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US STRATEGY IN THE PERSIAN GULF REGION (U)

Overview:

(S) Current military objectives and strategies for peacetime and for the range of potential conflicts in Southwest Asia are tailored to the nature of today's threat and are constrained by actual US military capabilities. US national objectives for the region include protecting access to oil, supporting friendly regional governments, countering Soviet efforts to gain influence, deterring or offsetting direct Soviet military intervention. This reflects the fact that the security of the region is inseparable from the fulfillment of security commitments to NATO and Asian allies because of allied dependence on Persian Gulf oil; thus, US and allied security is inseparable from the security of the Persian Gulf region.

(S) The US would:

- a. Oppose Soviet efforts to gain power and influence in the region.
- b. Deter or counter direct Soviet military intervention.
- c. Use military force if necessary to counter hostile attempts to gain control of the Persian Gulf region.
- d. Not withhold forces and resources from Southwest Asia solely because their use might degrade the defense of NATO Europe, Japan, the Republic of Korea, or other allies.

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(S) Defense of US interests in Southwest Asia requires a military structure greater than that currently available. Until adequate capabilities can be developed, the United States must pursue limited military objectives, considering defense priorities and attendant risks worldwide.

(C) Major threats to US interests in Southwest Asia include: (a) internal instability, (b) intraregional conflict, (c) Soviet-supported subversion or invasion by surrogate forces, and (d) Soviet armed intervention.

(S) The most likely objective for a limited Soviet invasion would be to occupy Azerbaijan in support of Azeri secessionist elements. Objectives for a full-scale invasion of Iran would be to seize the oil province of Khuzestan and to control the Strait of Hormuz. Phase I -- Seizure of northern Iran, to include Tehran; Phase II -- Logistic buildup and forward deployment of TACAIR into captured airfields; Phase III -- Seizure of southern Iran.

(S) Mobility and logistics considerations in determining military strategy: (a) great distances, (b) harsh geographic and climatic conditions, (c) relative paucity of logistic infrastructure, and (d) limited US military access to regional facilities.

--Within 30 days, using mobilized lift, the US currently could deploy to Southwest Asia a mix of about 2 light divisions of Army and Marine combat forces, 12 tactical fighter squadrons, 6

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tactical airlift squadrons, and 3 carrier battle groups; closure times vary. This force could be doubled in 60 days, but sustainment of either the 30-day or the 60-day force under combat conditions in Iran is questionable. Deployment of the larger force would necessitate drawdown of supplies and equipment required for the defense of Europe and the Pacific.

--Use of mobilized lift is required upon strategic warning if multi-brigade US forces are to reach Southwest Asia in a timely manner. Declaration of national emergency, should be initiated at the earliest possible moment.

--Because deployability and sustainability are the principal constraining factors in planning for military operations in Southwest Asia, there is a pressing need to improve US military mobility and logistics support capability.

Overall Strategy:

(S) Peacetime military strategy for Southwest Asia must be part of a global strategy of deterrence.

--The foundation of national strategy toward Southwest Asia is political, economic, and military -- designed to strengthen the independence and stability of regional nations and to make them less attractive targets for subversion or aggression.

--The US deterrence strategy should include specific responses to the current situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

--It is imperative that a continuous US military presence be maintained in, or at least on the immediate periphery of, Southwest Asia. This presence must be sufficient to be perceived as a guarantee of US commitment and as evidence that US power in the region is real.

--The US must substantially help strengthen the self-defense capabilities of key states in the region. Expanding direct military sales, assistance, training, and -- where necessary -- grant aid.

--Greater attention should be given to covert operations and capabilities.

(S) The execution of US strategy in Southwest Asia requires greater access to regional facilities. Because the US must have options for military action in the event of denials, redundant access is mandatory.

--Stationing of a NATO contingent in eastern Turkey, including frequent deployment of US tactical fighter units into air bases in eastern Turkey, should be a high-priority objective.

--US deterrent strategy must convey to the Soviets, should they attack the vital US interests in Southwest Asia, the US would promptly respond with military force, not necessarily confined to that theater.

--Deterrence is a two-part strategy that includes signaling intent and increasing military readiness in a manner phased to the threat.

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Strategy Variants:a. (C) Internal Conflict Strategy

Most internal conflict support situations will involve augmented economic, technical, political, and security assistance activities. The actual commitment of US military forces into combat should be made only when other means appear ineffective.

b. (C) Intraregional Conflict Strategy

Freedom of navigation through the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean is an absolute requirement. Air defense of oil facilities is of great significance whether the US is a belligerent or is concerned only with protecting neutral countries from external threat.

c. (S) Counter Soviet Invasion Strategy

(S) The fundamental US objective is to deter a Soviet attack and, should deterrence fail, to dissuade the Soviets from continuing their attack. The US cannot allow the Soviets to drive into the region without contesting them, nor can it accept yielding the Persian Gulf to Soviet control. The Soviets must be convinced that US interests there are vital, that the US cannot accept defeat, and that the US is therefore prepared to risk wider, even global warfare to prevent Soviet control of Persian Gulf oil.

(S) Military actions may include:

- a. Establishing operating bases on the Arabian Peninsula and in Turkey and Pakistan.
- b. Establishing lodgments at Iranian ports, southern airfields, and key road and rail chokepoints.
- c. Interdicting air bases and road and rail lines along routes of advance.
- d. Inserting ground and special operations forces to interdict the Soviet advance, to deny use of air bases and related facilities, and to assist indigenous forces.
- e. Security airfields and key terrain in Iran as far from the Persian Gulf as can be supported.
- f. Attacking Soviet forces in Iran.
- g. Striking Soviet Navy forces and facilities in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region.

(S) Without the use of Turkish air bases, the conduct of air interdiction in northern Iran and the introduction and support of ground elements become much more difficult. If timely actions to pre-position munitions and other supplies were not completed, all alternatives would be severely limited. There is no single preferred concept of operations independent of arguable diplomatic assumptions.

(S) If a direct defense in Iran appears infeasible, the US should consider executing both in-theater and out-of-theater war-widening actions while conducting a deliberate withdrawal to the Arabian Peninsula. The US should build up defenses on the Arabian Peninsula and reinforce to the extent necessary to defend access to Persian Gulf oil.

(S) Risks:

a. The major risk in deploying three carrier battle groups (CVBGs) to the Indian Ocean is that there would be insufficient naval forces remaining to adequately support a NATO conflict.

b. Deployment of 12 tactical fighter squadrons to Southwest Asia would result in a 15% reduction in dedicated US air superiority forces available for NATO.

c. A multibrigade commitment to Southwest Asia would significantly reduce Army forces available to fight in Europe.

d. A one-MAF commitment to Southwest Asia would commit about one-third of worldwide active Fleet Marine Forces. If the amphibious lift assets for this one MAF were to remain with it in Southwest Asia, there would be no remaining capability to conduct amphibious operations with the two other MAFs elsewhere.

e. Concentration of airlift and sealift assets for deployment and sustainment of forces in Southwest Asia will preclude timely deployment to Europe or Korea if required.

(C) Conclusion:

To the degree that current-force strategy reflects insufficient current military capability to protect vital national interests, either the military objectives must be redefined or the US must accept the risk of failure. There are no substitutes in national security for strength, readiness, and resolve.