting the Threat", op. cit., p.163.

CONCLUSION

"During the past year, much of the world has rediscovered a principle that some had mistakenly thought obsolete in the 60s and 70s: military strength counts. We still live in a world in which the use and potential use of decisive military power can influence policies, alignments and actions."


Although the strategic importance of the Persian Gulf region is said to have "declined" in the wake of the recent dramatic fall in oil prices caused by an abundance of supply, the region continues to receive considerable attention from the US. Several considerations account for this. Firstly, there is no reason to believe that the current oil "glut" is permanent. In fact, low oil prices are expected to revive the sellers' market by making a good deal of non-OPEC oil production economically unviable and discouraging exploration. This would increase the oil-importing countries' dependence on the Gulf region, which by far holds the largest share of the world's (and the OPEC's) extra production capacity. Secondly, although the dire predictions of instability in the Gulf raised in the wake of the Iranian revolution have not materialised, the US continues to view the region as a potential flashpoint. The confrontation between Iran and Iraq still threatens the security of the conservative Gulf states. In addition, American strategic planning remains alert to the possibility of domestic strife in the Gulf monarchies caused by falling oil revenues and the growing political expectations of the middle class. As for the Soviet threat, while Moscow's failure to achieve decisive
military victory over the Afghan rebels has lessened the initial speculation concerning possible use of Afghanistan as a spring board for eventual Soviet domination of the Gulf, the Pentagon still expects that in the event of an East-West confrontation, the Soviet Union is likely to "conduct offensive operations from the USSR and Afghanistan through Iran to the Persian Gulf in order to obtain a stronghold on the West's oil supplies". These concerns mean that for the foreseeable future, the US can be expected to retain its interest in and capability for military intervention in the Gulf region.

The present study has been concerned with analysing the evolution of this capability, its various components and its likely uses. The following conclusions can be drawn from it.

The creation of the Rapid Deployment Force marked a major turning point in US global strategic posture in general and its Persian Gulf policy in particular. In the wake of the crises in Iran and Afghanistan, the RDF became a major indicator of America's transition, both in a political and strategic sense, from the so-called "Vietnam syndrome" to a mood of geopolitical assertiveness. This transition was reflected, first and foremost, in the domestic arena where the critics of the Vietnam war began loosing, for the first time in over a decade, the debate on the use of force in support of US foreign policy goals. The Carter administration's early efforts to put post-Vietnam US foreign policy on a new "moral" footing was abandoned in the face of rising domestic disapproval. In the foreign policy field the transition was evident in superpower relations, where it led to the erosion and eventual demise of detente and ushered in renewed tensions. In terms of America's dealings with the Third world, it produced a greater appreciation of the utility of military force as a policy instrument.
That this remarkable transition in American foreign policy was catalysed by events in and around the Persian Gulf was hardly surprising or odd. During the 1970s, no other region outside of America's traditional alliances came to be regarded as so vital to the security of the US and its allies. No other region displayed so many conditions adversely affecting the pursuit of Western interests. American and Western interests in the Gulf: access to oil, containment of Soviet influence, and the preservation of conservative regimes, had evolved steadily since the end of the Second World War. But the importance of these interests magnified immensely during the 1970s as the result of a number of factors - the increasingly critical dependence of the Western consumer nations on Persian Gulf oil as the result of rising consumption and shrinking domestic reserves, the British withdrawal from east of Suez and the perceived threats to American regional interests. The latter was seen in terms of a possible collapse of the conservative order in the Gulf from the pressures of rapid socio-economic change, increased competition from the Soviet Union backed by its growing naval capability and, above all, the new solidarity among the producer nations determined to wrest control of their oil resources from Western multinationals and subject its availability to the satisfaction of their economic (price) and political demands.

Against this backdrop, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War had three major implications for the US policy toward the Persian Gulf. Firstly, it firmly established the linkage between American access to Persian Gulf oil and its policy toward in the Middle East conflict. The demonstrated willingness and ability of the Arab Gulf states to use their oil as a political weapon ended the hitherto successful effort
by American policy-makers to keep the two issues separate and forced them to take greater cognizance of Saudi Arabia's sensitivity toward the one-sided US support for Israel. Secondly, the October War and the accompanying oil price hike led to a considerable strengthening of America's economic stakes in the Gulf region. This was the outcome of the emergence of the Gulf states as significant financial powers with huge reserves of surplus revenues which could be recycled to the West either in the form of import of goods and services or investments in Western financial markets.

Both these factors were instrumental in giving the Persian Gulf an exclusive identity as a focal point of US strategic concerns. But the war and the oil price hike had a third major implication. They exposed the limitations of the "twin-pillar" approach which had characterized US policy in the region since the British withdrawal. This policy failed to uphold US interests; while Saudi Arabia, the secondary pillar, was pivotal in organizing the political threat to American access to oil, the primary pillar, Iran, showed none of the restraints expected of it in taking advantage of the embargo and pushing aggressively for much higher oil prices.

If the oil embargo underscored threats to US access to Persian Gulf oil posed by deliberate action by the producers, the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan highlighted, in the American mind, the threats of disruption which might be caused by domestic instability or foreign invasion. But the impact of the twin crises on American strategic perceptions touched more than the question of a cut off in the flow of oil. The American view of the events of 1979 in Southwest Asia was marked by an unprecedented degree of alarm and pessimism. The fall of the Shah was seen as a major
setback to US regional, indeed, global position, undermining basic economic and strategic interests of the Western nations. Besides, the Iranian revolution aggravated the Carter administration's fears about the possible collapse of pro-Western regimes in the so-called "arc of crisis". The "threats" posed by the Afghanistan crisis aroused similar but even more wild speculation concerning the imminence of a Soviet takeover of much of the Gulf and adjacent region. The invasion reinforced perceptions of an alleged wideranging Soviet "geopolitical offensive" aimed at eventual domination of the whole region and control of Western access to raw materials.

The US response to the oil embargo and the Iranian and Afghan crises was marked by increasing emphasis on military force as the instrument for protecting Western interests. The Nixon Doctrine, which had been applied to the Gulf in a situation where alternative options were severely restricted by the Vietnam debacle, survived as the basic framework of US policy in the aftermath of the "first oil crisis" (embargo and the price hike). But at the same time it became clear that the US was not averse to changes in its strategy as it concerned the use of military force in pursuit of its regional goals. The Ford administration's threats to retaliate against embargos with military action represented the first important move away from the policy of relying on local surrogates. But continued adherance to the Nixon Doctrine became further complicated as a result of the growing resentment within the US policy-making community against the Shah's "hawkish" stand on oil prices and the Congressional and media disapproval of the official policy of liberal compliance with the Shah's persistent quest for American weapons. These factors led to the undermining of the "twin-pillar" approach even before the Iranian revolution.
In this sense, the Nixon Doctrine can be more properly described as a "stop-gap" arrangement forced on the US by the Vietnam predicament. Of course, American policy-makers might not have perceived it as such at the time of the British withdrawal. But the fact remains that the "Vietnam syndrome" did not prevent the Nixon administration from carrying out a major build-up of US naval power in the Indian Ocean and the Congress from eventually approving, after some resistance within the Senate, the Diego Garcia military base. The "Vietnam syndrome" did not discourage the Ford administration's statements concerning the seizure of Gulf oilfields; nor did it dissuade the allegedly moralistic Carter administration from developing the blueprint for a global intervention force with the Persian Gulf as a specially-identified focus. The "Vietnam syndrome" did show up in preventing a speedy translation of this blueprint into reality, but it is clear that it applied much less to the Persian Gulf than to Southeast Asia, where, unlike the Gulf, the US had no genuine "vital" interests.

But it was the Iranian revolution which, along with the hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, completed the evolution of US strategic policy in the Gulf from one of reliance on the British to reliance on local surrogates to reliance, at least in a declaratory sense, on its own military interventionist capability. The RDF also represents the most complete realization of the concepts and capabilities envisaged over the past decades within US military circles to upgrade America's long-range power projection capability. It bears especially close resemblance to Robert McNamara's "rapid deployment initiative" of the 1960s. It is based on the same idea of a "central reserve" of combat units, including ground forces, ready
for quick projection into global crisis spots. It similarly stresses the critical importance of the mobility triad - airlift, sealift and prepositioning. The US Strike Command is a clear forerunner of the US Central Command, although the latter's geographic area of responsibility is smaller and force structure broader (including elements from all services while the Strike Command was an Army-Air Force joint enterprise). In another respect, while the McNamara rapid deployment initiative was an integral part of the Kennedy administration's efforts to replace the "massive retaliation" strategy with "flexible response" and therefore owed its inspiration to the strategic situation in the European theatre, the current RDF is geared from the outset exclusively to "non-NATO" contingencies (although, as noted, this distinction must take cognizance of the fact that much of the CENTCOM force structure retains a dual, NATO-reinforcement, role).

Since its formation, the RDF has made quick and substantial progress in removing the widespread initial impression which held it as a "paper tiger" and equated the Carter Doctrine with "bluff". But problems and deficiencies have persisted in several critical areas and these generally undermine the credibility of US strategy in the Persian Gulf.

One set of problems concerns the organizational aspect and the human and technological resources that affect military capability. These problems are evident in the readiness problems of the RDF's constituent units, their dual commitment and their apparent weaknesses against the armour heavy, firepower intensive opponent forces in the Gulf region. While some progress has been made in improving the capabilities of the RDF's force structure, there has been no major initiative to raise additional forces to meet the demands of a
simultaneous conflict in the Gulf and elsewhere beyond marginal "compensatory measures" undertaken by the NATO allies. Similarly, the RDF has made good progress in enhancing up its logistics support, especially in the areas of water supply and combat medical facilities, but the intelligence and communications support systems seem inadequate for handling a major contingency. In contrast, valuable experience of the Southwest Asian operational environment has been gained through regular theatre field - training exercises, complemented by additional desert warfare experience accumulated from large-scale manoeuvres in the continental United States.

The problems with the RDF command organization, which aroused much controversy during the first year of the force's existence, have been resolved with the replacement of the RDJTF with the US Central Command. The unified command with a specific geographic responsibility has been welcomed by critics who had been concerned about the complexity and the apparent tentativeness of the RDJTF and the intense inter-service rivalry it aroused. On the other hand, CENTCOM suffers from the same problem of lack of day-to-day control over its assigned forces as its predecessor. Also, it has disappointed those critics who wanted the Marine Corps, not a four-service joint command, to assume the primary responsibility for rapid deployment missions.

Despite considerable investment over the past five years, the RDF continues to suffer from deficiencies in strategic mobility, especially in the critical area of airlift. While the maritime prepositioning program has proceeded smoothly and the strategic sealift resources are expected to be short of the requirement by only a small margin, airlift is still far short of the requirement set by
the Congressionally-Mandated Mobility Study (CMMS). Efforts to enhance airlift capability have been undermined by the delay over the procurement of a new transport aircraft (C-17).

But overall, the evolution of the RDF has brought about a dramatic improvement in US global power projection capabilities. It should be stressed that much of the force structure improvements, doctrinal modifications, and the mobility enhancements that had followed its creation could prove as useful for an intervention in the Gulf as elsewhere in the globe. While some of the programs to modernize US intervention capability would have been undertaken irrespective of the Southwest Asian crises and the RDF, the latter have proved to be key factors in imparting a sense of urgency and overcoming bureaucratic inertia and Congressional resistance. In this respect the RDF has not only marked the end of the "Vietnam syndrome" as a foreign policy attitude, but has also created a substantive basis for the alternative posture by reversing the decline of US military intervention capabilities during the 1970s.

A second set of factors affecting the RDF's capability relates to the contribution of America's Southwest Asian and NATO allies. The former's attitude is an especially critical element in US strategy. In the light of setbacks in Iran and Afghanistan, American policymakers hoped that a strong US response, backed by a capability to protect its interests and those of its allies from varied threats, would win back the confidence of the regional allies and induce their positive response and cooperation. Such cooperation, in turn, would be a necessary condition for the effectiveness of the RDF, which depends as much as anything else on access to regional military bases and which otherwise would be politically destabilizing. The
recognition of this mutually-reinforcing linkage between regional cooperation and the RDF was the central basis behind ideas such as "regional cooperative security framework" (Carter-Brzezinski) or "strategic consensus" (Reagan-Haig).

But the response of the regional states, especially Saudi Arabia and the fellow the Gulf monarchies, to the RDF has been ambivalent and has not led to the degree of cooperation expected by US policy-makers. The US has scored important success in securing access to military bases in countries such as Oman, Egypt, Kenya and Saudi Arabia, but in most cases the agreements have, paradoxically, obviated the problems and complications rather than the element of cooperation in the overall strategic relationship. The US has not been able to secure a "base" in any of these countries, although in the event of the RDF being "invited" by the local regimes, this distinction between "bases" and "facilities access" could prove meaningless. With the exception of Diego Garcia, the US cannot hope for assured, timely and exclusive use of regional military installations, despite having spent millions in improving them. CENTCOM strategists have to contend with this uncomfortable fact.

The pro-Western states in Southwest Asia have shown little inclination to accept anything more than a "over-the-horizon" US presence. This, in turn, diminishes the deterrent value of the RDF and creates major problems for its overall intervention capability, including the timeliness of a response (due to delayed "invitation") and its adequacy against major threats (due to uncertain or restricted access).
The failure of US efforts to build a "regional cooperative security framework" or "strategic consensus" can be attributed to several factors. In a general sense, it is linked to the differing strategic priorities of the US and the regional countries. While the US, for reasons relating to political expediency and the broader strategic concerns of a superpower, has put most emphasis on the Soviet threat, the regional states have been preoccupied with more limited and local threats; for example, Somalia against Ethiopia, Jordan against Syria, Pakistan against India and Oman against South Yemen. Such differences create a gap in the strategic understanding between the US and its regional friends. They have also made the US wary of a closer security relationship with some of the friendly regional states for fear of becoming unnecessarily involved in local disputes. Furthermore, antagonisms between pro-Western regional countries have frustrated US efforts to bring them together under a security umbrella dominated by its interventionist capability; this being most strikingly evident in case of the failed attempt to cement a "strategic consensus" between Israel and the Arab friends.

The US has faced major obstacles in winning meaningful support from the conservative Gulf states for its interventionist strategy. This is largely due to the latter's desire to limit superpower rivalry in the region, their suspicion that the RDF could be used as well to seize their oilfields as to protect them from enemies and, most importantly, their disapproval of the US policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Gulf states have deplored the American failure to supplement its military strategy with a diplomatic initiative aimed at a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem recognizing the Palestinian right to self-determination. It is clear that in the
years following the RDF, there has been a marked deterioration in US efforts to seek such a solution. This is evident from the Carter administration's failure to live up to the expectations initially raised at Camp David, Haig's attempts to sidestep the Palestinian issue and focus on other regional security problems, and the Reagan administration's subsequent failure to push strongly for Israeli concessions to its own peace plan. Such failures might reflect the general intractability of the issues complicating a solution. But they have given the impression that emphasis on a military instrument has undermined the role of diplomacy in solving the region's major security problems. There can be no question that the Arab-Israeli conflict has been and will continue to be a major threat to the security of the Gulf states and a key factor in their unwillingness and inability (in terms of the obvious risks to their stability) to go for closer strategic cooperation with the US.

The problems impeding the involvement of NATO allies in US Persian Gulf strategy are different in nature. The West European countries and Japan have strong motives for supporting a US security framework which seeks to ensure the continued flow of Persian Gulf oil. The US expects their support in four major areas. The first is in undertaking "compensatory measures" in the European theatre to offset the impact of a possible diversion of US forces and equipment to the Gulf. The second concerns the role of France and Britain in providing "third party" contingency assistance to conservative Gulf states facing a domestic or intra-regional crisis. The third involves contributory deployments, especially naval, by the same two allies in support of US military operations against a major threat - especially the "worst-case" threat. The forth concerns the provision of access
and over-flight rights by allied countries to US forces deploying to the Gulf from the continental United States and Europe.

In responding to the US strategy, the Western allies have generally agreed that a capability for military intervention should be a part of any Western strategy to protect access to Gulf oil. But translating this approval to concrete supportive measures has not been easy. The allies have been unable, because of financial and political pressures, to devote additional resources to offset the impact of a possible wartime diversion of US resources from Europe to Gulf. The compensatory measures adopted so far appear to be inadequate, especially in the key areas of manpower (both combat and support) and strategic mobility. In so far as direct force contribution by allies is concerned, a British interventionist role in the Gulf could not be more than symbolic (although this does not diminish its political value for the US) while the French are likely to resist the kind of coordination between their forces and those of the US which would maximize the overall effectiveness of a Western military effort. The most important factor affecting allied response could be political in nature. So far the European allies have expressed doubts regarding the US strategy which emphasizes the military instrument and focuses on the Soviet threat. They have often disagreed with the one-sided US support for Israel, not perhaps so much out of any moral concern for the misery of the Palestinians, but out of a belief that a more balanced position in the Arab-Israeli conflict might lessen the political threats to the flow of oil and enhance their energy security. Such attitudes would be an important determinant of whether France or even Britain would respond positively to US requests for a direct force contribution and whether these and other European allies
would grant access and overflight rights to the RDF in a contingency. (The refusal of France and Spain to permit overflights by US aircraft for the American raid on Libya in 1986 is a case in point.) The political considerations would be especially important if the threat in the Gulf happens to be domestic or intra-regional in nature.

It is impossible to say with any measure of certainty to what degree and in what way the successes or failures of the measures undertaken to build-up the RDF would affect the US capability to respond to a Persian Gulf crisis with the military means. Such estimations have to be contingency-specific and in the Gulf contingencies to which the US may wish to respond may be extremely varied and unpredictable. Equally unpredictable is whether, and under what conditions, an American President would actually decide to use force; such decisions, again, have to be made on a case-by-case basis. Several points worthy of highlighting did, however, emerge in the course of discussion in chapters seven and eight.

1. Since the 1973-74 oil crisis, the US has made policy statements indicating military intervention in four different situations: (a) an oil embargo with severe economic consequences for the West (Ford administration); (b) a Soviet threat (Carter Doctrine); (c) a rebellion against the political status quo in Saudi Arabia ("Reagan Corollary"); and (d) an Iranian threat to the oil lanes and the conservative states of the Persian Gulf (both Carter and Reagan administrations).

2. A forcible intervention leading to control of the oilfields has been indicated with respect to two contingencies; (a) a debilitating embargo, and (b) an all-out Soviet invasion of Iran
not leading to an "invitation" from the Iranian regime, in which case the US, as leaked Pentagon documents have revealed, may consider a seizure of Iranian oilfields on the Persian Gulf coast.

3. Political factors are more decisive considerations in determining the rationale and outcome of an RDF intervention in non-Soviet contingencies while military factors, in terms of the superpower force projection balance, are more decisive in determining the decision to use force against a Soviet threat. This balance would, of course, decide the outcome of such an engagement.

4. The RDF is unlikely to prove an effective instrument in most non-Soviet contingencies because the political repercussions resulting from its use would be destabilizing. The Gulf states are also unlikely to seek its help in such situations. Recognition of this fact is evident from the nature of US strategy for such contingencies, especially the pursuit of options such as "third party assistance" and efforts to bolster the self-defence capability of the GCC states. Both options have been backed by an intensified program of arms sales to the GCC states and to countries such as Jordan, Egypt and Pakistan. The emphasis on arms sales among US policy instruments has survived the controversy in the wake of the Shah's downfall, which highlighted the adverse effects of the Nixon administration's decision facilitating unrestrained weapon sales to Iran. But it has faced major problems due to the continuing opposition of the Jewish lobby to US security assistance to the Arab states.

5. While there are inherent and major contradictions of purpose between the GCC collective security initiative and the RDF, the reality, in terms of the inability of the GCC states to do without
US military hardware, training and technology and, in a major contingency, direct help, creates at least some room for complementarity between the two. The US could find the GCC security cooperation working toward a de facto "division-of-labour" in which the GCC states could take care of minor politico-military domestic threats while the US would be called upon to intervene in a major contingency.

6. The RDF's capabilities vis-a-vis an all-out Soviet threat is difficult to assess in view of the many uncertain variables of such an encounter. Declaratory US policy on this issue indicates reliance on a mix of preemption and conventional defence, and stresses the possibility of nuclear and geographical escalation of the conflict. It is quite likely that any US response would involve elements of all three stages. But mere preemption entails the greatest probability of failure to achieve the objective while preemption backed by quick escalation (tripwire) involves the highest degree of risk. Conventional defence provides some prospect for success in containing the threat before it achieves the key objective of reaching the oilfields. But while the RDF's capability to face up to the Soviets in the Iranian mountains and harass them for an appreciable period of time should not be underestimated; the force currently does not appear to have a capability to defeat an all-out Soviet attack which presses on even after taking heavy losses.

But the RDF's inability to counter the worst-case threat should pose less of a problem to the US than its irrelevance in so far as the more likely domestic and intra-regional threats are concerned. In
terms of probability, the focus on the Soviet threat in the current US strategy is clearly unrealistic. Contrary to the claims of the Pentagon, such focus would not automatically lead to a capability to deal with the so-called "lesser" contingencies, precisely because the lesser contingencies generally originate from deep-rooted socio-political factors and are in most cases not amenable to military solutions imposed by an outside power.

But non-Soviet threats do affect US interests and a US strategy must necessarily provide the means to counter them. In this respect, the ideal US response would appear to lie not in the RDF but in promoting effective alternatives to it. The most politically sound and cost-effective answer could be in actively encouraging security cooperation among the GCC states which strengthens their self-defence capability. This would be supplemented by US encouragement of the Jordanian Logistics Plan and greater coordination between US and British and French interventionist forces.

Finally, the US strategy could benefit significantly from a sincere diplomatic effort to achieve a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. A military instrument like the RDF, while adding to US flexibility in repsondsing to crises affecting its interests in the Gulf, cannot by itself be adequate. The US would need to supplement it by encouraging politico-diplomatic solutions to the region's major security problems, of which the Arab-Israeli conflict remains one of the most important. Supporters of Israel might argue otherwise, they could point to the recent decline of the oil weapon and the disarray within the PLO and suggest that the Palestinian problem need not be a barrier to US efforts to develop a sound strategic policy in the Gulf. But such views would appear to be misleading. The Palestinian problem
continues to encourage radicalism within the region, it remains an important source of Soviet regional influence and leverage. It undermines US regional strategy in many ways - by discouraging direct strategic cooperation between the US and the Gulf regimes, and by restricting US access to regional military facilities. It is a divisive factor within the Western alliance, which in turn could lead to denial of contingency access and overflight rights to the RDF and prompt refusals from France and Britain to substitute for or reinforce the RDF in a crisis in the Gulf. The Palestinian problem frustrates US efforts to maintain leverage with the GCC and Jordanian military establishments through arms sales. In short, the Palestinian problem not only affects US options for direct intervention, it also frustrates the alternative approaches in the form of US-backed GCC self-defence capability and third party assistance. Sincere US efforts to find a solution to this problem, impossible, it would appear, without including the fulfilment of the Palestinian quest for self-determination, would therefore need to be a major priority for US policy in the region.

NOTE

APPENDIX I

Ground Mobility, Firepower and Anti-Armour Enhancements

These programs can be divided into two categories. One is the upgrading of the guns and missile systems operated by the infantry units and the attack helicopters. Examples include: the TOW Improvement Program which would extend the missile's range to 3,750 meters, a program to replace the DRAGON with the Infantry Man-Portable Anti-Tank Assault Weapons System, a replacement for the Light Anti Tank Weapon (LAW), replacement of the Cobra attack helicopter with the new generation Apache, an increase in the number of DRAGON operated by a Marine battalion from 24 to 32 weapons, and the introduction of Laser Maverick and Hellfire precision-guided-munitions (PGM) with the fixed-wing aircraft and attack helicopter fleets respectively.

Second and more importantly, both the Marine Corps and the Army are going ahead with programs to field Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV) and Mobile Protected Gun Systems (MPGS) to increase the mobility, firepower and armour-protection of their infantry forces. The LAV program is geared to fulfill four general requirements: (1) provide a broad base of weapons systems to enhance ... fire support (for infantry forces); (2) be transportable by the CH-53E helicopter; (3) provide the maximum level of protection within the weight constraints; and (4) provide a high degree of mobility and agility on roads and cross-country operations. Initially a joint Army-Marine Corps initiative, the LAV program led to the selection of an off-the-shelf vehicle, the LAV-25; but the Army withdrew from the program in FY1985. The Marines Corps then planned to buy a total of 758 vehicles - to equip a battalion for each of its three active division plus the reserve - in several variants: light assault (APC), assault gun, mortar, anti-tank and command and control, logistics, recovery, and air-defence.

Once operational, the LAV, which mounts a 25mm gun and has both strategic (air/sea) and rapid tactical (helicopter) transportability, will provide the RDF with helicopter transportable manoeuvre elements with a respectable amount of firepower. It is, however, capable only
of destroying enemy bunkers and fortified positions and not tanks; and it cannot protect itself from anything more lethal than small arms and artillery fragments. The Mobile Protected Gun System, on the other hand, is a longer-term joint (as yet) Marine-Army program designed to field a higher-performance cannon with a tank-destroying capability and more survivable armour. Disagreements between the Army and the Marine Corps over design requirements (the Army wants a heavier, tank-killer version while the Marine Corps is prepared to compromise on armour in order to enhance the transportability of the vehicle) has hindered a speedy procurement of this vehicle. But both the services are reported to have settled on a 75mm medium caliber anti-armour automatic cannon (MCAAAC) as the primary armament of the MPGS; and this cannon, if found efficient, may be later fitted into the Marine LAVs.

APPENDIX 2

Water, Medical and Communications Support

2.1 Water support

The DOD's efforts to provide adequate water supply for the RDF began with the designation of the Army as the DOD Executive Agent for land-based water resources for the RDF. The Army received $36 million in the FY1981 supplemental and $61.6 million in the FY1982 Budget and Amendment to provide "water support" to the RDJTF as a combined force, i.e. these sums were outside of what was spent by individual services to provide for their own water equipment requirements. The Army Corps of Engineers then surveyed the Gulf/Middle East region at specific areas to obtain geological information on surface and subsurface water and existing water supply systems, which was then cited in specially-developed maps supplied to the RDJTF. The research efforts recommended the use of Reverse Osmosis Water Processing Units (ROWPU - utilizing plastic membranes to desalinate salt water) as the primary means of providing water to the RDF. Meanwhile a tanker containing about 9 million gallons of fresh water was kept as part of the Near-Term Prepositioned Force in Diego Garcia to cater to the immediate needs of the RDF in a contingency situation. The plans to acquire the ROWPU proceeded in two stages. In the near term, the services purchased 600 gallon per day "tactical" units from the commercial sector. In 1984, the DOD claimed that the services had acquired a combined "capability of manufacturing over 10 million gallons of fresh water daily" by using these units - a capability which would grow to "50 million gallons per day" by FY1989 and remove the need for the prepositioned tanker-provided water in FY1986. The long-term effort called for the procurement of larger-capability ROWPUs which were initially unavailable commercially. In 1984, the CENTCOM reported placing the first operational 150,000 gallon per day reverse osmosis water purification unit on board a LASH barge unit with the NTPF, along with other modern, smaller water purification units.
2.2 Medical support

Medical support to the RDF has been provided in two phases. The first involved increased procurement of field medical/hospital systems organic to the services. In November 1980, the DOD requested $132.3 million in authorization from Congress "to accelerate the procurement of fleet hospitals and medical support equipment, improve Army and Air Force onscene medical readiness, and fund all of the aeromedical staging and tactical aeromedical capabilities required to support the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force". It should be noted that all the four services participating in the RDF share the responsibility for providing medical support to the Force. The Army has designed a "specific force package" of undisclosed medical units, including combat zone hospital beds, medical helicopters, ground ambulances, and specialty detachments to provide dental, veterinary, blood, and surgical care - to support its own forces. The Air Force would play "the dominant role" in the medical evacuation of RDF troops, using its aeromedical staging facilities, field hospitals, and air transportable hospitals and clinics. The Navy-Marine team would employ their medical support capabilities at several levels: the Marine infantry force's organic support - including Company Aid Man, Battalion Aid Station, Medical Company, Hospital Company, and the Navy's Casualty Receiving and Treatment Ships, Navy Hospital Ships and Navy Fleet Hospitals. Finally, strategic airlift would be used to ferry wounded soldiers needing hospital care in the United States.

In FY1983, the services requested a total funding of $208 million to procure the following deployable medical systems:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-bed RDF combat zone hospital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250-bed RDF combat zone hospital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-bed 4th echelon hospital</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250-bed RDF hospital</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250-bed air staging facility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile surgical unit</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd echelon unit</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field hospital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASH hospital</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evacuation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 bed general hospital</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

In addition, the Marine Corps purchased a 1,000-bed Rapidly Deployable Medical Facility, comprising two 400-bed Army field hospitals and one 200-bed combat support hospital, to preposition it aboard a NTPF break-bulk ship near Diego Garcia. In accordance with the NTPF concept, this RDMF was meant to be moved to a land location near the combat zone to support deployed Marine Corps units. Later the RDMF was replaced with four 200-bed hospital companies, similarly prepositioned, "dedicated to treating, holding and returning patients to duty within the theater."

Apart from the field medical systems, the other major DOD initiative to provide medical support to RDF has involved the acquisition of hospital ships. Initially, the Navy planned to purchase and convert an old luxury liner, S.S. United States, for its hospital ship program (TAH). But the ship was found too large for the job, and a review of the program revealed the existence of more
attractive alternatives in the private shipping industry. The Navy established a goal of procuring 2 ships with a total 2000-bed and 24-operating room capacity. After evaluating proposals from the private sector, two San Clemente-class tankers were selected for conversion into such floating hospitals. These ships would "provide full medical support on a worldwide basis to the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force and other U.S. Forces that are engaged in combat operations or are located in areas where hostilities may be imminent". The total cost of the hospital project is estimated to be $560 million, with the first ship to be delivered in late 1986 and the second in mid-1987.


2.3 Communications

To remedy the deficiencies in the RDF communications support the Pentagon took the immediate step of purchasing additional equipment for the JCSE. More than $20 million was allocated for this purpose in the FY1981-1982 funding. In addition, the JCSE personnel strength was increased by 132. In July 1982, the C3I section of the Office of the Secretary of Defence asked the Defence Communications Agency to identify urgently needed communications systems for the RDF. In his fiscal year 1984 report to Congress, the Secretary of Defence
mentioned programs being undertaken to modernize rapidly deployable C³ systems, including ground mobile satellite terminals, tactical voice communications, tactical data distribution, and tactical switched communications. The following year, the DOD revealed plans to spend $240 million over the next five years to procure mobile, deployable C³I equipment for peacetime storage in the United States, ready for rapid deployment to the region in a crisis. But it is unclear whether these efforts would fully meet the communications requirements of the Force, which has already spent its initial years without such support. Three years after the activation of the RDF, General Kingston told Congress that C³ support for his force needed a "great deal of attention. I need to communicate with my forces more quickly, more reliably, and more securely than I can now".

APPENDIX 3

Amphibious Lift Program

LHD-1: A modified and more capable version of the previous amphibious assault ship (LHA), the LHD-1 is a versatile unit. In its primary mission of amphibious assault, it would carry 3 Air Cushioned Landing Crafts (LCAC) and 4 to 6 AV-8B vertical/short take off and landing aircraft. If needed, the LHD-1 can also be quickly converted to a sea control and force projection mission; for which it can carry a minimum of 20 AV-8Bs and 6 SH-60B helicopters. According to the DOD program, 4 LHD-1s will be acquired by FY1989.

LSD-41: The new Landing Ship Dock can carry 4 LCACs and 504 troops. The DOD program envisages 8 LSD-41s to be funded through FY1987, after which a new, improved variant will be procured.

LPD-4: The service life extension program for the Amphibious Transport Docks of the LPD-4 class would keep them in service for another 15 years—beyond their normal 30 year life, and enable them to operate 1 LCAC.

LCAC: The tactical amphibious capability is set to receive a major boost when the new Landing Craft Air Cushioned vehicle replaces the World War II vintage conventional crafts: LCMs and LCVs. With a range of 200 nautical miles and a payload of 60 tons, the fast (more than 40 knots) LCAC would help the Marines to move with their equipment from ships stationed "over-the-horizon" (25 to 50 miles off shore) to the shore. While the LCMs and LCVs could land on only about 17 per cent of the world's shores, the LCAC can negotiate about 70 per cent. The DOD program envisages a total of more than 90 LCACs to support a MAF and a MAB.
APPENDIX 4


(Estimated project costs in million US dollars in parantheses)

A. Major Navy Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY1981 projects (total appropriation** - 108.1):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dredging (13.0); air cargo/passenger terminal (3.1); wharf (19.0); small craft berth (29.8); power plant (7.0); electrical distribution (4.7); potable water (8.1); dining facility (5.6); runway approach lighting (2.9); ocean surveillance (2.9); utilities upgrade (2.0).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY1982 projects (total appropriation - 122.7):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>taxiway¹ (14.3); parking apron¹ (4.9); wharf² (18.7); waterfront transit (2.8); cold storage (2.8); high explosive magazines (3.3); roads and parking (2.5); enlisted housing¹ (19.4); officer housing (13.0); tracked vehicle maintenance shop² (2.0); utilities (7.6); vertical replenishment pad (2.1); airfield utilities (6.0); enlisted housing¹ (12.9).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY1983 projects (total appropriation - 53.3):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>control tower (4.3); electrical power distribution (8.2); utilities (2.0); photo laboratory (2.3); gymnasium (3.4); enlisted housing¹ (7.9); anti-submarine warfare operations centre (6.3); communications facility (3.3); command center (4.4); officer housing (8.4).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY1984 projects (total appropriation - 31.8):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>public works/transport facility (6.3); enlisted personnel housing (6.8); administration facility (4.1); transmitter building addition (8.2); warehouse (3.5); waterfront operations/POL operations/weapons complex (2.4).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY1985 projects (total appropriation - 6.3):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>water system improvements (5.9).</td>
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</table>

B. Air Force Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY1981 projects (total appropriation*** - 23.7):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>petroleum, oils, and lubricants storage (23.7).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>FY1982 projects (total appropriation - 114.9):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hydrant refueling (3.5); airfield pavement apron⁸ (83.2); hazardous cargo pad (3.7); dredging (8.0); airfield lighting (3.4); demineralized water plant (1.2); operations/administration facility (4.1); cargo storage (1.6).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>FY1983 projects (total appropriation - 4.5):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>avionics shop (3.4); avionics warehouse (2.0).</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>FY1984 projects (total appropriation - 58.2):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>runway upgrade (41.3); SPACE TRACK observation facilities (14.1); tracking/monitoring station - NAVSTAR GPS (2.8).</td>
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<tr>
<th>FY1985 projects (total appropriation - 16.1):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>space surveillance facility officer housing (7.6); ammunition storage/maintenance (8.5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only projects costing $2 million or more are cited.

** Total Congressional appropriation for Navy construction at Diego Garcia as reported in the House-Senate Appropriations Conference Committee report for the relevant fiscal year.

*** Total Congressional appropriation for Air Force construction at Diego Garcia as reported in the House-Senate Appropriations Conference Committee report for the relevant fiscal year.

¹ Jointly funded with the Air Force; ² Second increment; ³ 3 buildings/94 rooms each; ⁴ 2 buildings/58 rooms each; ⁵ Cancellation costs; ⁶ 2 buildings/94 rooms each; ⁷ 1 building/94 rooms; ⁸ Jointly funded with Navy.

## APPENDIX 5

### MAJOR IDENTIFIED ARMS AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE US AND THE GCC STATES:

**JULY 1979-JUNE 1984**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Date of Agreement</th>
<th>Weapon Systems</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>Dec 1981</td>
<td>Improved HAWK SAM</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 1982</td>
<td>Bell 412 transport helicopters</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr 1982</td>
<td>F-5E fighter aircraft</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F-5F training aircraft</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TOW ATGW</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr 1983</td>
<td>F-20 fighter aircraft</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>Sep 1979</td>
<td>Improved HAWK SAM</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oct 1980</td>
<td>M-113 AZ APC</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-113 APC/Ambulance</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-113 SP TOW ATGW AFV</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-577 AZ Command post</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-125 AZ mortar carrier</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jun 1981</td>
<td>Improved HAWK SAM</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mar 1982</td>
<td>M-113 AZ APC</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-901 Improved TOW vehicle</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved TOW ATGW</td>
<td>4800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 1981</td>
<td>Improved HAWK SAM launcher</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved HAWK SAM</td>
<td>164</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 1982</td>
<td>L-100-50 transport aircraft</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>Oct 1979</td>
<td>Sidewinder AAM</td>
<td>250</td>
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<td>Oct 1980</td>
<td>C-130H transport aircraft</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-60 medium tank</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mar 1981</td>
<td>C-130H transport aircraft</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 1981</td>
<td>C-130H transport aircraft</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 1983</td>
<td>Bell-214 ST Helicopter</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Jul 1979</td>
<td>M-60 155mm medium tank</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>Oct 1979</td>
<td>Dragon ATGW launchers</td>
<td>172</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Dragon ATGW</td>
<td>1292</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 1979</td>
<td>Maverick ASM</td>
<td>916</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sidewinder AAM</td>
<td>660</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>TOW ATGW</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb 1981</td>
<td>V-150 Commando AFV</td>
<td>579</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oct 1981</td>
<td>KC-135 tanker aircraft</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AIM-9L Sidewinder AAM</td>
<td>1177</td>
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<tr>
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<td>E-3A AWACS</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb 1983</td>
<td>M198 155mm towed howitzer</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 1983</td>
<td>KC-707 tanker aircraft</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AIM-7F Sparrow AAM</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 1984</td>
<td>FIM-92A Stinger SAM</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>Jun 1981</td>
<td>C-130H transport aircraft</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 1981</td>
<td>TOW ATGW launchers</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved HAWK SAM launchers</td>
<td>7 batteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved HAWK SAM</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 1983</td>
<td>C-130 M-30 transport aircraft</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the agreements are subject to cancellation or changes.

**Abbreviations:**
- ATGW - anti tank guided weapon; AAM - air-to-air missile;
- AFV - armoured fighting vehicle; ASM - air-to-surface missile;
- AWACS - airborne warning and control system; APC - armoured personnel carrier;
- SAM - surface-to-air missile; TOW - tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided.

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