

FUTURE MILITARY SCENARIOS INVOLVING AMERICAN FORCES

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It is an honor to appear before the Committee's panel today to discuss future military scenarios. The Committee has suggested that we focus on five countries—China, North Korea, Iran, Pakistan, and India. I would categorically dismiss the need to prepare for any conflict against India. And I would add at least a small number of additional countries and possible conflicts to the list. But on balance, I believe the Committee's focus on China, North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan to be a good starting point. To complement the contributions of others who are focusing on East Asia, this testimony focuses on South and Southwest Asia.¹

Among its other implications, my analysis suggests that the U.S. military will need substantial numbers of ground forces even after the Iraq operation is complete. It will also have to retain substantial numbers of advanced naval and air forces. The requisite numbers are unlikely to be any more than today, and perhaps somewhat less. Quite likely, there will be opportunity to do what the Navy has already begun to do, cutting personnel modestly as it devises more efficient ways of performing various tasks. But the overall message of this analysis is one of conservatism. Those who would radically reshape the American armed forces, even in the aftermath of the Iraq operation, may not have given sufficient attention to the wide range of possible and quite demanding scenarios that could threaten U.S. security thereafter. At least two that are quite plausible--involving conflict against North Korea or in the Taiwan Strait--could involve 200,000 or more American forces for months and perhaps even longer. Several others, some of which could continue for years should they ever begin, could involve 30,000 to 50,000 American troops at a time. That would imply a need for a force structure at least three to four times as large. And of course, it is entirely conceivable that two of these operations, or even more, could occur over the same time period.

BACKGROUND

As is well known, U.S. defense planning after the Cold War was organized around the possibility of two overlapping wars. This scenario guided the sizing and shaping of the American armed forces under three presidents (both Bushes as well as Clinton) and five secretaries of defense (Cheney, Aspin, Perry, Cohen, and Rumsfeld). Only enough strategic lift was purchased for one war at a time. So the presumption was that the wars would be spaced by at least one to three months. But the assumption was made that their durations could overlap, necessitating enough combat and support forces as well as munitions and supplies for two effectively simultaneous operations.

¹ For my own views on North Korea and Taiwan contingencies, see Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Defense Strategy for the Post-Saddam Era* (Brookings, 2005).

There was a broad deterrence logic to the two-war framework--when involved in a future war, which most thought quite likely at some point, the United States would not want to invite attacks on its other allies or interests abroad. So it would need the ability to respond robustly to a second crisis or conflict while engaged in a major combat operation.

The two-war logic also had a basis in very specific examples. The most plausible candidate conflicts were wars against Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Kim family's North Korea. The first Bush administration contemplated a broader range of possible conflicts, including war to protect the Baltic states from a resurgent Russia. But it acknowledged that the two-regional-war scenario was the most demanding.² The Clinton administration later reduced the size of the active-duty military by about 15 percent relative to what Bush had planned. It pointed to the greater capabilities for modern weaponry and argued that increased use of prepositioned supplies as well as fast transport assets could compensate for smaller armed forces. But it otherwise echoed much of the Bush logic, also emphasizing the Iraq and North Korea scenarios.³ The first Bush and Clinton administrations both argued that forces designed to handle two regional wars could also address other possible, lesser conflicts.

In 2001, the George W. Bush administration modified the two-war concept somewhat, even while keeping much of the basic logic. Specifically, Secretary Rumsfeld argued that the United States did not need to have the capacity to win both wars in decisive fashion (meaning unconditional surrender of the enemy and occupation of its territory) at the same time. In the end, this change in doctrine had only limited implications for force planning, even though Rumsfeld reportedly toyed with the idea of cutting two divisions from the active Army before abandoning the idea.⁴

In the aftermath of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, further changes are now needed in America's armed forces and their undergirding defense strategy. The two-war framework should be retained in some form. The deterrent logic of being able to do more than one thing at a time is rock solid. If involved in one major conflict, and perhaps occupied in one or more smaller ongoing operations around the world, the United States also needs additional capability to deter other crises--as well as maintain forward presence, carry out joint exercises with allies, and handle smaller problems. The current "1-4-2-1" framework for force planning was a good modification to the previous two-war framework. By that approach, the United States prepared to defend the homeland, maintain strong forward deployments in four main theaters (Europe, the Persian Gulf, northeast Asia, and the Asian littoral), defeat two regional aggressors at once if

² See William W. Kaufmann, *Assessing the Base Force: How Much is Too Much?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1992), pp. 17-72.

³ See Michael O'Hanlon, *Defense Planning for the Late 1990s: Beyond the Desert Storm Framework* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1995), pp. 42-78; and Michael O'Hanlon, *How to Be a Cheap Hawk: The 1999 and 2000 Defense Budgets* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1998), pp. 52-76.

⁴ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2001), p. 21.

necessary, and overthrow one of them.⁵ But it was designed principally for a world in which hypothetical wars against Iraq or North Korea could still dominate U.S. defense planning.

The below scenarios are the type of possible operations that defense planners will need to consider in the coming years—if not yet fully in the 2005/2006 quadrennial defense review, then certainly by decade's end.⁶ The Pentagon has recently shifted from “threat-based analysis” to “capabilities-based analysis,” meaning that instead of focusing on specific threatening countries such as Iraq and North Korea it will emphasize the U.S. military capabilities that may be needed for future warfare more generally. But even the latter approach clearly requires some sense of the size and nature and location of plausible American opponents.

The following discussion begins with Korea and the Taiwan Strait, which it considers in some detail. My overall finding is that, while both are very demanding scenarios, either could be handled with existing force structure—at least for a time. Were war in Korea to require an extensive occupation, more drastic policy changes including a full activation of the National Guard and Reserves—or perhaps even a form of military conscription—could be needed. But the forces urgently need to defeat aggression and defend American allies in either possible conflict should be available. The essay then concludes with an overview of other scenarios that have received less attention to date. The goal is not to conduct a detailed analysis but rather to sketch out plausible scenarios and corresponding rough U.S. force requirements.

In the spirit of maintaining as much continuity as possible with previous doctrines, the set of scenarios considered here suggests changing the 1-4-2-1 framework to perhaps 1-4-1-1-1. The “4” would be reinterpreted slightly to refer not only to forward deployments but to limited-scale counterterrorist strikes as well. Viewing it in this light would place clear emphasis on maintaining a diverse global base structure and on keeping forward-deployed the military capabilities necessary for small but rapid and decisive strikes or other operations. And the “1-1-1” would refer to one large-scale stabilization mission (presently in Iraq, of course, but perhaps someday in South or Southeast Asia or the Middle East or Africa), one high-intensity air-ground war (for example, in Korea), and one major naval-air engagement (such as in the Taiwan Strait or Persian Gulf).

NEW MILITARY SCENARIOS

With Saddam gone, it is time that the American military planning process begins to emphasize new and imaginative possible future missions. Just as the Afghanistan war surprised almost everyone in the defense community, other missions that have not been

⁵ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (September 30, 2001), pp. 17-22.

⁶ For a somewhat similar list, see Paul K. Davis, *Analytic Architecture for Capabilities-Based Planning, Mission-System Analysis, and Transformation* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2002), p. 16.

frequently analyzed may arise. Several of these are in the category of large-scale stabilization operations.⁷ At least one other scenario, war against Iran in the Persian Gulf, could have some similarities to a Taiwan Strait conflict. All are offered here as catalysts to further thinking and analysis rather than complete assessments in and of themselves.

Stabilizing and Reforming a Palestinian State?

As Mideast peace remains elusive, some have gone back to the drawing board to imagine new frameworks for a negotiated settlement. It is possible that someday, leaders in Israel and Palestine will be willing to return to the logic of the 2000 Clinton administration process and work out an accord according to the classic land-for-peace logic. But it is at least as plausible that, even in a post-Arafat Palestine, the violence will continue, many Palestinian groups will find it difficult to accept any peace deal conferring upon Israel the right to exist, and Israel will itself show little interest in a deal at least until the threat of terrorism can be addressed.

Breaking this logjam could require substantial diplomatic creativity beyond the scope of this defense monograph to address. But it could also require a military component. That could well entail an international force deployed in Palestine, assuming circumstances under which the Palestinian Authority invites such a force into its territory (perhaps as part of a deal recognizing its sovereignty, even as the Authority in effect immediately surrendered part of that sovereignty to the outside force). The multinational coalition would deploy troops partly along the frontiers of Palestine with Israel, but also as an internal security force to help stabilize Palestine and reform its security forces to reduce the influence of extremist elements. American forces would likely have to play a substantial role in any such mission. This idea may seem implausible to some now, but it has been suggested by former U.S. ambassador to Israel and Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk as one of the few ways the current Palestinian-Israeli impasse might be addressed.⁸

Any security force in Palestine would have the advantage of dealing with a small population in a small geographic area. But it would face the disadvantages of dealing with numerous militias, terrorist groups, and competing quasi-official security bodies in urban settings that make law enforcement and counterinsurgency operations quite difficult.

The population of the West Bank and Gaza is roughly 3.5 million. Palestinians have a per capita average income of somewhat less than \$1,000, though actual economic circumstances are perhaps worse than those figures suggest, since unemployment is

⁷ Hans Binnendijk and Stuart E. Johnson, *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2004), p. 41.

⁸ See Martin Indyk, "A Trusteeship for Palestine?" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 3 (May/June 2003), pp. 51-66.

rampant. Official security forces number about 30,000. Various militias and terrorist groups have an estimated combined strength of perhaps 5,000.⁹

Given these parameters, what might an operation in Palestine entail? The first order of business would be to ensure a large enough force, with proper training, to carry out policing and help stabilize the country. Basic rules of thumb suggest that the necessary forces should total 1,000 to 10,000 troops or police for every million inhabitants. But in Palestine, given the stakes involved and the history of violence, the upper end of the range seems more plausible. Indeed, the density of international forces in Kosovo was greater—up to 20,000 personnel for every million Kosovars—and that might even be needed in Palestine as well. Overall circumstances require a need for perhaps 20,000 to 50,000 foreign forces of which anywhere from 15 to 50 percent could be American. Prudent planning suggests that U.S. numerical force requirements might total 10,000 to 20,000 personnel for five to ten years.

These forces would need to be ready for a difficult time ahead. They would be recruiting, vetting, and training a new Palestinian security force while gradually requiring the dismantling and disarming of existing groups. Opposition could be expected; it could be violent at times. The border with Israel would need to be vigilantly monitored as well. The job would take years and could involve many tens of American casualties. After the ongoing Iraq mission, it could seem relatively easy, but it would not be easy in any absolute sense.

Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe in South Asia

Of all the military scenarios that would undoubtedly involve the vital interests of the United States, short of a direct threat to its territory, a collapsed Pakistan ranks very high on the list. The combination of Islamic extremists and nuclear weapons in that country is extremely worrisome; were parts of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal ever to fall into the wrong hands, al Qaeda could conceivably gain access to a nuclear device with terrifying possible results. Another quite worrisome South Asia scenario could involve another Indo-Pakistani crisis leading to war between the two nuclear-armed states over Kashmir.¹⁰

The Pakistani collapse scenario appears unlikely given that country's relatively pro-western and secular officer corps.¹¹ But the intelligence services, which created the Taliban and also have condoned if not abetted Islamic extremists in Kashmir, are less dependable. And the country as a whole is sufficiently infiltrated by fundamentalist groups—as the attempted assassinations against President Mubarak as well as other

⁹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003-2004* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 278, 336, 346-7.

¹⁰ See Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹¹ See Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2004), pp. 97-130.

evidence make clear—that this terrifying scenario of civil chaos cannot be entirely dismissed.¹²

Were it to occur, it is unclear what the United States and like-minded states would or should do. It is very unlikely that “surgical strikes” could be conducted to destroy the nuclear weapons before extremists could make a grab at them. It is doubtful that the United States would know their location and at least as doubtful any Pakistani government would countenance such a move, even under duress.

If a surgical strike, series of surgical strikes, or commando-style raids were not possible, the only option might be to try to restore order before the weapons could be taken by extremists and transferred to terrorists. The United States and other outside powers might, for example, respond to a request by the Pakistani government to help restore order. But given the embarrassment associated with requesting such outside help, it might not be made until it was almost too late, complicating the task of helping them restore order before nuclear arsenals could be threatened. Hence such an operation would be an extremely demanding challenge, but there might be little than to attempt it. The international community, if it could act fast enough, might help defeat an insurrection. Or it might help protect Pakistan’s borders, making it hard to sneak nuclear weapons out of the country, while providing just technical support to the Pakistani armed forces as they tried to put down the insurrection. All that is sure is that, given the enormous stakes, the United States would literally have to do anything it could to prevent nuclear weapons from getting into the wrong hands.

Should stabilization efforts be required, the scale of the undertaking could be breathtaking. Pakistan is a very large country. Its population is just under 150 million, or six times Iraq’s. Its land area is roughly twice that of Iraq; its perimeter is about 50 percent longer in total. Stabilizing a country of this size could easily require several times as many troops as the Iraq mission—with a figure of up to a million being plausible.

Of course, any international force would have help. Presumably some fraction of Pakistan’s security forces would remain intact, able, and willing to help defend their country. Pakistan’s military numbers 550,000 Army troops, 70,000 uniformed personnel in the Air Force and Navy, another 510,000 reservists, and almost 300,000 gendarmes and Interior Ministry troops.¹³ But if some substantial fraction of the military broke off from the main body, say a quarter to a third, and were assisted by extremist militias, it is quite possible that the international community would need to deploy 100,000 to 200,000 troops to ensure a quick restoration of order. Given the need for rapid response, the U.S. share of this total would probably be a majority fraction, or quite possibly 50,000 to 100,000 ground forces.

¹² See International Crisis Group, *Unfulfilled Promises: Pakistan’s Failure to Tackle Extremism* (Brussels, 2004).

¹³ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003-2004*, pp. 140-142.

What about the scenario of war pitting Pakistan against India over Kashmir? It is highly doubtful that the United States would ever wish to actively take sides in such a conflict, allying with one country to defeat the other. Its interests in the matter of who controls Kashmir are not great enough to justify such intervention; no formal alliance commitments oblige it to step in. Moreover, the military difficulty of the operation would be extreme, in light of the huge armed forces arrayed on the subcontinent and the inland location and complex topography of Kashmir. In addition to the numbers cited above for Pakistan, India's armed forces number 1.3 million active-duty troops, and feature such assets as 4,000 tanks, 19 submarines, and about 750 combat aircraft (the defense budgets of the two countries are \$2.5 billion and \$13 billion, respectively).¹⁴

However, there are other ways in which foreign forces might become involved. If India and Pakistan went up to the verge of nuclear weapons use, or perhaps even crossed it, they might consider what was previously unthinkable to New Delhi in particular—pleading for help to the international community. For example, akin to the Palestine trusteeship idea outlined above, they might agree to allow the international community to run Kashmir for a period of years. After local government was built up, and security services reformed, elections might then be held to determine the region's future political affiliation, leading to an eventual end to the trusteeship. While this scenario is admittedly a highly demanding one, and also unlikely in light of India's adamant objections to international involvement in the Kashmir issue, it is hard to dismiss such an approach out of hand if it seemed the only alternative to nuclear war on the subcontinent. Not only could such a war have horrendous human consequences—killing many tens of millions—and shatter the tradition of nuclear non-use that is so essential to global stability today. It could also lead to the collapse of Pakistan, and thus the same types of worries about that country's nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands that are discussed above.

What might a stabilization mission in Kashmir entail? The region is about twice the size of Bosnia in population, half the size of Iraq in population and land area. That suggests initial stabilization forces in the general range of 100,000, with the U.S. contribution perhaps 30,000 to 50,000. The mission would only make sense if India and Pakistan truly blessed it, so there would be little point in deploying a force large enough to hold its own against a concerted attack by one of those countries. But robust monitoring of border regions, as well as capable counterinsurgent/counterterrorist strike forces, would be necessary.

Stabilizing a Large Country Such as Indonesia or Congo

Consider the possibility of severe unrest in one of the world's large countries such as Indonesia or Congo or Nigeria. At present, such problems are generally seen as of secondary strategic importance to the United States, meaning that Washington may support and help fund a peacekeeping mission under some circumstances but will rarely commit troops—and certainly will not deploy a muscular forcible intervention capability.

¹⁴ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003-2004*, pp. 136-137, 337.

However, under some circumstances this situation could change. For example, if al Qaeda developed a major stronghold in a given large country, the United States might—depending on circumstances—consider overthrowing the country’s government or helping the government reclaim control over the part of its territory occupied by the terrorists. Or it might intervene to help one side in a civil war against another. For example, if the schism between the police and armed forces in Indonesia worsened, and one of the two institutions wound up working with an al Qaeda offshoot, the United States might accept an invitation from the responsible half of the government to help defeat the other and the terrorist organization in question.¹⁵ Or if a terrorist organization was tolerated in Indonesia, the United States might strike at it directly. That could be the case if the terrorist group took control of land near a major shipping lane in the Indonesian Straits, or simply if it decided to use part of Indonesia for sanctuary.¹⁶

Clearly, the requirement for foreign forces would be a function of how much of the country in question became unstable, how intact indigenous forces remained, and how large any militia or insurgent force proved to be. For illustrative purposes, if a large fraction of Indonesia or all of Congo were to become ungovernable, the problem could be twice to three times the scale of the Iraq mission. It could be five times the scale of Iraq if it involved trying to restore order throughout Nigeria, though such an operation could be so daunting that a more limited form of intervention seems more plausible—such as trying to stabilize areas where major ethnic or religious groups come into direct contact.

General guidelines for force planning for such scenarios would suggest foreign troop strength up to 100,000 to 200,000 personnel, in rough numbers. That makes them not unlike the scenario of a collapsing or fracturing Pakistan. For these somewhat less urgent missions, by comparison with those considered in South Asia, U.S. contributions might only be 20-30 percent of the total rather than the 50 percent assumed above. But even so, up to two to three American divisions could be required.

Contending with a Coup in Saudi Arabia

How should the United States respond if a coup, presumably fundamentalist in nature, overthrows the royal family in Saudi Arabia? Such a result would raise the specter of major disruption to the oil economy. Saudi Arabia, along with the United States and Russia, is one of the world’s big three oil producers (in the range of 9 million barrels of oil a day), and is the largest oil exporter (7 million barrels per day, about 20 percent of the world total). It also has by far the world’s largest estimated oil reserves (260 billion barrels, or nearly a quarter of the world total).¹⁷ A sustained cutoff in Saudi oil production would wreak havoc with the world economy.

¹⁵ On Indonesia, see Robert Karniol, “Country Briefing: Indonesia,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, April 7, 2004, pp. 47-52.

¹⁶ Krepinevich, *The Conflict Environment of 2016*, pp. 23-27.

¹⁷ Energy Information Administration factsheets, Department of Energy, 2002 (available at www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/topworldtables1_2.html).

A coup in Saudi Arabia would raise other worries, some even worse. They would include the harrowing possibility of Saudi pursuit of nuclear weapons. An intensified funneling of Saudi funds to al Qaeda and the madrassas in countries such as Pakistan would also likely result. This type of scenario has been discussed for at least two decades and remains of concern today—perhaps even moreso given the surge of terrorist violence in Saudi Arabia in recent years as well as the continued growth and hostile ideology of al Qaeda along with the broader Wahhabi movement.

What military scenarios might result in such circumstances? If a fundamentalist regime came to power and became interested in acquiring nuclear weapons, the United States might have to consider carrying out forcible regime change. If by contrast the regime was more intent on disrupting the oil economy, more limited measures such as seizing the oil fields might be adequate. Indeed, it might be feasible not to do anything at first, and hope that the new regime gradually realized the benefits of reintegrating Saudi Arabia at least partially into the global oil economy. But in the end the United States and other western countries might consider using force. That could happen, for example, if the new regime refused over a long period to pump oil, or worse yet if it began destroying the oil infrastructure and damaging the oil wells on its territory—perhaps out of a fundamentalist commitment to a return to the lifestyle of the first millenium. Since virtually all Saudi oil is in the eastern coastal zones or in Saudi territorial waters in the Persian Gulf, a military mission to protect and operate the oil wells would have a geographic specificity and finiteness to it. The United States and its partners might then put the proceeds from oil sales into escrow for a future Saudi government that was prepared to make good use of them.

Saudi Arabia has a population nearly as large as Iraq's—some 21 million—and is more than four times the geographic size of Iraq. Its military numbers 125,000, including 75,000 Army troops, as well as another 75,000 personnel in the National Guard. But it is not clear, in the aftermath of a successful fundamentalist coup, whether many of these military units would remain intact—or which side of any future war they would choose to fight on, should a U.S.-led outside force intervene after a coup.

Some rough rules of thumb are in order for sizing out the requirements for this type of mission. Eastern Saudi Arabia is not heavily populated, but there do exist several mid-sized population centers in the coastal oil zone.¹⁸ For the million or so people living in that region, about 10,000 foreign troops could be required for policing. Ensuing troop demands would not be inordinate.

However, requirements could be much greater to the extent that a robust defensive perimeter needed to be maintained against incursions by raiders. There is no good rule for sizing forces based on the amount of territory to defend. The classic rule that one division is needed for roughly every 25 kilometers is clearly too pessimistic.¹⁹

¹⁸ Thomas L. McNaugher, *Arms and Oil: U.S. Military Strategy and the Persian Gulf* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985), pp. 1-18; 160-206.

¹⁹ Joshua M. Epstein, *Conventional Force Reductions: A Dynamic Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1990), pp. 51-65.

Indeed, no more than several brigades of American forces ultimately secured most of the 350 miles of supply lines in Iraq passing through a number of populated regions and significant cities.²⁰ So a modern American division could, if patrolling an open area and making use of modern sensors and aircraft, surely cover 100 to 200 miles of front.

Putting these missions together might imply a total of some three American-sized divisions plus support for a sustained operation to secure the coastal regions of Saudi Arabia. The resulting total force strength might be 100,000 to 150,000 personnel.

An operation to overthrow the new Saudi regime and gradually stabilize a country of the size in question would probably require in the vicinity of 300,000 troops, using standard sizing criteria. So in fact a coastal strategy, while easier in some ways and perhaps less bloody in the initial phases, could be fully half as large—and might last much longer.

Protecting the Persian Gulf Oil Economy Against Iranian Opposition

In the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq war, the United States had to cope with threats to shipping in the Persian Gulf. To ensure the viability of the global oil economy, it reflagged some oil tankers under its own colors and enhanced its naval presence in the region.

This type of scenario could recur. But next time, it could do so in a more worrisome way. Given the ongoing state of serious tension in U.S.-Iranian issues over matters such as Iran's support for terrorism, Iran's apparent pursuit of a nuclear capability, and President Bush's preemption doctrine, any spark in tensions could inflame a serious problem. Moreover, Iran is not nearly as weak as it was in the late 1980s, when it had spent the better part of a decade fighting Iraq. Since that time, moreover, while Iran's arms imports have not increased as fast as some had feared, they have permitted that country to improve its capacity to threaten shipping lanes in the narrow waters of the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. In particular, it has been improving its capabilities in those very areas of military capability that could cause the United States greatest concern—advanced mines, quiet diesel submarines, precision-guided antiship missiles.²¹

This hypothetical worry could become acute, for example, if in the coming years Israel or the United States attacked the exposed parts of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. In such an event, the United States might reinforce its defensive position in the region in advance; alternatively, an aggressive Iranian response against American friends and allies in the region, or against oil tankers in the Persian Gulf, could require a response.

There are two main ways to imagine protection of the shipping lanes in question. Either way, a certain number of naval vessels would be needed for antisubmarine

²⁰ Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point*, pp. 209-221.

²¹ Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Conflict Environment of 2016: A Scenario-Based Approach* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 1996), pp. 11-15.

warfare, for convoy escort, for minehunting, and for short-range ballistic missile defense. The above estimates from the China-Taiwan scenario are roughly indicative of the needed force requirements here as well, given the somewhat similar geography. Although the Persian Gulf's narrowness makes the mission more difficult, Iran's lesser power by comparison with China makes this mission somewhat easier.

Reconnaissance and rapid-strike capabilities could be provided either via sea-based assets or land-based capabilities. Aerial and sea reconnaissance, as well as quick-strike capabilities, would be needed. Submarines would probably be desired to keep a constant track on Iranian submarines. And of course, ships to protect convoys would likely be required as well.

The quantitative requirements for these various assets would be a function of three main sets of factors: geography, rotational policies, and total Iranian force strength. The United States, and any assisting allies, would need to maintain robust quick-action capabilities along the whole length of the Gulf. It would need to be able to sustain coverage 24 hours a day. And it would need to be able to face down an all-out Iranian assault if necessary as well.

In rough terms, these sizing criteria lead to the following rough requirements. Given Iran's small submarine force, with just three vessels, the demand for American forces would probably not require more than twenty submarines (allowing up to two U.S. subs per Iranian submarine as well as the need to rotate American ships). To ensure continual airspace dominance in the Gulf, roughly as many planes could be required as were needed to enforce the northern and southern no-fly zones over Iraq from 1991 to 2003—some 200 planes in all. The aircraft would ideally be based at several locations along the 500 mile length of the Gulf to minimize time wasted in transit and allow for rapid reinforcement should Iran attempt an assault. In addition, some additional number of planes might need to be capable of establishing superiority against Iran's total air force, numbering about 300 planes of which perhaps 200 are airworthy.²²

Enough surveillance aircraft would be needed to maintain orbits at the northern and southern ends of the Gulf, making for a grand total of 8 to 10 planes for air monitoring and a similar number for sea surveillance. And if points on the Arabian peninsula were potential targets, in addition to its convoy escorts the United States might need to create a "fence" of ships capable of ballistic-missile defense spaced every 50-100 miles along Iran's seacoast to ensure short enough reaction times to any missile launch.

Taken together, the above assets resemble the air and naval components of what has commonly been considered a one-war force package in recent times. Whether some ground forces were needed as a prudent deterrent against overland Iranian aggression would also have to be considered, but the numbers here would presumably not have to reach into the "major theater war" magnitudes.

²² International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003/2004*, p. 110.

