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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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February 28, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE VICE PRESIDENT
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ✓
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
DIRECTOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Additional Item for Friday's SCC Meeting
on Security Framework (C)

Attached is an OSD staff overview and synthesis of the needed security framework for Southwest Asia. Such a comprehensive action program would obviously have to be remanded for further analysis probably by an inter-agency working group. However, the Secretary of Defense would first like the preliminary reactions of the SCC principals as to whether a comprehensive document like this would be operationally useful. (C)


Christine Dodson
Staff Secretary

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Chief, Records & DeClass Div, WHS
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R. W. Komer
27 February 1980

Security Framework for Southwest Asia
(A DoD Viewpoint)

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Since our key objectives are not really at issue (access to oil, etc.), this analysis will focus on how best to achieve them. This is a much trickier proposition than in Europe or Northeast Asia, because we never built up a US presence in the region to compensate for the slow post-WW II British withdrawal.

Instead, largely because of the anti-colonial sensitivities of the newly independent states of the area, we relied on building up the security capabilities of the "northern tier" states--linking them together via CENTO, with its ambiguous US backing (we never became a full member). Later, under the Nixon Doctrine (and because Iran's escalating oil wealth fed the Shah's military monomania in any case) we tended to rely chiefly on Iran as the protector of the Gulf, because of our post-Vietnam inhibitions about assuming a more direct US role.

This policy worked for many years (at relatively low cost to the US). The reasons for its ultimate failure are instructive. To oversimplify: (1) all three northern tier regimes--Iraq pulled out in 1958--proved more or less internally unstable, so unable to build up adequate local power; (2) all three paid far less attention to the Soviet threat than to other external problems--Greece/Cyprus in the case of Turkey, India/Kashmir in the case of Pakistan; and the PG (chiefly Iraq) in the case of Iran; (3) the generous US arms subsidies designed to build up their capabilities declined sharply in the 1960s and 1970s for various reasons--US preoccupation with SEA, phasing out of grant MAP aid, various political reasons--till only Iran could afford to buy the arms needed; (4) the US focussed more in the 70s on access to oil and on its price than on protecting it; and (5) the overall shift in the East/West military balance 1965-80, especially the advent of nuclear equivalence, the decline of US maritime superiority, and the relative growth of Soviet force projection capabilities encouraged the USSR to adopt a more forward policy in the volatile and vulnerable PG/IO area.

When Sadat's expulsion of the Soviets and the Camp David breakthrough limited Soviet ability to exploit the Arab-Israeli problem against us, the USSR moved to compensate by wooing Ethiopia and PDRY, and giving yet more arms to Syria and Iraq.

In a sense the whole PG/IO problem sneaked up on us while our efforts were focussed elsewhere. We now have to

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make up for lost time. Let me take up various aspects of the problem sequentially.

I. Deterring Direct Soviet Intervention. This is the most dangerous though least likely dimension of the problem. While overt Soviet invasion still seems unlikely (even after Afghanistan), the risk of Soviet intervention in a local confrontation or to counter perceived Western action is much higher. Iran is a good case in point.

Only the perceived risk of thereby precipitating a direct US response is likely to deter Moscow in such cases. Therefore, our problem is to create a credible US security umbrella over the region, which will serve the added functions of (1) reassuring edgy local states that they need not be so fearful of the USSR; and (2) enabling us to use this umbrella as leverage in getting what we want from area states.

II. What Sort of Security Umbrella? No revival of CENTO or even the RCD is feasible, even with strong US backing. Nor are the PG states likely to favor any defense coalition, even among themselves (as the Iraqis vaguely propose). The locals are too skittish about formal "treaty" relationships, and their interests too disparate. The only useful thing that might emerge over time could be a loose understanding among the lower Gulf states (Saudis, UAE, Qatar, Bahrein, Oman, probably not Kuwait) that an attack on one would lead all to respond--chiefly by allowing US access. Moreover, adding weakness to weakness won't deter anybody.

The same applies to Allied participation. Regardless of the fact that they are far more dependent on PG oil than we, our NATO Allies and Japan simply will not risk joining us in formal security guarantees (except maybe the UK). Nor do they have much capability to support us.

Thus the security umbrella will have to be an American one, fleshed out by understandings with threatened local states. The first step (American-style) must be a strong declaratory policy, as outlined by the President in his 1980 State of the Union Message. It is important that we not dilute this message by refining it too much. Artful ambiguity is needed on this score, rather than too much clarification of where we will and won't draw the line.

But what backs this up and makes it credible? Not too much at present, since (1) nuclear equivalence means we can't get too far with nuclear retaliatory threats; (2) as of now we have very limited presence in the PG/IO and only marginal rapid force projection capabilities against a Soviet attack.

Hence we must hint that: (1) it may not be possible to keep a confrontation localized, partly because

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we Americans may choose to retaliate elsewhere (e.g. naval blockade) where our capabilities are greater; (2) we will exact costs elsewhere, even if not militarily; and (3) if the Soviets appear to outgun us in a conventional confrontation escalation to use of nuclear weapons obviously cannot be precluded when such vital interests are at stake. Even hinting at such dire possibilities will find some resonance in Moscow. Besides, what other near-term options do we have?

III. Building a US Response Capability in the PG/IO. But the main task of lending credibility to our declaratory deterrent policy will have to rest on the buildup of US capability to respond. At present we lack a game plan, though all the things we are doing to date seem useful to the broader effort needed.

A. Obviously we need an enhanced "permanent presence" in the region. This is already in train, but let's be realistic. Most of it will have to be naval. It would be politically very difficult and economically very costly to build up a sizable peacetime US base structure in the region itself. The locals will be leery, and little usable real estate is available. A greatly expanded Diego Garcia is probably the limit of near-term options.

B. Hence we must rely primarily on a major force projection capability. This too is underway, but even current projections 1980-85 are insufficient. Naval power (with its flexibility) is indispensable, but we must hold ground too. Hence we must think in terms of ability to deploy--and sustain--forces on the scale of 2-3 division equivalents plus tacair within two weeks and 5-7 divisions within a month/six weeks if we are, for example, to be able to hold Southern Iran. ~~These forces must be capable of~~ defending against such Soviet (Iraqi?) armor as is deployable within such timeframes. To project forces on this scale does not require a larger US combat force structure; rather the problem is to get them there fast enough, with their equipment, and sustain them. The key desiderata here are (1) adequate access and transit rights; (2) more rapid air and sealift; and (3) prepositioning equipment in the area.

C. Prepositioning is the key. Our ability to project force to the PG/IO (just like our ability to reinforce NATO rapidly) will depend critically on having the heavy equipment already in the area. Because of the geographically widely separated contingencies to which we might have to respond, (Yemen-Somalia to Pakistan), together with local political inhibitions about onshore prepo, maritime prepo seems by far the best answer (with some exceptions-see below). It ensures flexibility, reduces political problems,

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and probably doesn't cost all that much more. Since it will take years to complete our fleet of new MPS ships, Defense is pushing ahead with interim quick fixes (e.g. RO-ROs) to give us some near term prepositioning. This must be pressed.

D. Immediate access to forward bases is imperative, though they need not fly the US flag. If we are to depend primarily on projection forces, quick access to facilities from which we can operate is vital. Indeed, if we can get in before the balloon goes up, we may even be able to deter hostile action. But we must make the necessary arrangements well in advance with area states, including their upgrade of facilities as we can operate from them immediately in a crisis (adequate runways, taxiways, POL, WRSK, shelters, air defense, etc.).

Given the sensitivities of local states, we should not seek to fly our flag over these facilities. Much better to leave them under local control (with perhaps a few US "advisors" around), since if they don't want to let us use the facilities in an emergency, we couldn't do so anyway.

E. Moreover, such a forward base structure already partly exists or is building. Most PG states are already building (largely with their own funds--a major advantage) quite a base structure we can use. The COB concept we use in NATO is relevant here. For example, the elaborate Saudi construction program (to accommodate forces mostly equipped with compatible US arms) could readily accommodate US forces too--especially if suitably overbuilt. Moreover, aside from major Saudi/Kuwait/Omani/Bahrain airports, there are six major airports built or building in the UAE alone which could take up to C-5s. Our task is to ensure discreetly that these facilities will be suitable--and available. Our arms sale program must be carefully dovetailed to our strategic needs for this purpose, but we must avoid publicizing this.

F. We need a major Rear Base area too. We cannot logistically support the forces needed for a major contingency from Subic, Rota, and Diego Garcia. They will be invaluable but are real estate-limited (especially Diego) and much too far away. What we need to have available if needed is a major "base" complex relatively near the area which can draw on substantial local infrastructure and skilled labor. Since forward bases in the PG area would be highly vulnerable to Soviet air attack, we would use this rear base for staging, repair and resupply (analogous to USAF's rear A-10 base in the UK with FOBs forward in the FRG). Such a rear base area ought to be on the shortest ALOC or SLOC from CONUS. Egypt fits all these requirements, Sadat is probably willing, and we might as well get more for

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all the money we're going to have to invest in Egypt anyway. Hence I see Egypt as our best future main base area for major PG contingencies. Indeed, we may be able to get Egyptian/Israeli agreement to let us use the two Sinai airbases instead of demilitarizing them. Turkey is the only logical alternative, but I just can't see Ankara agreeing (especially any government in which Ecevit and/or Erbakan participate).

G. Transit and refuelling rights are vital. No matter how much prepositioning we do, people airlift and substantial cargo airlift as well will be indispensable for flexibility and quick response. We should look at ways of using Allied and local airlift to complement our own. But adequate en route transit rights, pre-arranged to the maximum extent feasible are critical to quick and adequate response. We would have to use both the trans-Pacific and Atlantic/ Mediterranean ALOCs in a major contingency. Hence we should work on both, and hedge against risk by seeking alternative en route basing (e.g. Spain, Portugal, and maybe Morocco just in case one proves unavailable). This is already underway, but must be made more precise as our contingency plans develop.

H. Homeporting one or maybe two more carriers forward is very valuable. Since it would take us many years to build new carriers (and old carriers can't carry today's fighters), this is the best way to maintain forward deployments in three oceans instead of two. Rota, Augusta, Lisbon, Subic, and Sasebo look to be the best bets.

I. Frequent deployment and exercising in the area is essential. Only in this way can we acclimate our projection forces, acclimate the locals to operating with them, and signal the Soviets that we mean business.

IV. We Must Pay the Security Assistance Price. Current aid availabilities are flatly inadequate to sustain this strategy. Much greater aid to Turkey, Egypt, Yemen and maybe Pakistan is clearly indicated at a minimum (economic as well as military). Access and facility rights will require US subsidy in many cases (fortunately the oil-rich can and will prefer to pay their own bills).

We must also seek relief from the web of legislative and other restrictions which rob us of flexibility to respond. At present, we simply cannot meet the demands for quick delivery, subsidized prices, withdrawal from US stocks, cheap training and the like which are essential to make our PG/IO policy work.

The potential role of Turkey deserves special mention. At present Ankara is adamant against use of

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Turkish facilities for any but NATO contingencies. But Turkey's force structure and sheer geographic location make it a major threat to the flank of any Soviet march southward to the PG. Moreover, the Afghan crisis should reduce US domestic inhibitions to aiding Turkey. Maybe we can repair our relations with the Turks sufficiently to at least help create a threat in being to any Soviet LOC through Azerbaijan. Given our severe problems in generating effective PG/IO deterrence, we ought to make the try. But only if we're willing to face up, along with our Allies, to the enormous costs involved.

V. We Must Also Deal with Key Collateral Areas of Risk. It is easy to see how Soviet or surrogate use of PDRY bases could interfere with our plans. So could Libya. So could Ethiopia in the Red Sea or against Somalia. A major effort to woo Iraq or at least secure its neutrality is equally indicated. In a Pakistan contingency, the role of India will be critical. We need a damage-limiting counter or containment strategy in each case.

Unquestionably, our ability to secure the cooperation of Arab (and most Islamic) states is also partially hostage to our Arab-Israeli policy. Thus our ability to devise a viable security framework in SWA cannot ignore this factor, which also bears heavily on VI below.

VI. We Need an Oil Strategy to Complement our Deterrent Strategy. If the US is to defend the PG oil producers from outside attack (which will cost us plenty), can we afford not to link this massive effort to an assured flow of PG oil at reasonable price? At the least, we have nothing to lose by trying. We must get across to the PG states that OPEC price rises and production cutbacks can undermine our capability to defend them.

VII. The Role of Allies. Granting the political necessity of seeking European and Japanese help in our PG/IO efforts, realism dictates that the most we are likely to get is some economic and military aid, maybe token forces from the UK and France, and at best moral support. Therefore, the chief price we should exact from these Allies is more defense help in NATO and NE Asia, partly to enable us to do more in the PG/IO.

Since local states will feel directly threatened, they will probably do more. At the least we can get them to strengthen their own defense capabilities, and upgrade facilities for US use.

VIII. Last but not least, we need programs to deal with the threat of internal instability/subversion in

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vulnerable ME/PG/IO states. The consensus of DoD as well as other area experts is that the problem of internal breakdown (à la Iran), perhaps abetted by external subversion, is a far greater immediate risk to our area interests than overt Soviet or surrogate attack. Moreover, it could create ambiguous situations which, if we did not respond, could be exploited by the USSR to increase the threat to our hold on ME oil, etc. A breakup of Iran is an obvious case in point. Another would be growing internal instability in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. In short weak traditional regimes will be a constant problem for us over the next decade.

Above all, this requires a post-hostage program for rebuilding some kind of relationship with Iran, which is the best road to the Persian Gulf. No matter how we look at it, the integrity of Iran (so long as it remains independent) is preferable to a breakup exploitable by the USSR. So long as even a neutral Iran exists it bars direct Soviet access to the Gulf. But we must also be prepared to react to a collapse if it nonetheless occurs by retaining a buffer area in the south.

Clearly DoD programs can have only limited impact on local stability. Promoting this must be the primary responsibility of other agencies. Nonetheless, by developing a credible military presence and response capability, DoD can strongly discourage external military meddling in any such internal crises. We can also contribute to strengthening local military establishments as stabilizing elements and even to strengthening local security forces (though past experience suggests that this is not the strong suit of the US military). In any case the point is that any security framework for Southwest Asia must vigorously address internal as well as external threats to our security interests.

The above is merely an outline of a viable security framework for Southwest Asia. It alone is a tall order, but it still may not be enough. However all of its elements must necessarily be part of any even larger effort required. Since the stakes are so great in any case, it is the minimum we should aim at--as a matter of urgency--now.

IX. AN ACTION PROGRAM

In the light of the above, the following short and longer term actions should be laid in train:

State/Defense

1. Expand our high level strategic dialogue with key area states -- to explain the broad outline of this

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security policy and seek their participation. At present there is confusion about our purposes, questioning about our resolution, and ignorance about where they fit in. We should take special pains with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, maybe Pakistan and India.

2. Develop lists of our short and longer term requirements -- in each key area state, and corollary lists of what we (and others) are willing to provide in return.

3. Further elaborate our declaratory deterrent policy -- in speeches, articles, and testimony. Tie this to the concrete measures we are taking to enhance its credibility.

4. Energetically pursue en route transit/refuelling rights in Atlantic/Mediterranean and Pacific. Push through Lajes upgrade package.

5. Immediately survey preferred homeporting facilities, for early costing and decision.

6. Explore possibilities for "facilities" access at Trincomalee (ex-Amb. Wriggins says this might just be politically feasible now.)

7. Prepare urgently (together with Allies) a separate military aid package for Turkey plus a corollary list of what we want in return from Turks.

8. Develop urgently a post-hostage program for repairing our relations with Iran, together with alternate politico-military contingency plans in case of breakup.

9. Prepare a next phase program vis-a-vis Pakistan, related appropriately to our aims vis-a-vis India.

10. Develop a proposal for an FY 80 security assistance supplemental to meet needs requiring immediate funding.

11. Explore ways of relating our energy needs and Arab-Israeli policy to our security needs in the PG.

12. Press our European and Japanese allies to participate appropriately in our game plan.

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Defense

1. Press ahead with interim IO maritime prepositioning.
2. Develop tailored RDF force packages for specified contingencies.
3. Press vigorously for the full FYDP package of MPS ships, airlift (including CX), and related measures. Examine ways of expediting IOCs.
4. Develop more detailed contingency-related facilities access plans for PG forward basing, as the basis for requests to local states.
5. Develop "rear base area" plans for Egypt/Sinai, sized to support a major effort to hold Southern Iran.
6. Develop plans for overbuilding the Saudi base structure and airfields, etc. in Bahrein, Qatar, UAE.
7. Develop programs for enhancing the local defense capabilities of appropriate area states in ways compatible with our own contingency needs.
8. Develop an expanded exercise/training program in the IO/PG area.

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