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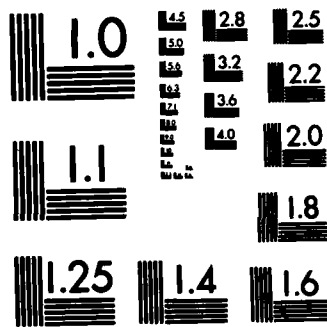
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JOINT TASK FORCE:
ORIGINS, DIRECTION, AND MISSION

Paul K. Davis

June 1982

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT
JOINT TASK FORCE:
ORIGINS, DIRECTION, AND MISSION*

Paul K. Davis**

June 1982



* This paper was prepared for an address at the 23rd Annual Convention of the International Studies Association held March 24-27, 1982, in Cincinnati, Ohio. It reflects the views of the author and is not related to any current work of The Rand Corporation.

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SUMMARY

Since the summer of 1979 there has been remarkable progress in improving U.S. capabilities for Persian Gulf contingencies. This progress was possible only because of a unique "correlation of forces" that included: (1) a background of staff studies in DoD developed after years of neglecting contingency capabilities; (2) the fall of the Shah; (3) the hostage crisis; (4) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; (5) a general buildup of Congressional pressure in favor of defense and readiness; (6) an activist Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP) who served as "Czar" of planning for the region; (7) extraordinary procedures in the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS); (8) a relatively smooth postelection transition (with respect to RDJTF/Southwest Asia issues); (9) problems so clear and understandable as to make options easy to develop; and (10) effective leadership of the RDJTF.

Although cynicism is easy, the progress has by no means been cosmetic, especially with regard to planning, command relations, readiness, mobility, presence, and diplomacy. The strategy for the RDJTF remains controversial, but--in the view of this paper--there is far less latitude on this matter than polemicists claim and far more rationale than is commonly realized for what has emerged as our strategy to date. The so-called maritime strategy, in its extreme forms, is essentially a fraud because maritime capabilities (which have been stressed in any case) are manifestly inadequate--extremely important, but inadequate.



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The problems we face in Southwest Asia are severe and will remain so. However, there is reason for optimism because of our rapidly improving capabilities and the difficulties the Soviets would probably have if they invaded the region. Deterrence against overt aggression should be achieved soon if we do not possess it today, and the quality of that deterrence (measured by results if deterrence fails) will increase as well.

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I. INTRODUCTION

SCOPE AND FOCUS

The United States has been engaged since the summer of 1979 in an accelerating effort to increase capabilities for non-NATO contingencies in the Middle East, particularly in "Southwest Asia" (SWA), the region surrounding the Persian Gulf (see Fig. 1). Central elements in this effort have been the newly created Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and related programmatic and diplomatic initiatives. Such rapid changes are unusual in recent U.S. history and provide lessons for the future. This paper reviews origins of the RDJTF, progress in its development, and possible problems on the horizon. It also discusses some of the related strategy issues. Overall, the paper's emphasis is on the remarkable political and managerial events (a "correlation of forces") that made the RDJTF and related programming initiatives feasible. Although the RDJTF's capabilities are still limited, and although general U.S. capabilities for a confrontation in the Middle East will remain tenuous at best, the situation is much better than it was in 1979 and improving rapidly.

BACKGROUND ON THE RDJTF [1,2]

As explained in the report to Congress of the Secretary of Defense, the RDJTF is not a fixed set of particular divisions, air wings, etc. Rather, it is a four-service reservoir of forces suitable and available for use in non-NATO contingencies, with a permanent headquarters established on March 1, 1980. In response to a particular crisis, an appropriate task force would be constructed from the reservoir and

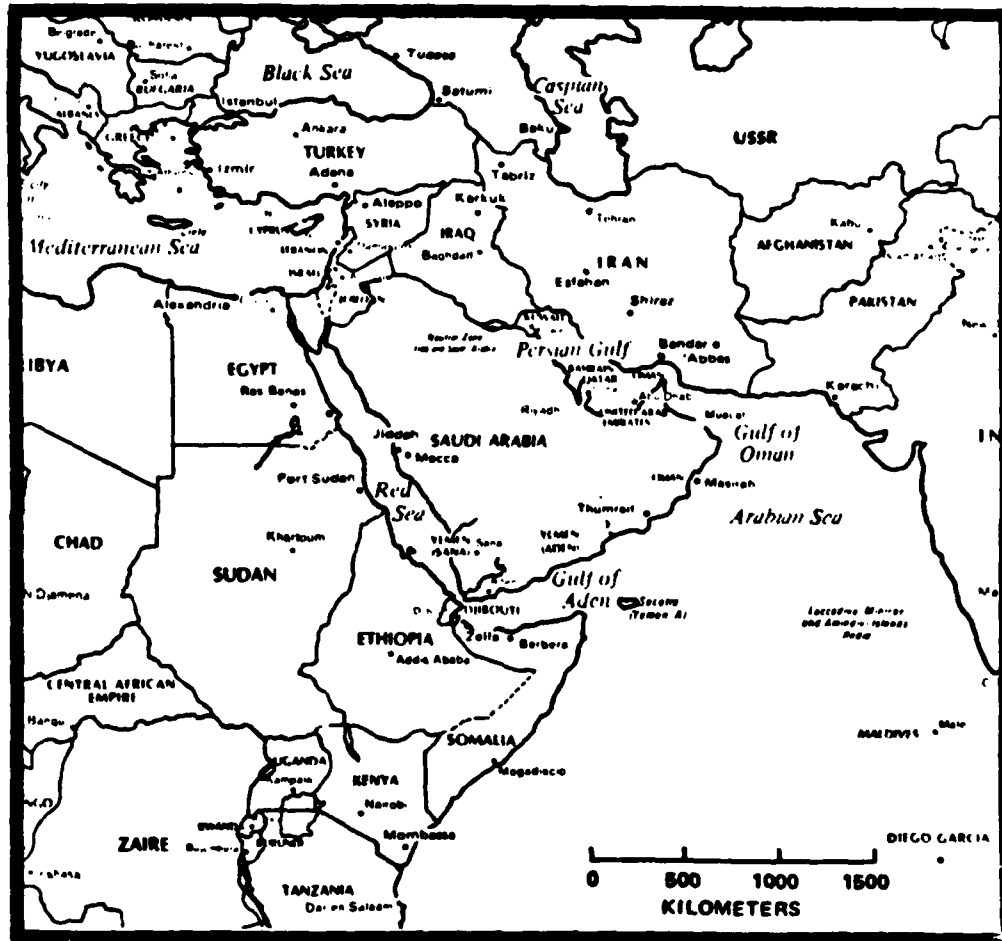


Fig. 1 -- The greater Middle East, including Southwest Asia

deployed with a headquarters element. A given RDJTF might be battalion-sized, or might instead consist of a number of Army and Marine divisions as well as supporting air and naval forces. The core reservoir today includes such units as the 82nd Airborne Division, 101st Air Assault Division, 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade, a Marine Amphibious Force, the 24th Mechanized Division, 6th Cavalry Brigade (Air Combat), various Ranger and Special Forces, 4-11 Air Force Tactical Fighter Wings, and a conventional Strategic Projection Force (SPF) of conventionally armed B-52Hs. Naval forces include three Carrier Battle Groups (CVBGs), a Surface Action Group (SAG), five squadrons of antisubmarine warfare patrol aircraft, and an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). Most of these had potential contingency missions before the RDJTF was created, and many of them also have NATO-oriented missions. The core reservoir will increase with time as our ability to deploy and support forces grows.[1]

We have long had forces for contingency missions, most notably the Marines, the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, the Special Forces, and, of course, the Navy. However, as of 1979, there were serious deficiencies in the quality of our planning and associated training for joint-service operations--quite apart from the adequacy of the force levels available. The RDJTF Headquarters was created to centralize responsibilities for SWA contingency planning in a single command. Initially, it was subordinate to the Commander in Chief of Readiness Command (CINCREDCOM), but Secretary Weinberger decided in 1981 to give it more autonomy in response to widespread criticism about the complexity of command structure, and his (and Mr. Carlucci's) personal philosophy of making

clear assignments of responsibility. The Commander, RDJTF, now has operational control over designated components of the four services. He reports directly to the National Command Authority (NCA) through the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).

Although details are uncertain, plans call for the Commander, RDJTF, to be given by January 1983 the full status of a Commander in Chief for a significant portion of the Middle East. It remains to be seen what the geographical split will be between CINCs, and whether the United States will be able to establish a permanent headquarters in the region.*

MEASURING READINESS FOR CONTINGENCIES

Our overall readiness for contingency operations (i.e., conflicts other than in defense of NATO) depends on many factors, particularly:

- o Existence of regional strategies (i.e., we must know where our interests lie);
- o Policy-level involvement in general contingency planning well before crises emerge (to permit prompt decisions);
- o Operational planning;
- o Intelligence capability (collection, analysis, reaction to information, and opportunities for effective covert action);
- o Combat forces (size, character, "readiness");
- o Strategic and tactical mobility;
- o Supportability of combat forces; and

* Congressional debate continues on the four-service model and the alternative option of assigning the Navy and Marines the dominant RDJTF role (and, presumably, the CINCship). Although serious interservice rivalry and coordination problems do exist (for all theaters), the likelihood of the Marine option seems low--for both substantive and bureaucratic reasons.

- o Political, logistical, and possibly military support from Western and regional states (e.g., access to bases as a minimum).

With these factors as criteria, it is relatively easy to demonstrate that development of the RDJTF has been far more than mere public relations. Although, in my view, our contingency capabilities will be inadequate for some time, there have been major improvements since the summer of 1979 and more are well on their way. What follows describes some of these in more detail, along with the origins of our current problems.

II. ORIGINS OF PROBLEMS

There is no task more basic to the management of our national security than correctly identifying the approximate magnitude and general nature of the military challenges we may face five and ten years in the future when the full effects of current decisions will be realized. Unfortunately, the 1970s was a difficult period for national security planners in each of three successive administrations. It was certainly not a good period for those concerned with our capabilities for non-NATO contingencies, and it is striking to note that the Defense Reports between 1970 and 1979 had virtually nothing to say on the subject (by contrast not only with recent reports, but also those of the 1960s).

Figure 2 shows in shorthand some of the many causes behind the decade-long diminution in our preparation for non-NATO contingencies or "half wars." The top row lists some of the "root causes." The second row indicates effects, which in turn produced the state of affairs for 1979 described in the lower box--a period in which we were prepared neither mentally nor in terms of capability for the more demanding of possible limited contingencies.

It is instructive to contemplate some of the interactions suggested by Fig. 2, because our current problems are by no means the result solely of the post-Vietnam backlash, important though that was. For example, the unprecedented inflation of the 1970s interacted with the Vietnam-related antidefense atmosphere, and with management systems designed in noninflationary periods, to produce serious underfunding of

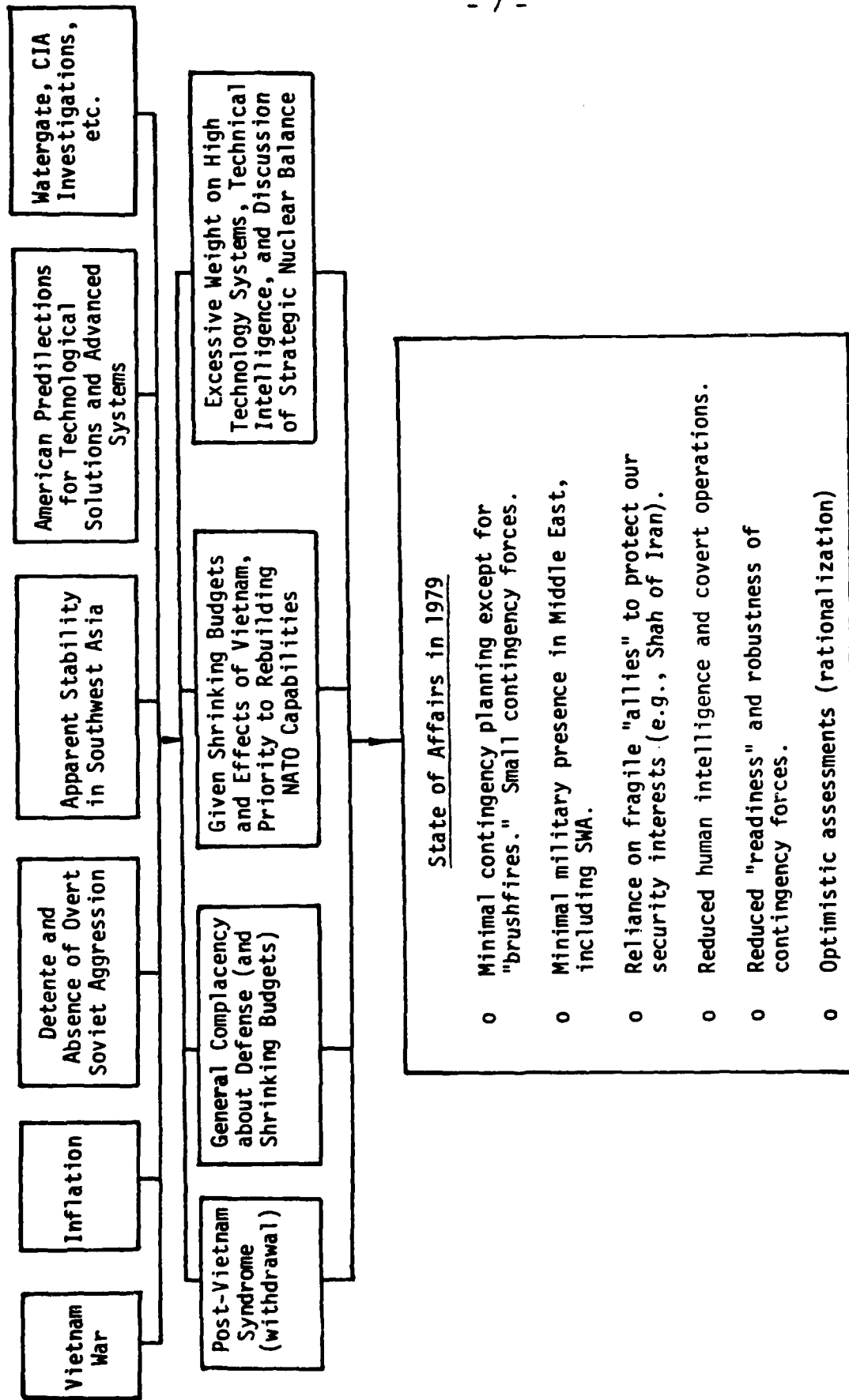


Fig. 2--Origins of current RDJTF readiness problems

the unglamorous "readiness-related" aspects of the defense program (e.g., procurement of spare parts for airlift; procurement of specialized munitions such as precision-guided munitions; and provision of adequate operating funds and training time). Some of the underfunding of "readiness" was recognized in that the services, and in some cases OSD, consciously placed higher priority on procurement of weapon systems. In effect, the argument was that we had to buy the aircraft, tanks, and ships while we could, and fix readiness later; we could not easily do it in reverse. In addition, however, there was a severe problem of visibility--monies programmed for readiness were frequently "scrubbed out" or reprogrammed one item at a time to pay for shortages in other accounts, and there was no good way to see or measure the cumulative effects on readiness.

Unfortunate things happened also in the policy realm. For example, the political necessity of relying upon regional states to protect our security interests in a period of U.S. withdrawal came to be treated as a virtue--in part because the fragility of such a policy was not evident to optimists, and because the threats to our security interests in places like the Persian Gulf seemed abstract.* Indeed, the region was commonly described as relatively stable because of the "Twin Pillars": the Shah's Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This led, in turn, to the traditional half-war requirement being thought of more and more as one of being able to deal with miscellaneous brushfires.

More insidious was the effect of the era's zeitgeist on defense analyses. Looking back, it seems that many analyses of the period were

* The difficulties in formulating a security policy during this period are discussed by Henry Kissinger in his recent book. [3]

overly optimistic regarding threats, scenarios, and U.S. capabilities. There was an excessive desire to avoid so-called "worst casing," and yet it was commonly believed that DoD planning and programming was based on "worst cases" (to be read as "extremely unlikely"). This was not a period during which studies or policies emphasized the need for robust capabilities, a variety of hedges, and the possibility that currently unforeseen contingencies could demand of us capabilities we did not then possess. Even as late as 1978 a Congressional Budget Office study [4] referred repeatedly to the possibility of a Soviet invasion of the Persian Gulf as a "worst case" scenario that the Congress apparently might reasonably reject as the basis for planning projection forces. The CBO study probably reflected man-in-the-corridor wisdom in the Pentagon also, although some wiser individuals were present and thought otherwise. Two years later, that allegedly "worst case" threat seemed both plausible and worrisome.

Some will argue that Fig. 2 is misleading because it fails to acknowledge that (in their view) the world has changed in unforeseeable ways with the fall of the Shah, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Soviet incursions in Africa. In my view, however, such claims merely reinforce the conclusion that the 1970s were peculiar. The instability, unpredictability, and importance of Southwest Asia, and the Middle East more generally, have long been evident to those who looked. [5-7] Moreover, Soviet interests in the region have been known for many decades, as has Soviet capability for mischief or intervention there. Most fundamentally, however, there was a time when conservative planning was thought prudent rather than extravagant--after all, defense programs are supposed to be robust enough that relatively major "surprises" do

not leave us vulnerable. This view was surely prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, but not in the 1970s.

In summary, then, the state of affairs in 1979 was bad--for a number of reasons. When the effort began in earnest to improve capability for non-NATO contingencies, the United States had to begin largely from scratch in developing attitudes and corrective programs.

III. RECENT PROGRESS AND THE EVENTS BEHIND IT

GEOSTRATEGIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS

In 1979, the Shah of Iran fell and the West's framework toppled with him. This in itself was sufficient to motivate some of the initial programs that would later be associated with the RDJTF (e.g., Maritime Prepositioning and increased military presence),* but it was the hostage crisis followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that convinced the nation (and President Carter) of the seriousness of our problems in Southwest Asia. Since then, there has been remarkable progress in rectifying the state of affairs identified in Fig. 2, especially as related to planning, mind-sets, and "readiness." Figure 3 and Table 1 summarize the principal features of that progress, each element of which could justify a separate paper.** This paper, however, is less concerned with the substantive issues and programs than with the management events that permitted the progress.

MANAGEMENT EVENTS BEHIND THE RDJTF

In looking back over the last several years, the author believes that five "events" were especially important in the RDJTF's development.

* Initial programs in 1979 were made possible by Congressional pressures to increase defense spending, possibly as the price of SALT II ratification. Until those pressures appeared, the programs were merely items on a wish list (albeit a serious list), and defense spending was highly constrained.

** Not surprisingly, the best single unclassified reference on SWA issues and RDJTF progress is a short but incisive paper by Harold Brown [8].

- o Carter Doctrine: made manifest our national commitment to defend our interests in the Persian Gulf; had a unifying effect within the government--changing the issue from "whether" to "how." Problem: a manifest lack of military capability to back up the doctrine.

- o Strategy: enormous progress in defining fundamental and derivative U.S. objectives, alternative military strategies, concepts of burdensharing, and a diplomatic effort consistent with our objectives and requirements.

- o Diplomatic Initiatives: successful consultation with Western and regional allies about the shared dangers, and about such matters as overflight rights and access to bases; laid framework for speedy cooperative action in crisis and for further discussions of burdensharing.

- o Increased Military Presence: from a minimal presence to the presence in the Indian Ocean of two carrier battle groups, one Marine Amphibious Unit, and prepositioning ships with the equipment for a full Marine Amphibious Brigade. Also, upon occasion, tactical air forces and joint exercises in Egypt.

- o Readiness: although details are classified and our current capabilities limited, we now are capable of deploying and employing a significant and balanced RDJTF on short notice. Large-scale exercises such as Bright Star '81 (6500 people used in Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, and Oman) are testing readiness, as well as serving political objectives.[2]

- o Programs: See Table 1 for programs probably exceeding \$20B through 1987.

Fig. 3--Elements of progress since 1979

Table 1

SELECTED RDJTF-RELATED PROGRAMS^a
(\$M)

Program	FY 81-82	FY 83-84	FY 83-87
Strategic Airlift ^b	1700	5000	Not Avail.
Strategic Sealift ^c	1100	1900	Not Avail.
Land-Based Prepo.	360	1400	Not Avail.
Base Facilities ^d	890	Not Avail.	1400
Munitions and Spares	Not Avail.	Not Avail.	Not Avail.
Joint Exercises	Not Avail.	Not Avail.	Not Avail.
Support Forces	Not Avail.	Not Avail.	Not Avail.
Other Readiness Items	Not Avail.	Not Avail.	Not Avail.

^aData are from Secretary Weinberger's Annual Report to Congress, [1] which does not break out separately the RDJTF's share of the very large sums being spent on general readiness (e.g., about \$90B for FY83-87 in modern munitions and secondary items). It is relatively easy, however, to come up with a total for RDJTF-motivated expenditures between FY81 and FY87 of about \$20B. Much larger expenditures became apparent if one prorates the RDJTF's share of the cost of General-Purpose Forces.

^bProcurement of C-5s, KC-10s, and utilization-rate-related spares; also, enhancement of the Civilian Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF).

^cSL-7s, Maritime Prepositioning Ships, Near-Term Prepositioning Force, Depot Ships, and Sealift Discharge Systems.

^dIncludes funds for upgrade of Lajes Air Base as well as facilities in the Middle East and Indian Ocean (Egypt, Kenya, Oman, Diego Garcia, and Somalia).

1. Staff Studies. As a result of requests in 1977 by the National Security Adviser, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, OSD and OJCS performed several detailed staff studies on U.S. capabilities for limited contingencies and on comparisons of U.S. and Soviet power-projection capabilities. These background studies had considerable influence in shaping ideas about what should be done if funds and national priorities permitted. Although not intended as decision documents, they were the origin of most of the RDF-related program initiatives in late 1979 and early 1980. They also set a framework for much of the discussion of military strategies.*

2. Creation of the RDJTF Headquarters. Giving the name Rapid Deployment Force to the preexisting set of forces available for non-NATO contingencies would have been mere public relations except that a headquarters staff commanded by the respected Lt. Gen. Paul X. Kelley (USMC) was also created to centralize planning and improve joint-service efforts. Having an RDJTF Headquarters (and a Washington liaison office) has enormously improved the flow of information among operational planners, policymakers, and program planners; it also greatly improved our operational readiness for joint-service operations. Although less visible, there have also been organizational changes in the OJCS to improve our planning for contingencies, especially in Southwest Asia. General Kelley's testimonies to Congress were also important during the initial period in which cynicism was rampant. In 1981, Lt. Gen. Kelley (now a four-star General and Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps) was

* Some of the OSD studies benefited from contrary-view papers by Edward Luttwak, Steven Canby, and Albert Wohlstetter (see, for example, Refs. 5, 9, and 10). The latter also chaired panels that encouraged a strategic debate that later paid off.

succeeded by Lt. Gen. Robert Kingston, an Army officer with extensive experience in both conventional and unconventional warfare.

3. Creation of the Under Secretary for Policy. Creating an Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP) had long been recommended by advisory groups because of the correct perception that there was too little OSD consideration of fundamental policy issues below the Secretary of Defense himself. One consequence had been that DoD "policy" was often vague or inconsistent with reality. Also, there was a tendency for "policy" to be created from the bottom up rather than from the top down in the following sense: day-to-day diplomatic problems, interagency squabbles, parochial interests, and programming guidance constrained by budget levels tended to drive "policy" rather than vice versa. Operational planners frequently had no policy guidance on assumptions to use in their planning.

The position of USDP was first filled in August 1978 by Ambassador Stanley Resor and then, in October 1979, by Ambassador Robert Komer. Secretary Brown asked the latter to take the lead role in OSD on matters relating to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean (and, later, what came to be referred to as Southwest Asia). Subsequently, there was greatly improved cooperation and communication among the many Pentagon groups concerned with these matters. The simple expedient of creating DoD-wide working-level and senior-level groups (e.g., the Power Projection Steering Group) that would meet regularly and exchange information was an essential step. Much of the substantive work was performed by a variety of other offices, including the OJCS and PA&E, but the policy offices under the USDP were responsible for extensive interactions with state and the National Security Council (NSC), as well as for

coordination papers. Studies and committees in themselves solve nothing, but in this case the products had a user. Komer played a strong personal role in "making things happen." This included discussions with our NATO allies about a new division of labor (i.e., more effort from the allies in their own theaters, with the United States taking on much of the burden in SWA). Another major effort was that of obtaining access agreements for use in crisis of critical en route and regional facilities such as airfields. Although no such agreements can be binding in advance, the diplomatic groundwork was clearly an essential part of contingency planning. Furthermore, in some cases facility upgrades were important enough to justify U.S.-funded programs (see Table 1).

In 1980, the policy office also produced an authoritative document long requested by the OJCS and services, the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG). The last DPG of Harold Brown succeeded in going beyond platitudes of high strategy by setting definite policies and priorities. His last Consolidated Guidance (a product of Russell Murray's (PA&E)) set both directions and goals for RDJTF-related programs. Both have held up. In both 1979 and 1980, PA&E also prepared strategy and overview material for the Secretary in briefing form that, among other things, had the effect of focusing high-level attention on key programs relevant to the Persian Gulf, including some that were not yet funded but were later added to the budget by Secretary Brown. The Reagan administration's initial policy decisions set new directions on a number of items (e.g., emphasis on an expanded navy and planning for other-than-short wars), but have generally continued or increased programs for the RDJTF.

After a quick and chaotic budget review early in 1981, Secretaries Weinberger and Carlucci not only supported the existing RDJTF programs but added some that had been identified but not funded in the last Carter budget (e.g., further items on "readiness" and mobility). Although there were philosophical disputes about strategy, they recognized that the initiatives at issue were valid in any case. Two other elements in the RDJTF program's continuity should be noted here. First, the OJCS (with assistance from OSD staff) provided formal continuity at a time when OSD was in extreme transition-induced turmoil. Second, the new USDP, Dr. Fred Iklé, brought into office a well-developed sense of our strategic interests in SWA and elsewhere. This was a major factor in the new administration's first Defense Guidance, hurriedly prepared though it was.*

4. A Technical Step: Making the RDF a Separable Item in the Defense Program. Traditionally there has been a tension within the DoD's Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) process between those who want to organize issues by procurement accounts, operations and maintenance accounts, and so on, and those who want to organize by function. Since the RDJTF is merely part of our General Purpose Forces, there was reluctance to treat it separately--after all, how would we charge the RDJTF for its share of, for example, CVBG operating costs? Nonetheless, during the summer program review in 1980, the offices of Program Analysis and Evaluation, and of Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics (PA&E and MRA&L), working with the services and OJCS, jointly produced an issue paper collecting in one place most of the RDJTF

* A good description of his views can be found in Ref. 11.

program issues. The result was useful to senior officials in DoD, OMB, and the NSC because it permitted a unified discussion of RDJTF options. The issue paper stimulated policy-level debates that later resulted in major changes in guidance and programming, thereby reducing the strategy-programming mismatch that previously existed regarding contingency forces. In particular, as was first made clear in Harold Brown's last Defense Report in 1981, the RDJTF is now oriented toward a Soviet threat, not mere brushfires. Also, providing this "functional cut" through the budget made it possible to protect RDJTF initiatives preferentially all the way through the PPBS system for the FY82 budget submission, and facilitated the program review conducted by the new administration early in 1981.

5. Program Balance. Table 1 describes briefly some of the RDJTF-related programs as they were in mid-January 1982.[1] It is important to note that a major effort has been made since the summer of 1979 to present balanced packages of RDJTF-related measures. So, for example, the program contains funds not only for Indian Ocean operations (visible "presence") and strategic mobility but also for readiness-related items,* exercises, and support forces. In general, there has been a serious effort to approach the issue as a "system problem" from the outset. A good example of why this is important is the bottleneck problem for airlift: PA&E and OJCS analyses in 1979 and 1980 demonstrated that our ability to airlift is constrained because of limitations in the en route and receiving bases at which the aircraft

* Another management "event" (really a series of events over several years) was the increased emphasis since 1977 on readiness in guidance provided by the Secretary of Defense. This guidance, coupled with Congressional interest and external events, has caused the services to treat readiness issues generally with higher priority.

would have to be refueled. Our diplomatic program has sought access in crises to a broad range of bases, and the defense program includes funds to improve a number of them with, for example, more fuel storage.

IV. A BRIEF LOOK AT STRATEGY ISSUES: THE MATTER OF SCENARIOS

Before discussing the challenges ahead for the RDJTF and related initiatives, it is useful to touch--even if briefly--on some of the strategic issues that continue to be controversial. In my view, the extent of misinformation and polemical nonsense on these matters is extremely troublesome.

One of the recurrent criticisms of RDJTF planning has been its alleged exclusive focus on the allegedly least likely threat, that of a Soviet invasion of Iran.* Indeed, it does seem far-fetched, in June of 1982, to think about responding to a call for help from the Iranians so that we could fight as brothers in a common defense of their nation. This paper is not the place to discuss such matters in depth, but a few observations are appropriate:**

- o Iran's independence is important to the United States not because of oil production (which is now only a small fraction of the region's), but because--on general strategic principles--we need to keep the Soviets as far as possible from our vital interests in the Gulf.
- o No one can foretell the future for the Persian Gulf, and it is by no means implausible that relations between Iran and the West will improve while those between Iran and the Soviet Union worsen. Moreover, the likelihood of that trend will increase more if Iran's future leaders see that we have some common interests than if we "write her off."

* Versions of the scenario are discussed in Refs. 5, 10, 12, 13, and 14.

** See also Appendix A, which discusses a range of strategic issues, including that of "Maritime Strategy," in question-and-answer format.

- o Continuing with a similar theme, proponents of alternative strategies seldom discuss the probable consequences of writing Iran off.
- o Planning for the most stressing plausible scenarios when developing overall force structure is a sound and well-established practice. The Iranian scenario, if carefully drafted, would seem to fill that role, and it is encouraging that the new administration has also emphasized the possibility--indeed the likelihood--of war in Southwest Asia leading to a general worldwide war. Alternative base cases will be difficult to conceive unless and until further changes occur in the region.

Finally, let me mention that when all is said and done, deterrence continues to be the major element of U.S. policy. The scenarios used in planning have an important, albeit indirect, effect both on Soviet perceptions of whether vacuums exist to be exploited and on the judgments of regional states on whether the West will prove resolute or impotent should the Soviets invade. Since most wars need never be fought (the potential players can imagine the results of "virtual wars" and modify their policies accordingly), creating a situation in which we have both the capability and the planning to confront the Soviets if they invade will probably have the effect of making that scenario far less likely. Thus, our goal is to make the critics' assessment a reality.*

Obviously, there is a spectrum of possible conflict scenarios in the Persian Gulf, and it is just as obvious that we should have plans for them. It is also clear, in principle, that our planning should allow for a wide range of variations in strategic and tactical surprise, regional cooperation, allied cooperation, and the like. Nonetheless,

* See, for example, Refs. 8, 12, and 13 for discussion of Soviet disincentives for invasion of the Persian Gulf in the presence of a vigilant West.

the status of the big Soviet-invasion scenario (in one form or the other) will continue to be special.

V. CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR IMPROVING THE RDJTF

The obstacles to progress deserve a treatise rather than a short article. Nonetheless, it may be worthwhile to mention briefly a representative cross section of threats. The first is quintessentially American:

- o Lack of Continuity: Given the enormous difficulties of dealing with Southwest Asia, it is inevitable that diametrically opposed "strategies" will be proposed and lobbied for. If polemical articles result in a broadening of the RDJTF and associated planning, so much the better. Unfortunately, paralysis or chaos is more likely if the debate lasts too long.*

Under the assumption that current programs (e.g., those touched upon in Table 1) are implemented in spite of distracting debates and possible trimming of the FY83 defense program, some of the most important residual problems will be:

- o Inadequate Force Structure: unless we and our allies expand our force structure, the building of our RDJTF must be at the expense of our capability for Europe, a capability that is already marginal.[15] At present, most of our RDJTF units are doubly or triply committed for the RDJTF, NATO, and West Pacific.[16]
- o Inflexible Style of War: successful operations in non-NATO contingencies, in Southwest Asia or elsewhere, will require doctrine, training, and equipment different from that developed for Europe. [9,10,14,15] The focus on firepower and armor must give way in part to special infantry able to fight in mountains and deserts under austere conditions. The new National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, may be especially useful in developing the new skills, but I am unaware of plans to increase adequately the level of unit training for mountain warfare, a training that proved essential in World War II's Italian campaign.

* See Ref. 14 for an articulate, thought-provoking, but--in my view--impractical exposition of the so-called Maritime Strategy. See Appendix A for comments on that strategy.

As we address the problems, issues, and programs noted above and in Fig. 3 and Table 1, we will be faced with a broad range of obstacles to progress--some of them bureaucratic, some not. My own list is as follows:

1. The Futility Syndrome: Preparing to protect our interests in a region that appears superficially to be "in the Soviets' backyard" appears to many people as a futile endeavor. As a result, they argue against improvements in capability or drag their feet when the action is theirs. Related to this is the national tendency at budget time to build our foes ten feet tall, and to ignore, for example, that: (a) nearly all of the Soviet divisions threatening SWA are reserve units that would need significant preparation time for operations; (b) few Soviet forces are well suited to opposed intervention operations in the difficult terrain of SWA; (c) Soviet force projection could in many cases be blocked by tactical air power; and, most importantly, (d) deterrence probably does not require forces so large as to give us confidence. My point is not to argue that the threat is exaggerated (given our modest current capabilities, it is not), or that we can safely rely upon mere tripwires, but rather to assert that both the criticality of the region and the results of analysis indicate that the effort to protect our interests is by no means futile.

2. The Constituency Problem: It is no revelation of the current era that strategic mobility, intervention forces, and readiness are important. Indeed, such matters were highlighted in the Defense Reports of the late 1960s. The problem is that these matters have no national constituency when budgets are tight and war does not appear imminent. Part of the difficulty is solvable by better management--providing more visibility to the related programs as well as a mechanism for auditing implementation--but the problem has proved persistent so far, partly because excessive "auditing" would amount to micromanagement of the services. Although a clear consensus in favor of more readiness and mobility exists today, it may evaporate if the defense budget is squeezed later in the year.

3. Reserve Component Readiness: A major problem for the United States is the limited size of our ground forces (about 39 division equivalents, compared with 175 for the Soviets).[16] It is evident from analysis and from the examples set by the Soviets, Israelis, and others that major increases in force structure can be achieved through Reserve Component programs. However, many U.S. Reserve Component forces suffer from low readiness, and U.S. Reserves have generally been slow to deploy. If we are to build a supportable robust RDJTF it will be extremely important to do better than in the past in developing "ready" Reserves, and in changing attitudes of operational planners accordingly.

At present, military planners are often reluctant to count on the availability of Reserve Component forces (combat or support), thereby exacerbating the futility syndrome referred to earlier. Fortunately, we appear to be in an era now of increased defense budgets, and if so, progress should be possible in beefing up the Reserves and making them more rapidly deployable.

4. Service Inertia: There is a large untapped reservoir of innovative thought within each of the military services, but it is rare to see the innovative ideas implemented except when there are long-term pressures such as technology-push behind them. It is by no means evident that the services will rise to the challenge of developing the full range of special forces and tactics that might be needed in RDJTF conflicts (e.g., forces for rapid entry or mountain operations). Some activities are under way, but they seem to this observer not to be adequate. Fortunately, Soviet training and force structure has so far been poorly suited to SWA also, as shown by their experience in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, that war is giving them direct experience from which they may learn.

5. Excessive Centralization: Most civilian observers would be expected to argue for more visibility of programs in the budget, audit trails, etc. However, I at least would also argue that we badly need decentralization of some budget control--especially if we are to achieve high readiness. One step in this direction would be to go further in creating "CINC funds"--moderate pots of money that could be used by the individual CINCs to solve practical problems they considered especially important.* The CINCs's recommended allocations could be reviewed once or twice a year, but they would be allowed discretion in solving the in-the-field problems to which they are most sensitive. This would tend to offset biases of the Pentagon, cut red tape, free up time of senior OSD officials for other matters, and encourage initiative. I suspect it would also save money, because in-the-field solutions to problems can be tailored, whereas those designed in Washington are boxed. Although the need for decentralization and CINC funds is general, it applies especially well to the RDJTF because there are large numbers of relatively mundane "horseshoe nail" problems to be solved as we develop capabilities for new missions. It is ironic that we Americans, who deride Soviet centralization, have become excessively centralized ourselves.

* Some steps in this direction have been made through a program initiated by OSD's PA&E and the OJCS, with strong support by Deputy Secretary Carlucci. Congress has yet to act on the proposal.

VI. WRAP-UP

In summary, then, there has been substantial progress on the RDJTF over the last 30 months, but the problems ahead are real and difficult. Moreover, much of what I describe as progress in this paper will not be "real" until 1984-1985. The associated programs are under way, but they have not yet reached fruition. Even when analysis points the way, there will be continuous obstacles to this effort to build new types of capability for a new set of missions. We can only hope that our enemies and fate give us the time we need.

Appendix A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE RDJTF

(A CYNIC TALKS TO A RELATIVE ENTHUSIAST)

1. Question: Is the RDJTF merely a public relations gimmick for capabilities we've always had? After all, there are no new combat forces, and the Marines and 82nd Airborne, for example, have always had contingency roles.

Answer: No. The RDJTF is a serious new initiative. However, to appreciate what has changed, one has to consider such matters as quality of planning, command relationships, and "readiness."

2. Question: Isn't it the case that the RDJTF still exists mostly on paper, and that it will be the end of the five-year planning period before related programs bear fruit (and we all know that programs funded for the end of the program period seldom materialize on schedule)?

Answer: The RDJTF programs are different, and remarkably so. Instead of being funded for the end of the FYDP, they have been funded since FY81. There will be dramatic improvements in capability by 1985, in addition to the impressive improvements in planning, coordination, and readiness that have already taken place. To cite a few examples of what should be complete by 1985 (see also Table 1 of text):

- o prepositioning ships for three Marine Amphibious Brigades (MABs)-- a combination of the Maritime Prepositioning System (MPS) and Near-Term Prepositioning System (NTPS) programs;
- o achievement of full utilization rates for the C-5 and C-141 aircraft in crisis (a function of replacement spares), something that will double aspects of current airlift capability;
- o acquisition and conversion to RO/RO configurations of all or most of the fast-sealift capability;
- o improvement of base facilities in the Middle East, Southwest Asia, and en route;
- o enormous improvements in readiness with respect to everything from water-related equipment to air-to-air missiles; and
- o extensive prepositioning.

The cumulative effect should be to more than double the size of the force that could be deployed "rapidly" and then sustained in combat. More detailed analysis indicates that this doubling has major military significance. For today, of course, our capability is certainly limited, and more dependent on the success of deterrence than we would like. But progress is occurring now, not just in the outyears of the budget.

3. Question: The RDJTF is all very nice, but whom are we kidding? Can we really expect to fight the Soviets in their own backyard?

Answer: The short answers are: (1) by rapid action in crisis we hope to avoid such a confrontation, i.e., to deter the Soviets; (2) the current RDJTF is prepared to fight, but has inadequate capabilities for prolonged conflict; (3) the mid-1980s RDJTF will represent a very substantial capability under the conditions that would allow us to act in any case (these include active cooperation of some regional states); and (4) the degree to which SWA is in the Soviet backyard has been grossly exaggerated--it's a very long "backyard" filled with some very nasty terrain and a lot of figurative snakes. If we can establish and maintain the sea lines of communication, and if we are able to act decisively early in crisis (a function of political events in the United States and friendly countries), and if we receive regional cooperation, the military demands on the RDJTF will by no means be hopeless; nor will they be based on faith in deterrence.

4. Question: Isn't it all a shell game? There are no new forces, and the military balance in Europe is tenuous at best. How can we possibly afford to send more than a token force to SWA if there is trouble in Europe?

Answer: There is a problem with total force structure, and some of us believe it is severe. However, there are several points to be made that mitigate the shell-game aspects: (1) the forces that would be diverted to RDJTF missions from potential European missions are only a small percentage of total NATO forces--and, in most cases, not particularly well suited to a big war in Europe in any event; (2) because of this and the absence of an in-place presence in SWA, leverage argues for the diversion to the RDJTF; and (3) the new mobility initiatives will mitigate the effects on our ability to deploy to Europe in the middle of a SWA crisis that is already using mobility assets for the RDJTF. Finally, note that the Europeans must bear most of the responsibility for defense in Europe (and they already do); to the extent NATO's forces are inadequate, and they are, the solution is not obviously to increase U.S. force structure as a matter of priority. We have such problems across the board (readiness, modernization, mobility, basing structure, etc.) that other items tend to come first.

5. Question: Can we really expect to work the problem by sending the cavalry all the way from the United States in crisis?

Answer: The concept of staying home except in crisis, and then responding with the cavalry, has long had an attraction for U.S. policymakers and diplomats--primarily because the alternative tends to

be intrusive presence in other nations' regions. Militarily, however, the concept has serious drawbacks and vulnerabilities--even if we procure all the mobility systems we can imagine. We surely can't wait till the war starts to deploy forces. This means, as a minimum, we need arrangements with regional countries for use of bases as early in crisis as possible; and it means that the base facilities must be suitable.

6. Question: Given the lack of assured bases and the difficulty of relying upon decisions by regional states, why don't we shift to a maritime strategy in which we maintain forces and plan for logistical operations from the sea (i.e., give the problem to the Navy and Marines)?

Answer: This administration (and its predecessor) has clearly recognized the important role and special advantages of seapower, and some of the earliest RDJTF initiatives were in this realm (Maritime Positioning for Marines, SL-7s, and increased presence). However, those who speak of the Maritime Strategy often seem to do so in mystical terms, and to ascribe to seapower all sorts of capabilities it does not and will not have. Note, for example, that:

- o Marines on amphibious ships are not instantaneously available for combat; for a variety of reasons, they are seldom close to the potential trouble spots unless we have received and been able to use strategic warning.
- o It is not feasible to keep a large force of Marines on station on amphibious ships during peacetime; there are extremely serious problems of morale, physical condition, and readiness.
- o It is not feasible to conduct a major air war in SWA from aircraft carriers. In spite of their impressive capabilities, the carriers are by no means comparable to land bases. Without the land bases, we could not control the air in the Persian Gulf. And, if we have the land bases for tacair, we will presumably have seaports and other examples of regional support. In short, we cannot expect to do much militarily with seapower alone.
- o At present, and for decades, the Marines have lacked some of the capabilities that might be particularly critical in a SWA conflict, especially one with the Soviets. There is no reason, in principle, why the Marines could not duplicate the capabilities of the 101st, the 82nd, the air cavalry, and mechanized divisions, but for critics of current strategy to wave their arms is not sufficient to make these things happen. And, if they did, it would surely take years. In the meantime, we need an RDJTF with a broad mix of capabilities.

- o The Marine Corps has only three active divisions with worldwide responsibilities. Larger forces are probably needed if deterrence fails. (For better or worse, the current administration is avoiding the issue by "doing everything"-- increasing the size of the Navy, buying new CVBGs, and increasing MAF lift. Whether these items will still have high priority if budget cuts come remains unclear.)

7. Question: So far, we have been talking about the big Soviet scenario, but is that the most likely? Shouldn't we be spending our time and money on more likely ones?

Answer: Planning and preparing for a big Soviet scenario is an important part of deterrence; the worst policy we could have would be to "write off" a part of the Persian Gulf region, and thereby create a vacuum to entice the Soviets. Clearly, there are many potential non-Soviet scenarios, some of them highly plausible and important. However, 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. As to the absolute likelihood of Soviet invasion, the ability of alleged experts to foretell the future in the Middle East and Persian Gulf has been abysmal. There are many objective considerations that argue for us to take the direct threat of Soviet invasion very seriously. On the other hand, it "ought" to be possible to deter that invasion so long as we take steps to protect our interests; i.e., it "ought" to be possible to make that scenario very unlikely (perhaps, to pick some nonrandom examples, as unlikely as the big war in Europe or a nuclear exchange with the Soviets).

8. Question: OK, OK, I hear you, but after all the debating, would you really put your own money down on a bet about what would happen if we really had to deploy and employ the RDJTF?

Answer: There are many scenarios that could prove to be debacles. Our capability to protect our interests in the Persian Gulf are and will remain tenuous--primarily for reasons described earlier (e.g., lack of in-place forces, the uncertainties about regional nations, etc.). However, we are not totally controlled by externals--we can do something to increase the odds of a favorable scenario (and there are scenarios on which to bet with the United States). Some of this will take years of diplomacy and cooperation and other parts will mean maintaining good plans and having a capability to make decisions quickly and decisively in early stages of crisis.

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