



POLICY

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

I-35354-80
10 October 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR SECDEF--INFO

Horizontal Escalation Paper. I strongly concur with Slocombe's recommendation (next under) that we need more time to work out an agreed OSD/JCS analysis of this sensitive tricky, and very important topic.

Unsurprisingly, the PP/J-5 attempt to meld two disparate papers with varying assumptions and quite different conclusions into a coherent whole (see Tab A for current version) has resulted in a schizophrenic output which confuses more than it clarifies.

Given JCS insistence that we cannot effectively defend Iran today, the Joint Staff says that only threatening escalation will deter the Soviets. But this is really declaratory strategy--the Joint Staff still hasn't analyzed what escalation and where--and at least some senior officers grant the PP case that there are few if any promising ways to escalate. PP, on the other hand, eschewed declaratory strategy in favor of looking at where and how the US could escalate once we were already defending (unsuccessfully) in Iran. While I personally find the PP approach far more realistic, it seems to me we have to start over with agreed (or dictated) joint assumptions which cover both cases and compel the JCS to face up to when and where we could profitably escalate and what risks are involved. In short we must move "horizontal escalation" out of the realm of theory by looking at the hard facts. Only then can we get on with the urgent job of building up as rapidly as possible our ability to defend PG oil in the PG/IO.

Second, the most sensible response to Soviet intervention in Iran gets lost in all the disputation. It is to counter by pre-emptively occupying Khuzestan, while insisting our vital interests are involved, in an effort to achieve a de facto partition. This confronts the Soviets with shooting directly at Americans if they keep advancing south--a prospect which to my mind amply threatens horizontal escalation. True, we couldn't stop the Soviets for

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long if they kept on coming, but in that case wouldn't our vital interests dictate a wider response? In short, the JCS would risk starting WWII before we even tried for a regional solution, whereas I'd like at least a little time in between.

Third, should we risk sending dynamite papers, which reflect to boot a split OSD/JCS view, around town just now? Distorted leaks could be exceedingly painful, not only in terms of election season exploitation but of the impact on our deterrent stance in the Iraq/Iran conflict right now.

Therefore, I propose to hold up this paper and reorient it along lines proposed by Slocombe plus some ideas of my own. I intend to insist on a common outline and common assumptions plus a look at both near term and mid-term time-frames, at declaratory as well as defensive strategy, and at the risk/benefit ratio of specific escalation options. This will take at least three weeks, but (like Walt) I'd rather not set a deadline.

RWK

R. W. Komer

Attachment

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POLICY

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

9 OCT 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THRU: USDP

SUBJECT: Horizontal Escalation Paper

Our efforts to get a single paper, agreed by both JCS and my people have so far proved unsuccessful. I recommend that you give us more time to continue trying.

The problem begins with the fact that JCS and we look at different parts of the problem:

-- The OSD paper focuses on the case where the outcome of a direct defense in Iran is assumed to be uncertain, i.e., on the situation where we would be implementing our current SWA strategy by putting US forces, with regional and other help as available, into the area to stop a Soviet advance toward the critical areas near the Gulf. The OSD paper, taking this premise then considers whether there are some additional actions we should take outside the region to help stop the Soviets. (The closest historical analogy I can think of is the argument the "Easterners" kept making during the First World War.) Looking at a variety of possible extra-regional additions to direct defense, the paper concludes that no such move offers a prospect of stopping the Soviet advance in Iran, and, indeed that most divert effort from the main contest in Iran, in addition to risking dangerous escalation. In short, so long as direct defense remains a plausible possibility, the US should concentrate on that defense to stop the Soviet advance in Iran. Those extra-regional additions that are feasible (like striking at Cuba) aren't significant enough to affect Soviet capabilities or incentives in Iran and those that would be significant (like a Chinese attack on the USSR) aren't sufficiently feasible to be reliable. (There are, of course, actions -- such as attacks on Soviet naval units and littoral facilities in the Indian Ocean -- that would likely be needed to facilitate direct defense and that would de facto widen the war.)

-- The Joint Staff approach considers a different case, one which they think is far more likely. The choices facing the US in a situation in which direct defense was clearly not going to be possible.

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The Joint Staff feel strongly that only this case is relevant in the short term, given the formal JCS judgment, that we could not hold with current capabilities. They do not disagree that, if we do the things necessary, we should be able to get into a position where the OSD case will be the one to think about.

In a situation where direct defense is infeasible, they argue, the US would have to be ready to escalate geographically if it was to have any alternative to acquiescing or using nuclear weapons. Moreover, they maintain that US willingness to escalate could have an important deterrent effect -- because it would dramatize the scale of US commitment and the vital nature of our interest, thereby making the Soviets pull back from aggression, even if they believed they could win locally.

I don't think there is a necessary contradiction between these two views. In particular, I understand the Joint Staff to agree that if we could defend successfully in the region itself, we should do so, because there is no "soft underbelly" somewhere else. I certainly agree that the possibility of large scale escalation to general US/Soviet war is an element in deterring any Soviet attack that they think could lead to a confrontation with US military forces. However, as I understand their views, the Joint Staff are saying something more: They are saying that the US should plan on some specific escalatory measures short of general war because of the contribution such action could make to deterrence.

As it now stands, however, this proposition needs more analysis to test its validity and relevance to our real-world problems. In the Joint Staff paper the potential middle range escalatory options are not defined. The OSD section includes a brief consideration of possible escalatory measures, including those identified by in the paper Zbig sent over for your comment. The Joint Staff have not challenged the conclusion that none of them offer a cheap way to avoid direct defense. I support it is possible in principle that measures that aren't advisable while there is a chance of direct defense would be necessary where there is no more direct alternative, but the analysis so far isn't sufficient to identify what they are. Until we know what sorts of actions -- world-wide naval war? attacks on the Soviet Far East? -- the Joint Staff think of as appropriate in carrying out their general approach, it is hard to evaluate their approach fairly.

For this reason alone, I recommend that you give us more time to work the problem. This is a matter of fundamental policy concern, there is no external deadline (or even scheduled SCC action) and it deserves the time needed to present you and the SCC with fully analyzed alternatives.

There are, obviously, also bureaucratic/political reasons not to press for interagency circulation of a paper now. Realistically, the best we could get would be an openly split paper in which the JCS supported only that part of the paper that reflects their statement that since direct defense is infeasible, deterrence can lie only in a readiness to resort to ill-defined escalation (or nuclear weapons). I don't have to point out the drawbacks of such a conclusion being circulated at this delicate -- and reasonably successful -- point in our SWA efforts, not to speak of any other considerations. (Leaving out the JCS perspective is just as bad, because it would then put you in the position of rejecting JCS advice on a military question and insisting instead on the analysis of your own staff.)

I met Wednesday with the OpsDepts to discuss the paper. It appears from the discussion that the Joint Staff would like to have a joint paper, since they recognize the dangers if a split within DOD is exposed inter-agency. However:

-- They are determined that any joint paper make clear that it is the JCS view that at present the US could not mount a successful defense in Iran against a determined Soviet attack. I think there should be no difficulty in modifying the paper to make this JCS position clear, noting that it is a view they have already expressed..

-- They agree that if the US accomplished various force and mobility improvements, got relevant facilities and access, etc., Case 1 would be of interest, and would (I think) be willing to agree to its analysis on a hypothetical basis as a case for the future.

-- They agree that the paper should consider the specific forms of escalatory action that would be involved in implementing their preferred Case II approach. This is particularly important and is the part that will take time. I would propose to ask Paul Gorman to try a first cut, so they know we are doing the analysis of their option.

In my view, it should be possible, working with Paul Gorman and his staff, to produce a paper which is both more useful analysis and ~~more~~ less troublesome bureaucratically. In short, both substantively and procedurally there is every reason to see whether more time won't produce a paper that avoids these stark contradictions. At this point, I recommend against setting any precise deadline, until we have a better sense of how the Joint Staff proposes to approach the analysis of specific options for escalation.



Walter Slocombe
Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Policy Planning)



POLICY PLANNING

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THROUGH: UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (POLICY)

SUBJECT: Horizontal Escalation Paper -- ACTION MEMORANDUM (U)

(S) Over the past week we have undertaken to merge the OSD and Joint Staff papers on Horizontal Escalation. We have one paper (Tab A) but at the price of two somewhat disjointed sections. The sections differ as to (1) assumptions about the military outcome if the Soviets invade Iran and (2) conclusions about the utility of a war-widening strategy. The first section assumes that the military outcome would be uncertain and concludes that the U.S. should concentrate on the defense of Iran rather than pursue a war-widening strategy. The second section assumes that the U.S. cannot commit and sustain sufficient forces in Iran to stop a determined Soviet invasion. It concludes that the U.S. should make the Soviets understand that we will not accept defeat and that we are prepared to risk wider, even global, warfare.

(S) The Joint Staff believes that the assumption about the military outcome in the first section is unrealistic and not the interesting case. They do not, however, disagree with the conclusion that follows from the assumption. With respect to Section II, I believe we need to do some additional analysis before we can say definitively that it would be in the U.S. interest to announce or pursue a war-widening strategy under the assumption that the U.S. would be defeated in Iran.

(S) I, therefore, recommend you not endorse the paper but rather have Carl Smith forward it to the NSC as a staff paper for discussion by SCC principals.

Attachment

. a/s

Coordination:

Director, Joint Staff _____

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WORKING PAPERS

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HORIZONTAL ESCALATION AS A RESPONSE TO SOVIET AGGRESSION
IN THE PERSIAN GULFIntroduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze whether with current forces it would be in the U.S. interest to respond to a Soviet act of aggression in the Persian Gulf by attacking Soviet vulnerabilities in other parts of the world.* The paper focuses on U.S. military actions beyond those which would de facto widen the area of the fighting but which would be undertaken in response to direct Soviet threats to U.S. forces in the region or to facilitate U.S. intervention efforts.

War-widening could in principle serve to deter a Soviet attack into Iran or to dissuade the Soviet leadership from further pursuing their objectives in the region should deterrence fail. Such a strategy could convey to the USSR that the U.S. has both the will and capability to oppose any Soviet incursion into Iran and that the U.S. military response need not be limited to Iran or even to Southwest Asia. The U.S. could put at risk Soviet interests in areas where the U.S. and its allies have local force advantages. Or the U.S. and its allies could threaten the security of the Soviet Union.

The U.S. could execute a large number of conventional military ripostes against Soviet interests: (a) support for insurgent groups or external adversaries of Soviet client states; (b) attacks against Soviet facilities in the Indian Ocean; (c) invasion of PDRY; (d) punitive actions against Cuba; (e) NATO mobilization; (f) coordinated military actions with China; (g) destruction of the Soviet Indian Ocean fleet; (h) attacks against military or industrial targets in the Soviet Union; (i) selective naval blockade; (j) worldwide naval blockade of the Soviet Union. In turn, the Soviets could respond by counterattacks against U.S. or allied interests: (1) Warsaw Pact mobilization; (2) attacks against facilities used by the U.S. in the Indian Ocean; (3) attacks against Pakistan; (4) Cuban intervention in Latin America; (5) Vietnamese invasion of Thailand; (6) North Korean invasion of South Korea; (7) Soviet pressure on Berlin; and (8) attacks on NATO's southern flank.

would happen anyway?

To evaluate a U.S. strategy of horizontal escalation, this paper uses the scenario of a full-scale Soviet invasion of Iran. It assumes that U.S. interests would be sufficiently vital as to warrant a U.S. military response to the Soviet aggression. The paper does not prejudge the likely outcome of direct U.S. military resistance to the Soviet invasion. It examines a U.S. riposte strategy using two different assumptions: (1) that the outcome of direct U.S. military resistance is uncertain or (2) that the U.S. is unlikely to be successful in the direct defense of Iran.

* This paper assumes that the Persian Gulf conflict will not escalate automatically but that the respective governments will retain the choice to expand the conflict. Whether it is realistic to assume that the armed forces of both sides can co-exist peacefully in one part of the world while they are in conflict in the Persian Gulf is not analyzed.

I. Outcome of Direct Resistance is Uncertain

This section examines a U.S. riposte strategy under the assumption that the military outcome of the U.S. resistance in Iran is sufficiently uncertain as to raise the question of whether it would be in the U.S. interest to expand the conflict by attacking Soviet vulnerabilities. It does not consider whether it is in the U.S. interest to threaten Soviet vulnerabilities outside the area immediately prior to an expected invasion as a means to deter the Soviets -- although it is not self-evident that deterrence would be served by actions which would not be in the U.S. interest to implement if deterrence failed.

To be attractive in this case, a U.S. riposte strategy would have to improve the U.S. position (1) by affecting Soviet calculations as to the costs and benefits of continuing the aggression; (2) by acquiring bargaining chips which could be used to obtain a favorable settlement of the conflict; and/or (3) by forcing the Soviets to divert forces from the conflict in Iran to defend interests in other areas. The gains from a riposte must also outweigh the significant risk of Soviet counterattacks against U.S. and allied vulnerabilities and the heightened risk of general war.*

The analysis of potential U.S. ripostes and Soviet counterattacks (attached) indicates that a strategy of expanding the conflict outside the Persian Gulf does not hold much promise as a means of offsetting Soviet military advantages in the region. There is no U.S. and allied riposte against Soviet interests (e.g., support for insurgent groups or external adversaries of the Soviet client states, attacks on Soviet facilities or naval forces in the Indian Ocean, an invasion of PDRY, punitive actions against Cuba, or a limited naval blockade) that would clearly equal or exceed in value the political, military, and economic gains the Soviet Union could be expected to achieve from control of Iran. In short, the cost to the U.S. of Soviet control of Iran would exceed the cost to the USSR of these ripostes. Such a U.S. riposte strategy would, therefore, not be able to hold these Soviet interests hostage in order to obtain a favorable settlement.

The U.S. cannot design a strategy of ripostes which would force the Soviets to divert their military effort from Iran. In the case of direct threats to Soviet territory, the Soviets should be able to defend themselves with in-place forces. In the rest of the world, the Soviets could either accept the losses as the price of securing control of Iran or respond with naval forces which would not play a primary role in an Iran invasion. Indeed, several of the potential U.S. ripostes -- attacks on Soviet client states or facilities in the Indian Ocean -- would tend to divert U.S. forces which otherwise could be used to counter the Soviets in Iran.

More to the U.S. advantage would be actions which brought into play additional countries on the U.S. side and/or employed some of the remaining U.S. military forces that would have to be withheld from the

* This case does not address U.S. declaratory policy which may or may not be the same as the policy that would actually be implemented. It also does not consider whether it would be in the U.S. interest to attack Soviet vulnerabilities following the failure of direct resistance in Iran to stop the Soviet invasion as a means to punish the Soviets, show resolve to others, and to deter future Soviet aggression.

Persian Gulf conflict. Hence, options such as NATO mobilization, coordinated military actions with China, or a worldwide naval blockade may be worth pursuing, if we could gain the support of the other countries whose support would be essential. Such ripostes --together with a vigorous U.S. defense of Iran -- might convince the Soviets they had seriously underestimated the West's resolve and overestimated the ease of success in Iran, thereby causing them to consider a negotiated end to the conflict. Nevertheless, such ripostes are unlikely to achieve this result because (1) the chances of a NATO or Chinese attack are small, (2) Warsaw Pact and Soviet Asian forces in-place are sufficient for effective defense, and (3) a worldwide naval blockade would not immediately hurt the Soviets, who are largely economically self-sufficient.

The only category of ripostes which has the possibility of raising Soviet costs to a level commensurate with the gains of occupying Iran involves major escalation of the conflict, e.g., attacks on Soviet naval forces worldwide or fomenting and actively supporting rebellion in Eastern European countries. Such actions, however, carry heavy risks of rapidly expanding the conflict to a worldwide NATO-Warsaw Pact war with the attendant risks of nuclear escalation. Hence, they do not offer an attractive alternative to concentrating on the conventional defense of Iran.

For the U.S. the gains of a riposte strategy must also be weighed against the risk of Soviet counterattacks against U.S. vulnerabilities. (As on the U.S. side, the Soviets would have the option of attacks against U.S. facilities, naval forces, etc. supporting the conflict in Iran.) The Soviets could create minor problems for the U.S. by subverting friendly third world countries or by attacking U.S. facilities in the Indian Ocean. They could benefit from the military demands which would be placed on the U.S. if North Korea or Vietnam attacked their neighbors. They could take advantage of their conventional superiority in Eastern Europe and along their borders to threaten major U.S. and allied interests on NATO's flanks or in Central Europe. Thus, the Soviets have the option of responding in kind to any U.S. riposte. The Soviets could not, however, undertake a counterattack strategy without incurring certain risks themselves, such as involving U.S. allies in combat or the possibility of escalation to worldwide war.

In summary, in the case where the military result in Iran remained uncertain, a U.S. riposte strategy does not offer a clear cut way of convincing the Soviets to abandon a full-scale invasion of Iran, or of obtaining a favorable settlement through bargaining chips, or of decisively diverting Soviet forces from the region. Moreover, given the possibility of Soviet counterattacks and the risk of general war, the U.S. would be better off concentrating on the defense of Iran without broadening the scope of the conflict outside the Persian Gulf region.

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11. U.S. Unlikely to Prevail in Direct Defense

This case is based on the assumption that if the Soviets choose to make a determined and sustained drive into Iran, they can eventually outmatch the U.S. in the air and on the ground. Therefore, for U.S. military strategy in SWA to succeed, we must convince the Soviet Union that our interests there are vital, that we will not accept defeat and that we are therefore prepared to risk wider, even global, warfare. Within this context, war-widening could serve to deter a Soviet attack into Iran, to dissuade the Soviet leadership from further pursuing their objectives in the region should deterrence fail, and to seize the overall initiative should dissuasion fail.

While a U.S. strategy to widen the war beyond Iran may hold promise of accruing substantial advantages there are also significant risks, including: the danger of our allies not remaining firmly with us; the vulnerability of our long sea lines of communications to SWA, and the potential for the Soviets to use counter-pressure points, perhaps in Berlin, in Northeast Asia, or in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In this case the rationale for a war-widening strategy depends upon the following considerations: First, the requirement to assure an uninterrupted flow of oil from the Persian Gulf region appears to be more urgent than any Soviet interest in disrupting oil flow to the Free World or securing Persian Gulf oil for their own purposes. Second, the Soviet Union has a greater relative capability than we do to project air and land forces into Iran. A U.S. strategy should seek to maximize their recognition of our vital national interests there, in order to prevent them from perceiving the issue as merely a test of military strength in Iran. The threat of widening a war beyond Iran could convince the Soviets that they stand to lose in a much broader context. In addition, Soviet correlation of force calculations would be significantly more complex if they have to deal with confrontation in more than one theater at a time and are opposed by U.S. allies as well. Should deterrence fail, war-widening also has the potential to serve other useful purposes. First, specific and prompt actions could dissuade the Soviet Union from further aggression in SWA. Second, widening the war could enable U.S. forces to seize the initiative and confront the Soviet Union at a time, place, and scope of our choosing. In so doing, the U.S. would seek to apply pressure against key Soviet vulnerabilities, while ensuring that U.S. vital interests in other areas are protected.

Failure of deterrence does not mean that we must immediately follow through on every threat. To the contrary, inherent in deterrence strategy is the intention to raise Soviet uncertainty over what specific actions the U.S. would take in response to an invasion of Iran. Having once pledged action, however, the U.S. must take some military action or accept serious (perhaps irredeemable) damage to our credibility, thereby increasing the likelihood of having to take even more serious escalatory steps at a later point.

Whether we intend it to happen or not, the likelihood of the conflict spreading beyond the confines of the region increases dramatically if U.S. and USSR forces engage in combat. The Soviets would probably seek to constrain the conflict to a conventional mode and to locations where they would calculate they could prevail. They could easily create crisis situations in areas where they enjoy time, space and force advantages --

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such as Berlin. Any escalation could raise the distinct possibility of miscalculation, including the threat of escalation to general war and the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons.

War-widening actions in the theater could present the Soviets an immediate price for aggression and could also help secure U.S. access to the region thereby enhancing the prospects for success of subsequent U.S. military actions.

In summary, based on the assumption that the U.S. is unlikely to be successful in the direct defense of Iran, placing the Soviet Union in a position where it faces the uncertain risks inherent in escalation is seen by some as fundamental to U.S. strategy. Threatening to widen the locale of the conflict could enhance deterrence. However, posing broad threats of a wider war could precipitate the very war we are striving to deter. Once war breaks out, escalation would be difficult to control since it would depend in large part on actions taken by both sides. Nevertheless, if deterrence fails, and if direct action against invading Soviet forces is not effective, war-widening, with all its risks, offers the only alternative to acquiescence in Soviet control of Iran or to escalating to nuclear warfare.

Annex A: Description of Potential U.S. Ripostes and Potential Soviet Counterattacks

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I. Potential U.S. Ripostes

A. Support for Insurgent Groups or External Adversaries of Soviet Client States

The U.S. could provide support for insurgent groups or external adversaries of Soviet client states to multiply Soviet security problems in the Third World. For example, the U.S. might encourage the Somalis to intervene in the Ogaden, provide arms to the Eritreans, support UNITA in its continuing struggle against the Angolan government, and/or funnel arms to the Afghan rebels. Such ripostes would not have any adverse effects on U.S. military capabilities to resist Soviet aggression in Iran, but they would also not seriously weaken Soviet military capability. First, the effect of these ripostes would take time. Second, the Soviets could respond quite effectively by increasing their arms shipments and expanding their own and surrogate presence. In a situation where Soviet troops are all that is keeping a regime in power, as is the case in Afghanistan, an infusion of U.S. arms might force the Soviets to increase their level of presence. But the Soviets could add forces in Afghanistan without diverting them from operations in Iran. If trade-offs had to be made, the Soviets would almost certainly choose to permit conditions to deteriorate in other areas rather than draw down forces supporting the conflict in Iran. Finally, the Soviets could retaliate in kind in areas important to the U.S. or its allies, e.g. by supporting terrorist groups or insurgents in Oman or Somalia.

B. Attacks Against Soviet Facilities in the Indian Ocean

The U.S. could attack military facilities used by the Soviets in PDRY or Ethiopia as a means of reducing Soviet military capability in the region, casting doubt on Soviet security guarantees, and removing a threat to the SLOCs to the Persian Gulf. Such attacks could require CVBGs and/or land based air and would, thereby, degrade temporarily U.S. capabilities in Iran.

Ripostes against Soviet regional facilities are unlikely to compel the Soviets to abandon their intervention in Iran since the economic and strategic value of Iran far exceeds the value of regional facilities. Loss of the facilities would not affect significantly the military situation in Iran. The Soviet fleet could be used to defend PDRY or Ethiopia resulting in a naval conflict in the Indian Ocean. While some Soviet response is likely, the Soviets could also decide not to respond to U.S. attacks given that the Soviet fleet is needed to interdict the U.S. SLOC and is capable of operating independently of the littoral facilities by using naval auxiliaries.

C. Invasion of PDRY

U. S. forces, possibly in conjunction with Saudi or Omani forces, could invade PDRY and oust the Marxist regime. The Soviets would suffer the loss of a minor ally, the U.S. would gain access to the facilities at Aden, and a minor threat to the security of Saudi Arabia, Oman and the

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U.S. flank would be removed. The costs to the U.S. of this riposte would, however, be much greater than the potential benefits. The U.S. would have to divert from Iran significant ground forces and one or more CVBGs. Moreover, even if the invasion were successful, the loss of PDRY would probably have little or no impact on Soviet behavior. The Soviet position on the ground in Iran would be unaffected.* The value of Soviet domination of PDRY is insignificant when compared with the value of control over Iran. A U.S. oriented regime in Aden would not provide a means to bargain for Soviet withdrawal from Iran.

D. Punitive Actions Against Cuba

This riposte could take three forms: destruction of Soviet military facilities in Cuba, a naval blockade, and/or an invasion. A single attack using PGMs could bring home to the Soviets the vulnerability of their facilities in Cuba. However, more effort would be required to cause serious damage. A 1976 NSC Study on Contingency Planning for Cuba concluded that the destruction of selected Cuban/Soviet military facilities would require on the order of

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

Both these options could probably be implemented without degrading U.S. capabilities in Iran, but the bulk of CINCLANT's forces would be tied down in the Caribbean and not available for the protection of the North Atlantic SLOCs if the crisis spread to Europe. Soviet loss of facilities in Cuba would have only marginal impact on Soviet military capability; it would not affect Castro's power or alignment with Moscow.

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

The most likely Soviet response would be to reinforce Cuban forces with their naval and air forces but not to intervene with ground forces. The Soviets would be at a disadvantage militarily in fighting in this part of the world. Soviet losses in the Caribbean, however, are unlikely to influence Soviet behavior in Iran or provide a means to bargain for a termination of Soviet aggression.

E. NATO Mobilization

The U.S. could urge the NATO allies to move toward partial or full mobilization as a demonstration of Alliance resolve and NATO support for U.S. efforts in Iran as well as a potential threat to Eastern Europe. While the NATO forces would remain on the defensive, NATO (particularly German) mobilization could affect Soviet calculations as to the value of continuing the aggression in Iran and their view of their counter options

* The Soviets could intervene with their naval forces, but this would be an expensive and probably futile gesture on their part. They could also try to reinforce PDRY by air but this would be difficult if not impossible assuming the presence of U.S. TACAIR forces in Saudi Arabia.

in Europe. The Soviets would also have to worry about the loyalty of the non-Soviet members of the Warsaw Pact. Given the magnitude of the Soviet intervention and the potential threat to Western European security, the NATO allies could be expected to support a U.S. call for mobilization.

The NATO Center Region Balance Study states that in 1984 NATO's in-place forces will constitute about 80% of the total Alliance strength in terms of ADE scores for the first 30 days of NATO mobilization. Thus, even if all U.S. airlift and double-hatted combat forces are committed to the Persian Gulf, NATO mobilization could still be impressive. The U.S. contribution would be short the units in the expanded RDF, but several of these (i.e., the 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Air-mobile Division, and one or two MAFs) are not programmed for early deployment to Europe anyway. In the near term, the arrival of POMCUS divisions would be significantly delayed. Although adequate passenger airlift is available, existing equipment shortfalls in POMCUS require significant airlift of equipment from CONUS. The main constraint on our military capability in the Persian Gulf is the lack of sufficient lift. If we compound this by establishing an additional NATO requirement, the U.S. could give an impression of weakness not strength.

In any event, NATO mobilization--however useful in discouraging further Soviet aggression in Europe--would probably not result in the Soviets ending their intervention into Iran. The CIA estimates that the Soviets can introduce 27 divisions into the Persian Gulf region without drawing down the forces reserved for use against NATO or China. Despite potential Soviet insecurities, they could probably be confident that the forces they have in-place in Eastern Europe and the Western Soviet Union would be adequate to maintain order in Eastern Europe and to defend against the unlikely prospect of a NATO attack. If the Soviets were concerned about the NATO threat, they could respond by mobilizing Warsaw Pact forces in Europe. A small risk exists that NATO mobilization could lead to a Warsaw Pact preemptive attack.

F. Coordinated Military Actions with China

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

Soviet fears about the Chinese threat appear to be disproportionate to actual Chinese military capabilities, and this riposte would seek to exploit the Soviet sense of insecurity.

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

Whether the PRC would be willing to present a united front if the Soviets intervened in Iran is uncertain. As in the case of Europe, China might

find it prudent to mobilize, not to help Iran, but to hedge against a broader Soviet attack. Although Beijing takes a hardline position on Soviet expansionism, the PRC may not be willing to risk confronting the Soviets over Iran since their vital interests would not be at stake in the Persian Gulf.

Coordinated action with the Chinese up to and including Chinese mobilization, moreover, is unlikely to have a major impact on Soviet actions in Iran despite Soviet apprehensions of the Chinese threat. The Soviets can be reasonably confident that the 46 divisions they have in Asia would be more than adequate to rebuff Chinese attacks in the unlikely event China went on the offensive. On the other hand, Chinese mobilization could force the Soviets to take defensive precautions and, thereby, limit the Soviets' latitude to initiate conflict in other areas such as Pakistan or Turkey as reprisals for U.S. ripostes.

Chinese mobilization poses some risks for the U.S. including the possibility of a major conflict arising from a combination of Chinese belligerency and Soviet paranoia. The Soviets, for example, might preempt the Chinese in order to prevent hostilities from taking place on Soviet territory. There is also a chance that one side or the other might resort to nuclear weapons.

G. Destruction of the Soviet Indian Ocean Fleet

The U.S. could attack Soviet naval forces at large in the Indian Ocean. Those forces directly supporting the Soviet intervention in Iran or potentially threatening U.S. reinforcement would be attacked as part of the military conflict in the region. Soviet naval forces in the rest of the Indian Ocean could be attacked as a means of expanding the conflict and increasing the costs of aggression to the Soviets. It is improbable that war at sea could be confined to the Indian Ocean. We must anticipate that it would probably involve our Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, as well. War at sea would also have the potential to spread to land, since we might not be willing to allow Soviet land-based strike aircraft to operate from sanctuaries against our naval forces. Nevertheless, conventional war-at-sea has one major advantage for the United States: we would be likely to defeat Soviet naval forces.

The Soviet Fleet in the Indian Ocean is probably the most valuable and the most vulnerable Soviet asset which the U.S. could threaten with a riposte. A naval defeat, however, would probably not undermine the Soviet position on the ground in Iran and could temporarily weaken the U.S. position by diverting critical airpower (though strengthening it in the aftermath by reducing the threat to U.S. SLOCs). However, while the Soviets may be willing to write off the loss of their naval forces in the Indian Ocean as the price of acquiring Iran, there is a significant chance that the naval conflict would spread to other oceans. Moreover, the chances of Soviet counterattacks against U.S. interests elsewhere is very real.

H. Attacks Against Soviet Military or Industrial Targets in the Soviet Union*

The U.S. could undertake raids against LOCs and airfields in the Soviet Union as a direct response to Soviet aggression in Iran. Such raids could disrupt Soviet logistics and TACAIR operations and affect Soviet calculations as to the value of continuing the aggression in Iran. A

* The issue of whether Soviet territory should be a sanctuary is beyond the scope of this paper.

PA&E study, for example, emphasized that interdiction raids behind Soviet lines would play a crucial role in limiting the size of the force which the Soviets could project into southern Iran. The Soviets may, in fact, expect that airfields and LOCs in the Soviet Union which are being used to support an invasion will be subject to attack and not see such attacks as expanding the scope of the conflict. The Soviets would almost certainly retaliate against the bases or forces which participated in the raids on Soviet territory. DIA believes there is a real possibility the Soviets would respond by counterattacking against U.S. interests elsewhere.

Going beyond direct responses, the U.S. could attack military or industrial targets in the Soviet Union not directly related to the Soviet invasion. Such punitive attacks would almost certainly evoke Soviet reprisals, possibly including attacks on U.S. territory. On balance, interdiction raids against targets inside the Soviet Union unrelated to the invasion would probably be counterproductive given the high risk of escalation.

I. Partial Naval Blockade

The U.S. could implement a partial naval blockade by mining one of the various chokepoints leading from Soviet waters or by imposing a selective quarantine of several Soviet ports. There are a variety of options which would be feasible including closing off the Baltic, the Red Sea, the Black Sea, the Sea of Japan, etc. [redacted]

[redacted]
E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

[redacted] The economic impact of a partial blockade would be mitigated by the fact that Soviet trade would already be reduced by the imposition of Western economic sanctions. In addition, the Soviets could circumvent a partial naval blockade by routing essential shipments through other Soviet ports. Moreover, the Soviets would have reinforced their Indian Ocean squadron before the start of the invasion. In practical terms, the loss of this SLOC would make little difference since the Soviets would not be able to rely on SLOCs in a situation where the U.S. had naval superiority. They would have to plan to support their forces using land LOCs. It is unlikely then that the imposition of a partial blockade would affect the conduct of the Soviet campaign.

[redacted]
E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

J. Worldwide Naval Blockade of the Soviet Union

With allied help, the U.S. could impose a worldwide naval blockade of the Soviet Union. A naval blockade in conjunction with economic sanctions would isolate the Soviet Union from the outside world and over a very long time could have a serious impact on the Soviet economy. A worldwide blockade would need the cooperation of the countries situated on the chokepoints leading from the Soviet Union such as Japan, Turkey, Norway, and Denmark. The objective would be to mine the chokepoints and thereby bottle up the Soviet Navy and merchant fleet. The major NATO allies would probably be willing to blockade the Soviet Union if their oil supplies were directly threatened by Soviet aggression. The weaker countries located on the chokepoints, however, may be less willing to bear the brunt of Soviet retaliation and more willing to reach an accommodation with the Soviets in order to secure their oil supplies. The U.S. and its major allies could still mine the chokepoints at the cost of aggravating relations with the adjacent states. Although such a blockade would hurt the Soviets economically, it would be unlikely to force a change in Soviet behavior in Iran since the effects would be delayed and the Soviets are largely economically self-sufficient. Finally, if the Soviets prevailed in Iran, they would be in a position to disrupt Western oil supplies unless the blockade were lifted. The options open to the Soviets would include mining Persian Gulf harbors and the Straits of Hormuz, air attacks on key oil transshipment facilities, or a SLOC campaign against oil tankers on the high seas.

II. Potential Soviet Counterattacks

Any U.S. strategy of attacking Soviet vulnerabilities outside the Persian Gulf risks a Soviet counterattack against U.S. interests in other parts of the world. This section briefly summarizes potential Soviet counterattacks and the implications for the U.S., its allies, and the Soviets themselves.

A. Mobilization of Warsaw Pact Forces

Warsaw Pact mobilization would force NATO to prepare for a European war, thereby placing an additional burden on U.S. forces. As mentioned earlier, several of the RDF units are double-hatted with NATO and limited contingency roles. Strategic airlift, which would be heavily engaged in supporting the direct U.S. defense of Iran, would also be required for the rapid reinforcement of NATO. If NATO had not already begun mobilizing, the reduced size and buildup rate of the U.S. reinforcement contribution would increase NATO's vulnerability if the conflict spread to Europe.

The Soviets would probably institute measures to improve the readiness of the Warsaw Pact forces in conjunction with an invasion of Iran, but they would probably avoid fullscale mobilization or actions which would suggest an imminent invasion of Western Europe. First, a heightened Warsaw Pact threat would tend to unify NATO behind U.S. actions in response to Soviet aggression. In the absence of a direct threat to NATO, the Soviets might benefit from divisions within the alliance over the gravity of the Soviet threat to Western oil supplies and the proper response to the Iranian crisis. Second, the Soviets could not be sure

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7

what effect the combination of aggression in Iran and mobilization in Europe would have on the reliability of the support from their Eastern European allies. Finally, the Soviet concern over Germany's military capabilities would argue against doing something that would force the Federal Republic to mobilize and bring its forces to a high state of readiness.

B. Attacks Against Facilities Used by the U.S. in the Indian Ocean

The Soviets could attack facilities used by the U.S. in Somalia, Kenya, Diego Garcia, or Oman to divert U.S. forces from the Persian Gulf conflict, to block the primary SLOC for deployment through the Red Sea, and to destroy rear-area logistic support facilities. Alternatively, Moscow could encourage Ethiopia and PDRY (perhaps with help from Cuban forces) to attack neighboring states with close ties to the U.S.

The facilities at risk in Somalia, Kenya and Oman are not, however, central to a U.S. military response to Soviet aggression in Iran. While they would have some military utility, they primarily support peacetime naval presence. In any case, the U.S. would probably not divert enough ground and TACAIR forces to defend rear area facilities in these countries to detract significantly from the direct resistance in Iran. (Diego Garcia is more important for supporting U.S. forces and is more likely to require some U.S. land-based TACAIR to defend.) In addition, the Soviets (and particularly their allies) would probably not view this as an attractive option because of the risk of U.S. retaliation in kind either immediately or after the conflict in Iran was over.

C. Attacks Against Pakistan

According to DIA estimates, the Soviets presently do not have the force structure or logistics base in Afghanistan necessary for a full-scale invasion of Pakistan. Given the scale and complexity of the operation, the Soviets probably would not couple a major drive into Iran with a full-scale invasion of Pakistan.

Moscow could create pressure on the U.S. by launching cross-border raids into Pakistan and by stirring up trouble in Baluchistan. Unless there were a direct threat to the survival of Pakistan, however, the U.S. probably would respond with emergency arms shipments rather than diverting forces from the Persian Gulf. Although U.S. relations with Pakistan would be strained, it is unlikely that Soviet raids would significantly affect U.S. military capability in the Persian Gulf. Finally, this option may not be attractive because the Soviets are equally, if not more, vulnerable to U.S. and Pakistani efforts to support the rebels in Afghanistan.

D. Cuban Intervention in Latin America

The Soviets and the Cubans could step up support for radical insurgents in Latin America and could encourage attacks on American interests in the region, e.g., the Panama Canal and Venezuelan oil facilities. Such

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activities would be a nuisance to the U.S. but would have little or no impact on U.S. actions in the Persian Gulf. The primary drawback for the Soviets is that Cuban intervention would give the U.S. an excuse to retaliate against Cuba. Having incited the Cubans to meddle in Latin America, the Soviets would face pressures to defend them against U.S. reprisals in an area where the U.S. enjoys military superiority.

E. Vietnamese Invasion of Thailand

The U.S. would oppose a Vietnamese invasion of Thailand but not at the expense of military operations in the Persian Gulf. U.S. assistance probably would be limited to emergency arms shipments and possibly some TACAIR support.

The Soviets, of course, have no assurance that the Vietnamese would be willing to run the risks of an invasion of Thailand. The Vietnamese have experienced considerable difficulty in consolidating their grip on Cambodia, their economy is run-down after years of war, and Hanoi may not be ready or able to launch a new, more extensive campaign.

Equally important, Hanoi would have to take into account the likelihood of Chinese attacks on their rear. In turn, the Soviets would have to assess their requirement to assist Vietnam if the PRC intervened.

F. North Korean Invasion of South Korea

Moscow could use arms transfers and promises of logistic support in an attempt to induce North Korea to attack across the DMZ. The size and capabilities of North Korea's armed forces give the impression that Pyongyang has not abandoned its goal of reuniting the peninsula by force. The combination of Soviet support and U.S. involvement in a major conflict with the Soviets in the Persian Gulf may be sufficient to persuade Pyongyang that the time is ripe for an invasion. [REDACTED]

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

G. Soviet Pressure on Berlin

The Soviets could limit or completely shut off Western access to Berlin to divert U.S. forces from the Persian Gulf and to acquire a bargaining chip which could be traded for concessions in Iran. On the basis of their historical experience, the Soviets might conclude that they could get away with interference with Western access to the city without starting a European war. To minimize the risk of general war, Moscow might direct that steps be taken to isolate the city without mobilizing Warsaw Pact forces or making preparations for a major invasion of Western Europe.

The Soviets probably could not improve their position in the Persian Gulf by pressure on Berlin. Harassment alone is unlikely to have much of an impact on U.S. actions in the Persian Gulf. A serious threat to change the status of the city such as a complete cut-off of access would create a high risk of war with NATO. A complete blockade of Berlin would unify NATO against the Soviets and could cause irreparable harm to Soviet relations with Western Europe. However, if the Soviets are willing to alarm NATO by invading Iran with the attendant threat of being able to jeopardize Western Europe's oil supplies, they may not be very concerned about going a step further by threatening Berlin. In any event, even if West Berlin were in imminent danger of falling into Soviet hands, the U.S. would probably not divert forces from the Persian Gulf or to make concessions in Iran.

H. Attacks on NATO's Southern Flank

Rather than create a risk of general war in Western Europe, the Soviets could attack NATO's Southern flank to generate additional pressure on the West to come to terms in the Persian Gulf and to split Western

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10

forces between Central Europe, the Southern flank, and the Persian Gulf.

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

Given the already heavy Soviet involvement in Iran, the principal constraints on the Soviets would be (1) the limited forces available for such an attack (unless forces were redeployed from areas normally considered for reinforcement of a Central European Front), (2) the probability that the

E.O. 13526, section 3.3(b)(5)

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