SECRET

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

(DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS; DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS)

153

RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCE AND THE PERSIAN GULF

A CASE STUDY BY PIERCE K. BULLEN

AND

CAPTAIN DAVID B. ROBINSON, USN

CLASSIFICATION AUTHORIZED BY:

JOHN SAROTT, ACTING DIRECTOR
FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

Twenty-Fourth Session 1981-82

Executive Seminar in National and International Affairs

United States Department of State
Foreign Service Institute

This study has been prepared as part of the curriculum of the Executive Seminar in National and International Affairs. The views expressed in the study are those of the author; they do not necessarily represent either those of the Foreign Service Institute or of the Department of State.

Rapid Deployment Force

and

The Persian Gulf

A Case Study

by

Pierce K. Bullen

and

Captain David B. Robinson, USN

Twenty-Fourth Executive Seminar

March, 1982

Table of Contents

		page
	Preface	i
	Summary	ii
I.	Evolution of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force.	1
	The Carter Doctrine	1
	Establishment of the RDJTF	2
	Facilities Access	4
II.	Political Background and Threats in the Persian Gulf	5
	Political Background	5
	Threats	6
III.	The Formidable Difficulties	7
	Planning Factors	8
	Benign Environment	8
	Warning Time	8
	Strategic Mobility	9
	Strategic Airlift	9
	Strategic Sealift	11
	Prepositioning Ashore	12
	Tactical Mobility	12
	Substainability	13
	U.S. Mining and Mine Countermeasures Capabilities	14
	Communications	14
	Amphibious Shipping and Naval Gunfire Support	15
	Personnel	15
IV.	Conceptual Issues	15
	Soviet-Related Issues	16
	Can U.S. forces defend the Persian Gulf against the USSR without escalating to a world war?	16
	Regional and Internal Threats	17
	Is the RDJTF effectively useful in non-Soviet scenarios?	17
	Can the RDJTF lend effective political support, in deterring action against our friends, even if it is not actually used	
	How much on-land presence is possible or prudent?	19
	Budgetary Issues	20
	Present Program Costs	20
	Cost of increased capability	20
	Impact on Total force levels	21
	Command and Control	21
	Appendix A - Forces Allocated for Planning to RDJTF	22
	Appendix B - U.S. Strategic Airlift and Sealift Forces	23
	Footnotes	24
	Bibliography	26

Foreward

This paper reviews the development of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and related issues faced in force projection to the Persian Gulf area. These issues are all covered in published sources (see Bibliography), which have been drawn on heavily. The authors would also like to express their appreciation to the U.S. military and civilian officers and officials with whom they have discussed these issues. However, the presentation of issues and the opinions expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors.

SUMMARY

Since before World War II, the United States has had rapidly deployable forces -- the Marines, airborne divisions, and maritime forces. However, for some years the U.S. has lacked a viable command and force structure to develop our diverse capabilities, and to employ them in any part of the world without seriously degrading forces committed to the NATO or Korean theaters.

The decision to form a Rapid Deployment Force was hastened by the growing need to become directly involved in protecting our interests in the Persian Gulf region, coupled with the realization that we lacked the preparedness to project a credible force into that area.

The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was established in early 1980. To date, its planning has focused primarily on countering a Soviet threat in the Gulf area. It is also anticipated that U.S. forces could be made available, if called on, to respond to an intra-regional crisis or conflict.

Projecting U.S. forces into a remote area like the Persian Gulf poses formidable difficulties. Some of these are inherent in the distances and climates involved, some are brought about by shortfalls in equipment and capabilities, and others result from the limited possibilities of forward deployment of troops and equipment due to the political sensitivities of the Gulf nations.

A number of conceptual questions are offered for discussion: is the RDJTF an effective deterrent force for Soviet aggression in the area; could a US/USSR confrontation be limited, or would it necessarily escalate into a global conflict; is the RDJTF a viable option for protecting U.S. interests in intra-regional conflicts; can a U.S. military presence be established ashore in peacetime without itself being destabilizing; and how much is the nation willing to pay for Persian Gulf security.

Despite the serious practical and strategic problems, there is a clear need to be able to project U.S. forces into the Persian Gulf area in order to demonstrate this nation's resolve to protect its security interests. The Rapid Development Joint Task Force may not be the ultimate answer to this need, but it is a step which clearly needed to be taken.

I. Ev ion of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force

The Carter Doctrine

In his State of the Union address in January 1980, President Carter proclaimed:

> "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."

This strong enunciation of the importance of the Gulf region to the interests of the U.S. has become known as the Carter Doctrine. This pronouncement was the culmination of protracted policy discussions during which three events dramatically highlighted the strategic situation for the United States: the Iranian revolution in 1979, the taking of U.S. Embassy hostages by Iranian terrorists in November 1979, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

The strategic importance of this area is well documented. It was not until the 1973 oil crisis, however, that the Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf (SWA) region was recognized by the country at large as calling for serious attention. In earlier times, we neither felt the same anxieties nor concerned ourselves greatly with the need for projection of U.S. forces into SWA to protect our security interests. In the 1950s and 1960s we relied on global strategic deterrence to discourage Soviet aggression, while relying on the British to bear the primary responsibilities for security in the Gulf itself. After the U.K. withdrew its military forces from East of Suez in 1971, we shifted to reliance on the "two pillars" of Iran and Saudi Arabia to ensure Gulf security. This policy provided the theoretical underpinning for the sale of more sophisticated arms to Iran, and increased arms to Saudi Arabia. To the extent it appeared viable, reliance on strong, friendly regional powers was clearly the most economical and politically convenient way to protect our interests.

A permanent Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean began in the early 1970s. At approximately the same time, the U.S. Seventh Fleet commenced deploying a carrier task group into the area for short periods on a regular basis. Admiral Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations,

recognized the probable continuing need to support carriers in the area and sought congressional authority to expand the facilities and logistical support capabilities at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean in 1974. In the mid-1970s the Soviets greatly increased their naval presence in the area.

President Carter expressed concern in 1977 regarding the country's limited readiness to project a military presence anywhere in the world outside the NATO and Korean theaters. He determined that a rapidly deployable force option was needed, and directed that planning be initiated to better coordinate this capability.

After the revolution in Iran, the two pillars policy for protecting American security intersts in the SWA region became inoperable. Shortly thereafter, partly in response to the increased Soviet presence and partly in recognition of the limited capabilities of the Middle East Force, the U.S. began to deploy a carrier battle group in the Indian Ocean on a full-time basis.

In February 1979, the National Security Council included the concept of a rapid response force as a strategic option for the Gulf region. In August of that same year the JCS began identifying units which could comprise a rapid deployment force and Defense Secretary Brown said in an interview:

> "...the United States would defend its oil interest in the Middle East with military forces if necessary ... we will take any action that is appropriate to safeguard production of oil and its transportation to consumer nations without interference from hostile powers."

In October 1979, the intention to establish a Rapid Deployment Force was announced. Shortly after the American hostages were seized, the U.S. increased its Indian Ocean fleet to two carrier battle groups.

Establishment of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force

The headquarters of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) was officially established on 1 March 1980 with Lieutenant General P.X. Kelley, USMC, as its first commander. Its stated mission was to plan,

jointly train, exercise, and be prepared to deploy and employ designated forces in response to contingencies anywhere in the world. No new forces were established. Rather, "the RDJTFs job is to amalgamate the broad range of diverse combat capabilities currently extant in all four Services into an effective combat force."[1] Forces were to be assigned as directed by the JCS. The RDJTF was made a subordinate command of the U.S. Readiness Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, one of the eight CINCs reporting directly to the National Command Authorities (NCA) through the JCS.[2]

From its inception, the RDJTF has been designed for flexibility. As General Kelley described it, "We organize around the building-block principle, which means that we could tailor forces so as to respond to minor as well as major contingencies."[3]

In the short period since its establishment, the RDJTF has undergone significant change and refinement. On April 24 1981, the Secretary of Defense directed that RDJTF evolve into a separate unified command responsible for all aspects of U.S. military planning and operations in the SWA region. Although the RDJTF was formed as a worldwide contingency force, its primary focus for planning had already been centered on SWA. SecDef directed the JCS to formulate the necessary transition planning to accomplish this task by a date subsequently set for 1 January 1983. In memos of 18 May and 6 June 1981 (JCSM 201-81 and 255-81), the JCS proposed three phases for the transition, recommended specific forces to be placed under the operational control[4] of the Commander, RDJTF, and delineated the proposed geographical area of responsibility for the new CINC.[5] Approved terms of reference under which the RDJTF will operate during the transition to a unified command were promulgated by the JCS on 23 September 1981 in SM 661-81.

On 1 October 1981 the RDJTF commenced operating as a separate task force reporting directly to the NCA through the JCS. Its primary focus continues to be SWA, although it retains its direction to be prepared for any contingency worldwide. However, this will likely change when the RDJTF becomes a CINC. The forces assigned for operational control are existing units which generally do not have a primary commitment to the NATO or Korean theaters, but do have secondary taskings worldwide including those theaters. (These forces are listed in Appendix A.)

The RDJTF is not structured as an invasion force, but rather as a rapidly deployable force to deter aggression from outside the SWA region and to assist nations in the region in resisting aggression. If deterrence fails, the RDJTF is prepared to conduct sustained combat operations.

The SWA region encompasses an area which approximates the size of the United States with a wide variety of terrain and climatic conditions. The Gulf is 7,000 airmiles and 12,000 sea miles (via the Cape of Good Hope) from the U.S. east coast. Consequently, the RDJTF is critically dependent on strategic mobility assets. In a prolonged engagement, sealift will provide the RDJTF its staying power, moving approximately 90-95 percent of the cargo. The first ships, however, cannot arrive from the U.S. for nearly 30 days, so airlift and prepositioning will have to provide the personnel, equipment, and logistics for the first month.

To enhance sealift mobility and to improve the speed with which the first forces could be assembled ashore, a Near Term Prepositioning Force (NTPF) consisting of thirteen ships has been assembled at Diego Garcia. The NTPF carries the principal items of equipment, less helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, to support the assault elements of the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB), along with selected equipment for early arriving Army and Air Force units. The NTPF ships are 2500 miles from the Gulf.

Facilities Access

Although a massive peacetime basing structure is neither currently feasible nor intended, shore logistical support and base access will be essential if the RDJTF is called on to operate in the area. The United States has negotiated access agreements with three regional countries: Kenya, Somalia, and Oman. These agreements permit the U.S. access to military bases, airfields, and ports in circumstances where both countries agree on their use. It seems almost certain that the governments concerned would grant access rights for an incursion or aggression from outside the region. It is not assured that they would be made available in a regional conflict in which the individual countries did not feel threatened.

The governments concerned do not desire a highly visible U.S. military presence, and none will result from these agreements. In return for the agreements, the U.S. has committed to a sizeable increase in military aid and construction. In addition, Oman regards this agreement as tantamount to a U.S. commitment to its security.[6]

In addition to these negotiated agreements, President Sadat offered to permit the U.S. to build limited military facilities at Ras Banas. President Mubarak has given assurances that he will abide by this offer, and Congress is now considering the necessary funding.

II. Political Background and Threats in the Persian Gulf

The U.S. approaches Persian Gulf security issues with a dual purpose: to keep the Soviets out, and to encourage stability in the region. Stability is in our interest both to keep the oil flowing and to avoid upheavals which could lead to anti-American regimes or provide an opportunity for Soviet political or military action. The Persian Gulf monarchies, on the other hand, see the top priority as internal stability, followed by avoidance of regional warfare, preservation of independence vis-a-vis the West, and lastly the Soviet threat.

Political Background

A third-world, anti-colonial heritage is fundamental to the people of the Gulf, most of whom were under British control or influence until after World War II. This is one reason why, in their concern not to be dominated by any outside force, they look at the West (now the U.S.) with concern. No government wants to appear dependent on the outsider because dependence is a sign of weakness. Reluctance to get too close to the U.S. is reinforced by the Arabs' deep concern for the Arab-Israeli (Palestine) problem, where they see the U.S. as the essential supporter of Israel. Arab leaders have told the U.S. that "as soon as you solve the Palestine problem," the door to greater security cooperation will be open. (However, one should not read into such statements a total willingness to have American bases on their territory in such eventuality.)

While some of these factors may be muted in some Arab officials' statements, because of perceptions of national interest, they are sufficiently potent at the popular level -- and the opposition to "foreign bases" is so intense -- that area leaders' actions on security cooperation with the U.S. are limited by the fear of regional or domestic reactions. They cannot afford to permit much of a U.S. military presence in their countries lest this catalyze a domestic and regional opposition which could lead to their own demise.

On the other hand, many Arab countries are prepared to have an over-the-horizon U.S. presence to cope with any possible Russian threat, and a few might conceive of such a U.S. force for some other circumstances. Area countries are happy to receive inputs from the U.S. which appear to strengthen them domestically or regionally (military equipment and training, internal security training, economic aid for the poorer countries among them, and U.S. foreign economic policies which facilitate their development).

Threats

U.S. planning is oriented toward a Soviet incursion into Iran on the theory that this is the most serious threat, though not the most likely. As Gen. Kelley says, if we are prepared for the worst, we should then be prepared for any lesser military threat. However, the possibility of regional conflict or internal subversion appears much greater than a Soviet incursion. Congress has doubts, expressed in last year's budget hearings, on whether preparation for the worst case in fact ensures a capability for lesser contingencies. The potential for regional turmoil disrupting Western oil supplies is vividly illuminated by the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, which severely cut back Iranian and Iraqi oil production.

The Soviets have the assets to pose a serious threat if they felt secure in using them. They have over 25 active and reserve divisions in the Transcaucasian and Turkestan military districts and Afghanistan, an impressive airborne capacity (seven divisions), significant naval forces in the Indian Ocean, access to friendly ports and facilities in Southern Yemen and Ethiopia, and the tremendous advantage of propinquity. These strengths would be of immense advantage in a conventional war, or

in a situation in which Soviet airborne forces were rushed in to support an initially successful coup attempt. Furthermore, the 25 divisions mentioned would be available for use in Iran without affecting the forces dedicated to confronting NATO or China. If invited into Iran, a substantially smaller force could be used.

While internal instability is a fundamental concern, most Arab monarchies in the area look relatively stable for the immediate years ahead. The Gulf states which most risk domestic unrest appear to be Iran and Iraq, and turmoil in Iran after Khomeini goes could provide an opening for pro-Soviet elements. Of course, future developments could change the situation in any of these countries. As to regional conflicts in the Gulf, the leading possibilities in the coming years would be a widening of the Iran-Iraq war, a separate conflict between Iran and one of the other Gulf Arab states, or (after the end of the present war) an Iraqi conflict with Kuwait or possibly Saudi Arabia.

III. The Formidable Difficulties

There is clearly a need for a credible and capable military force and strategy for SWA. However, viewpoints concerning force make-up, combat capabilities, acceptable costs, political maneuverability and scenarios have as many proponents and critics as there are typewriters available. The RDJTF has made substantial progress in planning for contingency operations in SWA and in developing the requisite capabilities with the forces allocated. The RDJTF headquarters emanates a sense of optimism, joined with a pragmatic awareness of the challenges ahead, at all echelons of the command.

During its short history, the RDJTF has engaged in a demanding exercise program, with eleven major exercises including three deployments of forces to the SWA region. The most recent and successful exercise was Bright Star 82, conducted late last year. This exercise, involving over 6,500 troops (including 5,500 airlifted from the U.S.) and 200 aircraft, was designed to exercise the RDJTF headquarters command and control procedures, provide an interface between senior U.S. military commanders and area officials, familiarize RDJTF forces with the SWA environment, evaluate logistics and communications plans, and provide a highly visible display of this country's resolve and capability to protect our security interests.

The exercise involved: (1) desert maneuvers in Egypt, with parachute drops and bombing practice, including the dramatic first employment of B-52 bombers flying non-stop from U.S. bases and dropping their payload within one minute of the planned time; (2) in Oman, U.S. Marines and amphibious shipping practiced coastal landings with Omani forces; (3) joint exercises with Sudanese troops near Khartoum; and (4) joint logistical training with Somali troops in Berbera.

There are, however, problems and deficiences which must be addressed and solved in the future if the U.S. military is to attain the force projection capability necessary to protect this country's vital interests not only in SWA but worldwide. Due strictly to space limitations, the following paragraphs deal only with some of the more pressing problems associated with a U.S. force projection in SWA and do not address the documented and demonstrated strengths of the RDJTF.

Planning Factors

Specific planning factors were not made available to the authors. Several planning factors, however, can be gleaned from the literature and congressional testimony. Two of these, benign environment and strategic warning, are of concern.

Benign environment refers to the need for secure ports and proximate airfields for marrying troops airlifted from CONUS with either maritime prepositioned or airlifted equipment. If a benign environment is not present, forcible entry would be required. Since NTPF equipment cannot be directly used for forcible entry, such entry would require using another unit with its own equipment, such as a different MAB or the 82nd Airborne Division, plus tactical air. The combat sustainability of these units, however, would be limited.

Warning Time. The Soviets would require mobilization time prior to a full scale invasion of Iran, the worst-case scenario. The development of a mobilization should give the NCA time to evaluate the situation and reach a decision on deployment of U.S. forces in advance of the invasion. A Soviet operation of lesser scope could give only a very short military warning time. Military warning times for an intra-regional conflict are not as easily postulated. However, it is commonly held that political actions could give strategic warning in advance of detected military indicators.

Nevertheless, warning time and the commensurate NCA decision to deploy U.S. forces are critical to the RDJTF's capability in countering any threat in the SWA region. The likely ambiguity inherent in making such a decision is pointed out by Jeffrey Record:

> "... to ensure the RDF's arrival at the point of dispute before hostilities begin ... requires a willingness on the part of the political decision-makers to deploy U.S. forces to a crisis spot under circumstances likely to be characterized by ambiguity with regard to the immediacy of the threat and understandable concern that preemptive deployment could provoke the very outbreak of violence it was designed to deter."[7]

Therefore, if the RDJTF is to be an effective extension of the nation's foreign policy, a timely order from the Commander-in-Chief is paramount. As expressed by Secretary Brown:

> "What is important is the ability to move forces into the region with the numbers, mobility, and firepower to preclude initial adversary forces from reaching vital targets. It is not necessary for our initial units to be able to defeat the force which 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 indicators."[8]

Strategic Mobility

General Jones, USAF, JCS Chairman, has addressed the continuing shortfalls in the nation's strategic mobility in his Posture Statement for 1983. The inadequacies of our strategic mobility assets, both sealift and airlift, will be with us for a long time to come. Significant upgrading is costly and time-consuming, but it is necessary if the U.S. is to have a force projection capability to areas in which the USSR has logistical advantages. Jones stated:

"Without adequate mobility, combat forces cannot be brought to bear at the point of attack soon enough or with sufficient staying power to influence the outcome favorably ... Mobility shortfalls are especially pronounced when multiple, simultaneous contingencies are considered."

Strategic Airlift. A deployment of one or more U.S. divisions would require the dedicated use of the entire inventory of military strategic airlift aircraft, (70 C-5s and 234 C-141s). General Jones stated that current strategic airlift forces, including the Civil Reserve Air Fleet of some 350 planes, provides adequate passenger lift capability to support most major planned deployments. However, the fleet has serious shortfalls in cargo airlift requirements, especially for outsize equipment such as self-propelled howitzers, fighting vehicles, attack helicopters and support vehicles. He goes on to say that the inter-theater airlift capability should be increased by 20 million ton-miles per day (equivalent to approximately 115 C-5s) to provide the nation an adequate capability for force projection. (A list of current airlift assets is in Appendix B.)

Several programs are planned for improving these capabilities. These include purchase of a number of KC-10 aerial refuelers, a C-5 wing modification program to add to aircraft service life, and C-141 stretch modification to increase cubic capacity (but not tonnage) and add in-flight refueling capability.

Record, a strong proponent of sealift prepositioning, does not feel that these enhancement programs are sufficient. He says,

"... the initiatives do not fully serve the RDF's twin goals of being able to preempt Soviet intervention or local aggression in the Gulf and to reinforce adequately a commitment once made."[9]

A related topic is the shortage of sufficient intra-theater aircraft. Successful prosecution of a conflict in SWA would require forward movement of forces from the air and sea ports of debarkation and the ability to distribute material and equipment throughout the theater. The current short-haul aircraft inventory is deficient in both capacity and outsize equipment capability.

Strategic Sealift. The nation's sealift assets of approximately 490 military and commercial ships are barely adequate in terms of tonnage carrying capacity. However, there is a critical need for upgraded assets (particularly fast roll-on/roll-off cargo ships and fast tankers and barge carriers) to provide worldwide rapid deployment and reinforcement capability. (A current listing of sealift assets is contained in Appendix B.)

The current fleet suffers from (1) lack of self-sustainability, i.e., a dependence on berthing and off-loading facilities; (2) antiquated ships in the National Defense Reserve Fleet; and (3) long transit times because most ships have maximum speeds of under 20 knots.

Several programs have been initiated to enhance sealift mobility. The NTPF, briefly mentioned earlier, is one such program. The Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) program, scheduled for completion in 1987, will have capacity for the equipment, less helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, and 30 days combat stores for the assault forces of three MABs and selected Army and Air Force units. These ships will not require shore based off-loading equipment, but will require a secure port.

Recently, the Navy purchased eight commercial SL-7 container ships. These ships have a speed of 30 knots, enabling transit to the Gulf region in approximately 19 days vice the average 36 days for current assets. As currently configured, the ships are not optimal for carrying armored equipment. After conversion to a roll-on/roll-off configuration they will be able to transport combat element equipment, plus 5 days sustainability, for a full army mechanized division. Current plans are for these ships to be home-ported in the U.S., with the primary mission of transporting the Army's 24th Mechanized Division, but they could be used for any mission.

Establishing the proper air/sea mobility mix is a gamble. The tendancy oftentimes is to look at the cost of air transport compared to sealift and lean towards purchasing more ships at the expense of aircraft purchases. (To illustrate, it costs approximately $142,000 to lift one battle tank to SWA in a C-5. Each 60,000 short tons of supplies which can be maritime prepositioned within

1,000 miles of an objective will save 100 C-141 sorties per day for one month.) But flexibility and versatility cannot be attained by putting all the eggs in one basket, and airlifting personnel is inevitable because combat troops are not permitted peacetime basing in the SWA area.

Prepositioning Ashore. In addition to maritime prepositioning, another option could be to preposition armor and other heavy equipment at shore sites in the region. But it would not be advantageous to concentrate large amounts at any one site, particularly in potentially unstable areas, because of logistical considerations and potential vulnerabilities. Further, the lack of political receptivity in any of the countries in which prepositioning would be advantageous augurs against significant prepositioning ashore in the near-term.

Tactical Mobility

There is a continuing criticism that U.S. projection forces, because they are designed for rapid air transport, lack the necessary armor and tactical mobility to effectively combat the heavily armored Soviet airborne divisions and motorized rifle divisions which they could expect to face in the worse-case scenario. This perceived weakness is the primary reason Record feels that the RDJTF as currently structured is "fatally flawed." He points out that the forces available to be deployed quickly (Army airborne and Marine divisions) have far fewer armored vehicles than Soviet airborne and mechanized units of comparable sizes.

Numbers alone are not by themselves determinative unless one assumes these forces will clash head-on on an undulating plain. SWA terrain, notably in Iran, can present overwhelming logistical and interdiction defense problems. As General Meyer, Army Chief of Staff, pointed out during congressional hearings, "... the light airborne force in restricted terrain, in certain areas of that world, presents significant advantages over the heavy, mechanized, roadbound Soviet force."[10] In addition, General Barrow, the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, discounts the criticism helicopters have received after the aborted hostage rescue attempt, emphasizing that his forces rely heavily on the rapid tactical mobility helicopters can provide.

Sustainability

The severe difficulties in sustaining U.S. forces ashore in the SWA region -- supplying beans, bullets, and especially water -- is recognized as the most serious challenge the RDJTF has to face. The environment, lack of an established shore basing infrastructure, and the extreme distances involved are the overriding causes of the problem, with mobility weaknesses a contributing factor.

Water requirements in an arid region are awesome. It is estimated that water requirements would be 20 gals/man/day, of which 4 gallons must be potable. A new reverse-osmosis water desalting system was successfully tested during Bright Star 82, but development and testing of an efficient water distribution system is still lacking.

Regional distribution of fuel, consumables, and spare parts is hampered by the terrain and limited road systems. Although one can assume that a full-scale Soviet invasion would lead regional nations to open staging areas for U.S. resupply operations, it is easy to develop scenarios where these facilities would not be provided in the right places. While intra-theater airlift could be used, it is too costly to plan on prolonged resupply of a major force by air alone.

During the funding cutbacks in the early 70s, the Army and Air Force were forced to allocate many of their field support and logistical functions to ready reserve units. Even under the building block concept of the RDJTF, some of these reserve units could well be in the forefront of the forces required. Thus there could be an immediate need to call up reserves if the RDJTF is deployed, complicating the deployment decision. In addition, the President is limited by law to activating a maximum of 100,000 reserves and then only for 90 days unless a National Emergency is declared. This is apart from the statutory restriction against using U.S. troops in combat for more than 90 days without the Congress' concurrence under the War Powers Resolution of 1973.

U.S. Mining and Mine Countermeasures Capabilities

The Soviet Union has the largest stockpile of naval mines in the world, and a large portion of the Soviet surface fleet, submarine fleet, and maritime aircraft are believed capable of laying mines on short notice. The Soviets also possess a large force of mine countermeasures (MCM) ships. In contrast, U.S. mining capability is primarily restricted to aircraft and some attack submarines. Our MCM forces consist of 25 obsolete ocean minesweepers (22 of which are in the Naval Reserve Force) and two squadrons of airborne MCM helicopters.

The mining of the Straits of Hormuz, for instance, would constitute a serious threat to the nation's security interests. Even a pretense of mining -- e.g., enemy forces dropping inert drums in the region and declaring the area "mined" -- could disrupt oil tanker traffic. The situation could resemble that of the merchant skippers in Haiphong harbor who were reluctant to get underway even after the U.S. announced that the mines there were no longer active.

Communications

Since Hannibal realized the necessity of communicating with the subaltern on the lead elephant, communications have been a critical and vulnerable battlefield necessity. Without secure, reliable communications, command and control of dispersed forces is impossible.

The RDFTF is dependent on communications support from the Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) headquartered at MacDill -- a highly proficient, experienced and dedicated command. However, the JCSE is also responsible for providing other communications support to CINCs worldwide as ordered by the JCS. It is not dedicated to, nor necessarily available for, RDJTF deployments.

The SWA region does not enjoy the degree of established communications infrastructure which exists in such geographical areas as Europe. The RDJTF is dependent on portable, jam-susceptible field communications equipment. Although today's equipment is technologically advanced, communications are still hampered by the physical properties and weaknesses inherent in electronic propagation. The problems are compounded by a lack of HF (long-range) communication stations in the area.

Amphibious Shipping and Naval Gunfire Support

As recently as 1968, the Navy had enough amphibious shipping to lift the assault forces of two Marine Amphibious Forces (division/air wing). Today that capability has shrunk to the assault forces of one MAF, using the amphibious shipping from both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets. The majority of these ships will reach the end of their normal service life in the next decade, creating a block obsolescence problem. There are only limited plans for building new assets in the next five years.

Of equal concern is the greatly diminished capability the Navy has to support an amphibious landing with gunfire support, the only all-weather fire support available. Since 1964 the total number of barrels which can effectively be used for support has declined by 70 percent.

Personnel

Since units assigned to the RDJTF have received priority manning by their parent services, the overall manning of these forces is excellent. They do, however, suffer from a key shortfall extant in all the services -- a shortage of mid-grade non-commissioned and chief petty officers.

Only in the last three years has the nation realized that retention of experienced personnel, not recruiting, is the crucial parameter in the all-volunteer force. Congressional initiatives have helped stem the hemorrhage of talent, but it will be several more years before this shortfall can be corrected. As one senior officer bemoaned, "We have found in the armed forces that it takes ten years experience to gain ten years experience."

IV. Conceptual Issues

Several broad topics for discussion are listed below. These issues were among those examined during the 1982 defense budget hearings, where many of them will be discussed again this spring. They are also discussed in Record's book. The issues are not black and white; differing points of view exist on each. The sections below give brief issue statements with a few thoughts about each, without getting into a full discussion of viewpoints or formulating conclusions.

Soviet-Related Issues

It has been argued that the real deterrent to overt Soviet aggression in the Persian Gulf is (1) the overall US/USSR military balance, (2) the expectation that the U.S. would fight for the Gulf, and (3) the fact that the Soviets have consistently avoided conflicts which would lead them into a direct clash with U.S. forces. This last point is of course dependent on our willingness to fight being credibly maintained. Hence, in the context of a direct Soviet attack scenario, the primary value of a rapid deployment force is as concrete evidence of our resolve to fight for the Gulf -- the RDJTF's deterrent effect. Secretary of Defense Weinberger described U.S. security policy toward the USSR as basically one of deterrence in which the RDJTF plays a part:

> "For the region of the Persian Gulf, in particular, strategy is based on the concept that the prospect of combat with the United States and other friendly forces, coupled with the prospect that we might carry the war to other areas, is the most effective deterrent to Soviet aggression."[11]

Scenarios can be postulated in which the Soviets might be invited into Iran, and would be tempted to move in the belief that the circumstances would be so clouded that the U.S. would not respond militarily. This might occur, for example, if the USSR were invited to assist a leftist group which had seized power in Tehran, or a breakaway leftist regime in Azerbaijan. In such circumstances, the existence of the RDJTF could increase the deterrent effect of a U.S. warning against intervention.

Can U.S. forces defend the Persian Gulf against the USSR without escalating to a world war? If deterrence fails, Soviet forces move into Iran, and the U.S. sends in the RDJTF, the risk of a world war would be high. While the RDJTF may be credible as a show of the nation's resolve, with a tripwire effect if deployed, it is militarily adequate only up to a certain point. The balance of forces -- including readily deployable military strength, sustainability, and ability to reinforce -- is heavily in favor of the USSR. The RDJTF would be out-gunned and could not roll back a significant Soviet advance which

has occurred. Most observers feel the U.S. could not stop the Soviets with conventional forces if they were resolved to march to the Gulf. Continuing Soviet military pressure could in time expel any U.S. force from most or all of Iran, and could probably interdict oil supply from other Gulf countries as well. In this view, a serious effort to stop them would require horizontal escalation into a broader war. JCS Chairman Jones told Congress that if the Soviets

> "are making a concerted effort to take over the Arabian Gulf, at least the Soviets should be aware that conflict won't necessarily be limited to the region where they have the strategic advantage. I don't necessarily say that means World War III, buth they ought to know it won't be just on their terms in a place of their advantage."[12]

On the other hand, a Soviet move into Iran could occur without these results if the geographical movement of Soviet forces were either limited in conception, or limited by the interposition of U.S. forces. It would be possible for Soviet forces to move into Northern Iran and U.S. forces into Southern Iran without the two ever coming into contact, as napened when similar zones of occupation were taken by the USSR and the British during World War II. In this sort of scenario, rapid RDJTF movement would play a deterrent role, making use of the Soviets' reluctance to clash directly with U.S. forces.

Another possible mode of Soviet military involvement could present special problems. If the USSR sent airborne intervention forces quickly to support an indigenous revolutionary take-over in a Persian Gulf country, the Soviets could be on the ground before the U.S. had a chance to react. This would confront the U.S. with the prospect of itself initiating military action against Soviet forces.

Regional and Internal Threats

Is the RDJTF effectively useful in non-Soviet scenarios? There is a debate as to whether U.S. forces would be asked to, or could effectively, respond to internal disorders or fighting between regional countries.

For internal security crises, many observers see virtually no role for the RDJTF. Subversion, terrorism, coups, and rebellion are far less susceptible to military solutions than is direct aggression. U.S. forces might be called on and arrive too late. In any event, a regime which needs U.S. troops to stay in power probably cannot be saved in the long run. However, the possibility that we might be invited in and want to try to assist a beleagured regime cannot be excluded.

In a conflict between regional countries, there may be a greater chance of U.S. forces being useful or of having a significant deterrent effect. However, it is doubtful whether a request for U.S. military assistance would come before the outbreak of hostilities. This could mean that some positions would already have been taken by the invaders and could call for a U.S. forcible-entry capability. It would, for example, be possible to imagine use of U.S. forces to help defend against an Iranian attack on one of the Arab monarchies. (Present U.S. use of AWACs on behalf of Saudi Arabia could be viewed by others as indicating a possibility that U.S. forces might be so used.) An Iraqi or South Yemeni attack on Saudi Arabia or Oman might also fall into this category. The desire of some area governments for an over-the-horizon U.S. presence implies that they can conceive of contingencies in which they might want to call on U.S. forces, or point to them as a deterrent.

Can the RDJTF lend effective political support, in deterring action against our friends, even if it is not actually used? Perhaps more important is the deterrent effect which the availability of U.S. force, even over-the-horizon, could have in a potential regional crisis. Indeed, the U.S. was considered weak in its resolve to defend its interests in the Gulf before it began sending carrier battle groups to the Indian Ocean and created the RDJTF. The favorable, although skittish, attitude of the Arab monarchies toward a U.S. capability to move forces to the Gulf must reflect a feeling that their own positions are strengthened, and potential adversaries somewhat deterred, by such a presence.

Of course, the countries of the region need to provide their own defense forces insofar as possible. Regional military cooperation would be the best way of enhancing the individual countries' security, and some tentatives in that direction are evident in the development of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the procurement of compatible equipment (e.g., I-HAWK anti-aircraft missiles by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait).

How much on-land presence is possible or prudent? As Record says,

> "Friendly regimes in the Gulf region are unwilling to permit the establishment in peacetime of an operationally significant U.S. military presence on their territory, for fear that such a presence would compromise their internal political legitimacy."[12]

Area countries think that a shore-based U.S. presence is destabilizing beyond a fairly low threshold. Oman is the only Gulf country which has been willing even to agree to U.S. access to its facilities, aside from Bahrain's longstanding consent for use of its port by Mideast for ships. The Saudis have thus far refused, as have the other Gulf monarchies, and there appear to be more or less narrow limits to what Kenya and Egypt are willing to permit.

Some optimists hope that in time area states will "get used to" a growing U.S. presence in peacetime, but history suggests that this is very doubtful. While we have probably not yet reached the limits of local tolerance, it is difficult to conceive of any area country except Somalia agreeing to the stationing of combat units or of significant numbers of personnel even in a facilities maintenance, communications, and aircraft/ship servicng role. In view of the destabilizing popular political reaction which would ensue, it appears inimical to U.S. interests to station in any area country larger elements than make long-run political sense, even if at some point a fearful or weak government is willing to permit that.

It is also argued that a substantial U.S. presence on land might facilitate Soviet basing in other countries of the region. While this argument may have some validity, it is questionable whether it is relevant to the relatively low levels of U.S. presence which a prudent regard for local/regional political factors would permit. The existing Soviet presence in Ethiopa appears more substantial than anything we have yet in prospect.

Budgetary Issues

Present Program Costs. There is no comprehensive estimate of costs attributable to the RDJTF force because so many of the costs are imbedded in the U.S. force structure. This is implicit in the fact that RDJTF planning thus far does not involve creation of any new forces. But some differential costs have been incurred. RDJTF has stated that programs for RDJTF exercises and training, facility improvements, support and special equipment, prepositioning of stocks, weapons systems modifications, and strategic mobility improvements are budgeted to cost $1.5 billion in FY 81 and $4.3 billion in FY 82.[14] These costs include overseas military construction programmed at $1.5 billion for FY 81-FY 85. (The ultimate total construction may cost significantly more.) The budget figure presumably covers the cost of building RDJTF Headquarters facilities in Tampa, but it probably does not cover staff costs for the 967-man RDJTF Headquarters. The figure apparently also does not cover aid being provided as quid-pro-quo for access.[15]

Cost of increased capability. It would be possible to spend greatly increased amounts of money to provide a rapid deployment force with greater capability than currently planned. Increased expenditures could be envisaged for more strategic mobility and prepositioning, additional facilities construction, light armored vehicles or other additions to tactical mobility, or increased amphibious and mine counter-measures capabilities. To fight and win a war against the USSR in Iran would call for a tremendous movement of U.S. forces to the area, and probably require much greater forces in readiness in advance of the conflict that now exist.

Record says that for the U.S. to mount a serious military defense of the Persian Gulf area against the USSR would call for hard budgetary choices and probably could not be achieved within the framework of the all-volunteer force.[16] Without going to such extremes,

there is clearly an issue of how much money it is worth spending in support of our commitment to SWA security, including the RDJTF, in comparison to other military and civilian priorities.

Impact on total force levels. As presently constituted, the RDJTF and the eventual CINC/SWA do not involve any increase in overall U.S. force levels. Goals are to be achieved within existing manpower levels, using existing units. However, the forces to be used are ones which already have mission taskings worldwide, including NATO or Far Eastern contingencies. This dual designation of forces implicitly poses the question of whether, or above what point, the U.S. commitment in Southwest Asia implies a need for larger total U.S. forces, and an increase in total lift capacity.

Command and control

Congressional staff have suggested that the evolving CINC/SWA should have the Indian Ocean added to its geographical area of responsibility, and should be provided with the naval assets necessary to form a fifth U.S. fleet. In this view, CINC/SWA should be headquartered afloat or in an accessible port such as Perth or Freemantle, Australia. Such an idea poses its own problems, notably the need for additional logistical capability to support a separate fleet, and a viable afloat command ship or headquarters facilities in Australia. Consequently, it does not appear to be a practical immediate step, but it would be a feasible goal if adequate funds were appropriated.

APPENDIX A

FORCES ALLOCATED FOR PLANNING TO THE RDJTF

Service	Unit
Army	HQ XVIII Airborne Corps 82nd Airborne Division 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) 6th Cavalry Brigade (Air Combat) Ranger and Special Forces Units
Air Force	2 Bomber Squadrons 12 Tactical Fighter Squadrons 2 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadrons 9 Tactical Airlift Squadrons
Navy	3 Carrier Battle Groups 1 Surface Action Group 5 Maritime Patrol Squadrons
Marines	1 Maritime Amphibious Force 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade

---

Army and Air Force units are under the operational control of Commander, RDJTF.

Navy units operate "in support of" Commander, RDJTF.

Marine units operate under Navy when control afloat, and under Commander, RDJTF when deployed ashore.

APPENDIX B

U.S. STRATEGIC AIRLIFT FORCES
(as of 1 December 1981)

Military Airlift Command		Civil Reserve Air Fleet	
Type	Number	Type	Number
C-5	70	short-range international	28
C-141	234	long-range international (passenger)	215
		long-range international (cargo)	109
	304		352

U.S. STRATEGIC SEALIFT FORCES
(as of 30 September 1981)

	Dry cargo	Tankers
MSC Controlled Fleet	12	19
U.S. Merchant Marine	158	119
Ready Reserve Force	31	0
National Defense Reserve Fleet	142	8
	343	146

Ready Reserve Force ships are inactive reserve ships designed to be manned and ready in 5-10 days.

Footnotes

[1]Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services on Department of Defense Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1982, United States Senate, 97th Congress, 1st Session (1981), Part 4, p. 1708 (Hereafter cited as Hearings).

[2]The eight U.S. commands, organized in accordance with the National Security Act, are: Aerospace Defense Command, Atlantic Command, U.S. European Command, Military Airlift Command, Pacific Command, U.S. Readiness Command, U.S. Southern Command, and Strategic Air Command.

[3]P.X. Kelley, "Rapid Deployment: A Vital Trump", Parameters. 1981.

[4]Operational control is defined as those functions of command involving the composition of subordinate forces, assignment of tasks, designation of objectives, and the authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission.

[5]The current geographical area for RDJTF planning includes 18 countries and two bodies of water, but not the Indian Ocean. These are: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, North Yemen, South Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea.

[6]U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf: Report of a Staff Study Mission, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, March 16, 1981, p. 17. This report includes a synopsis of the agreements and political considerations relating to SWA.

[7]Jeffrey Record, The Rapid Deployment Force and U.S. Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf, (Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc., 1981), p. 20.

[8]Harold Brown, Remarks to the Council of Foreign Relations, New York, March 6, 1980.

[9]Record, p. 61.

[10]Hearings, p. 1991.

[11]Quoted in Navy Times, February 22, 1982. p. 19.

[12]Hearings, p. 1982.

[13]Record, p. viii.

[14]RDJTF Public Affairs Office. Fact Sheet, September 1981. p. 6.

[15]Oman: Initially $5 million/year in grants plus some $35 million/year in FMS and AID loans. Somalia: initially economic aid averaging $26 million/year, plus FMS credits of $20 million/year. (U.S. Security Interests, pp. 15-20, 50-53.) For Kenya and Egypt, there appears to be no direct link between RDJTF access and ongoing aid and FMS credit levels.

[16]Record, p. viii.

Bibliography

I. Publications

Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate. Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services on S. 815. Part 4: Sea Power and Force Projection. U.S. Government Printing Office. 1981. Pp. 1625-2316.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. U.S. Security Interests in the Persian Gulf: Report of a Staff Study Mission. U.S. Government Printing Office. 1981. 102 pp.

Public Affairs Office, Rapid Development Joint Task Force. Fact Sheet. September 1981. 12 pp.

Record, Jeffrey. The Rapid Deployment Force and U.S. Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf. Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc. Washington, DC, February 1981. 82 pp.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. United States Military Posture for FY 1983. Washington. 1982. 120 pp.

Public Affairs Division, USMC. NTPS/MPS and Amphibious Operations. Washington. 1981. 4 pp.

II. Articles

Forsberg, Randall. "The Case Against A Rapid Deployment Force." Christian Science Monitor. June 3, 1980. P. 25.

Meyer, D. G. and Schemmer, B. F. "We Will Do Whatever the Country Wants Us To Do." (Interview with Gen. R. H. Barrow.) Armed Forces Journal. Nov. 1980.

Hickman, William F. LCDP, USN. "Soviet Naval Policy in the Indian Ocean." U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings. August 1979. Pp. 43-52.

Kelley, P. X. "Rapid Deployment: A Vital Trump." Parameters. 1981.

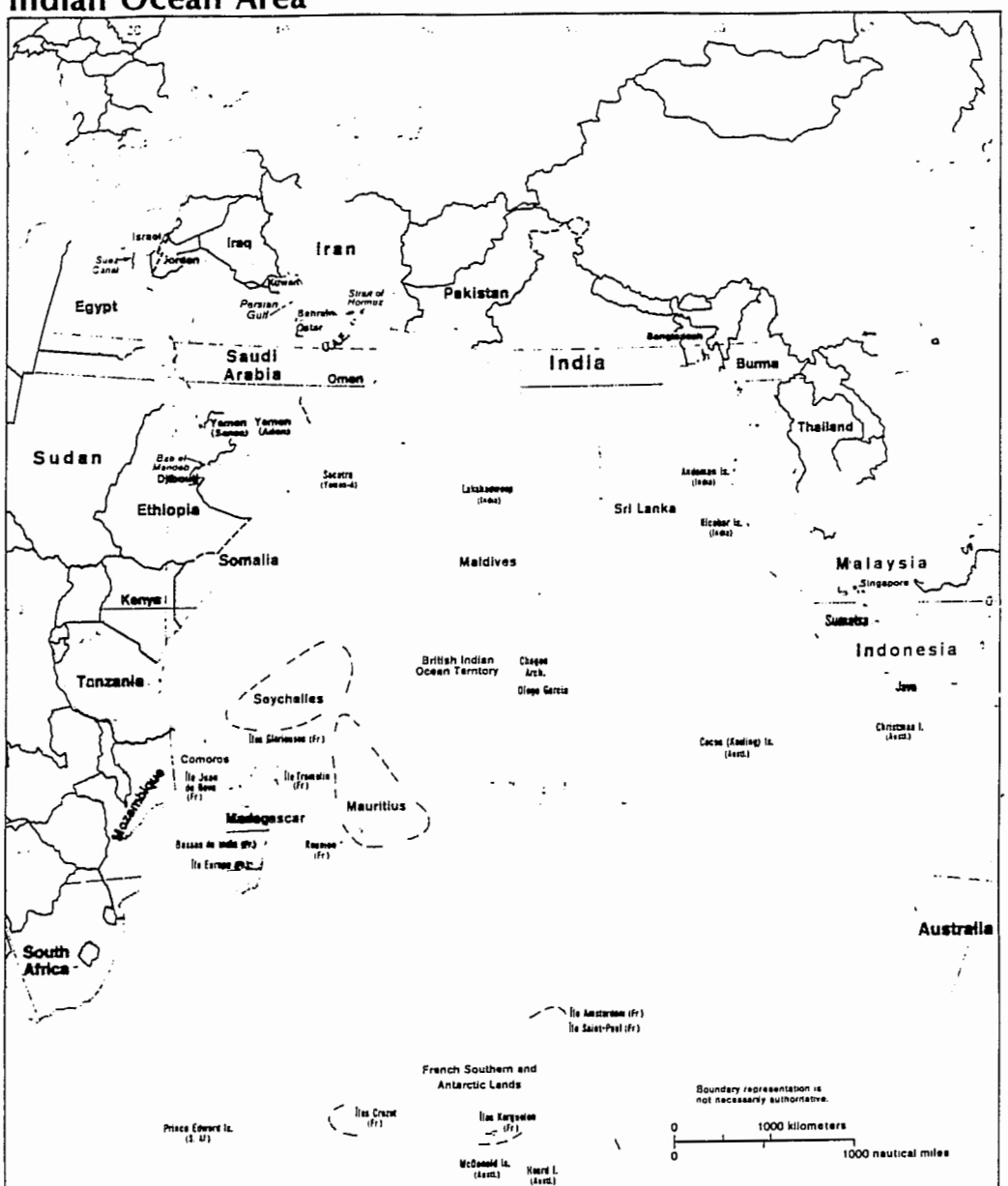
Miller, John G., COL. USMC. "Amphibious Warfare: the Decade of Decision." U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings. September 1981. Pp. 74-79.

Johnson, Maxwell O., MAJ, USMC. "U.S. Strategic Options in the Persian Gulf." U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings. February 1981. Pp. 53-59.

Lacouture, John E., CAPT, USN (ret.). "Seapower in the Indian Ocean: A Requirement for Western Security." Naval Institute Proceedings. August 1979. Pp. 30-41.

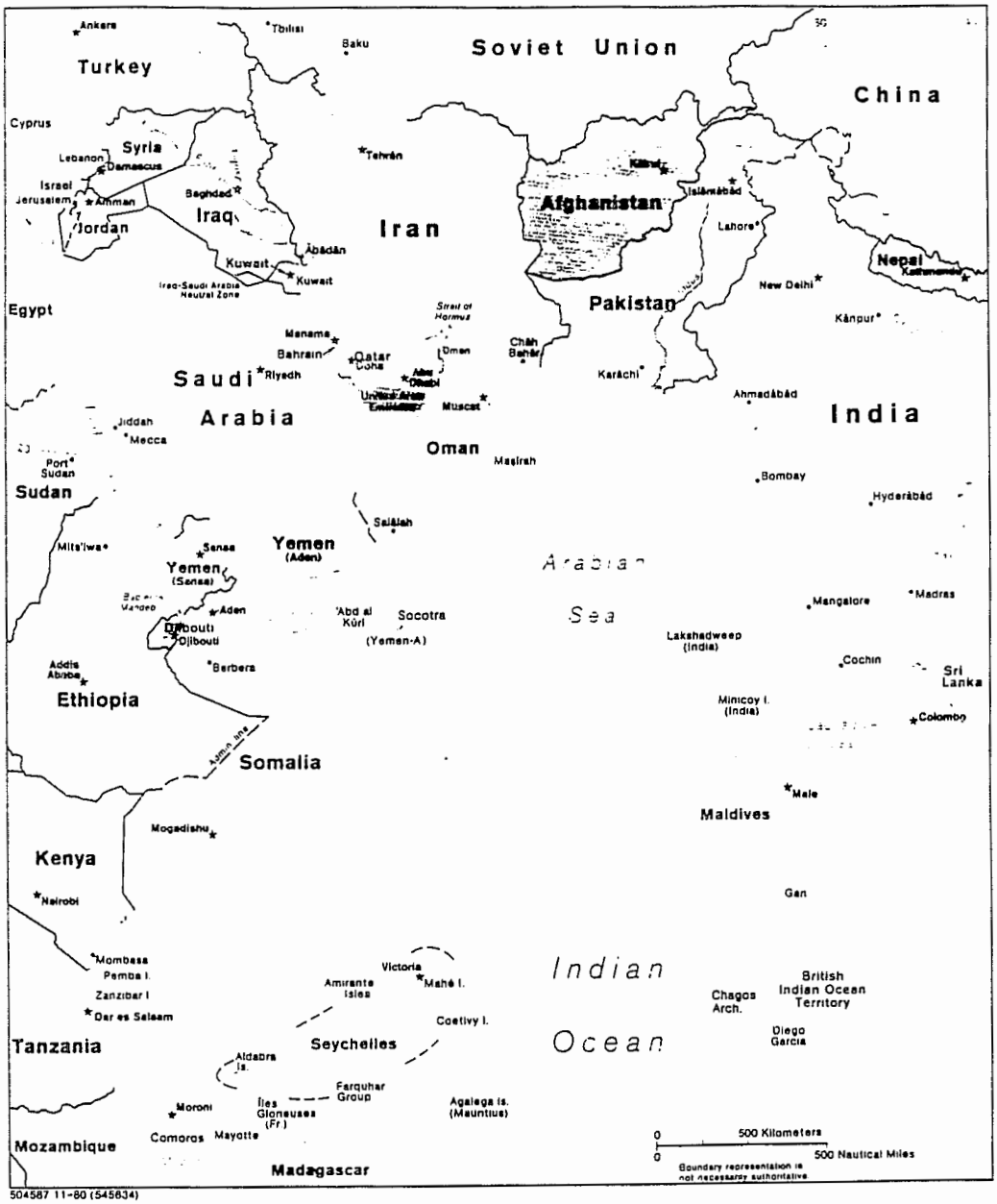
Woolsey, R. J. and Moodie, M. "Ahead: A Chasm of Capability and a Window of Vulnerability." Sea Power. November 1980, Pp. 45-54.

Indian Ocean Area



504588 10-80 (545633)

Northwest Indian Ocean Area



504587 11-80 (545634)