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The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric War

Bahrain

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Working Draft for Review and Comments

Revised: June 28, 2006

Introduction

Bahrain is a small Gulf country of some 655 square kilometers. It is becoming the first “post-petroleum” state in the Gulf. Although Bahrain still gets about 60 percent of its export receipts from petroleum production and refining – as well as some 60 percent of government revenues, and 30 percent of its GDP – it has largely exhausted its oil and gas resources.¹ It can only operate its refinery and provide limited exports because Saudi Arabia has given Bahrain an added share of the oil from their common Abu Saafa field. At the same time, Bahrain is a strategically important island in the middle of the Southern Gulf, with a major port and significant air facilities.

Map 1 shows just how strategic this position is. Saudi Arabia’s main oil fields and ports are to Bahrain’s southwest, Qatar’s gas fields are to its southeast. It is within some seven to nine minutes of flying time of Iraq and Kuwait, and has Iran to its north. Its access to the Gulf, its proximity to Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq all combine make Bahrain a strategically important country for the region and the United States.

Map 1: Bahrain



Source: CIA, “Bahrain,” 2003, available at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/bahrain_pol_2003.jpg

Bahrain had a total population of about 695,000 in 2006, of which 235,000 are estimated to be non-nationals.² It has a GDP of \$11.2 billion in 2005 at the market exchange rate and a national budget of some \$3.4 billion. Because of its small size, economy, and native population, it cannot

support large military forces of its own, or defend itself against its larger Gulf neighbors. Bahrain's military forces only had a total strength of some 11,200 men in 2006, although it another 10,600 men in its security forces.

Bahrain does not, however, need to rely on its own force for defense. The United States provides de facto security guarantees to Bahrain against any foreign threat. Its strategic location has long made it a base for U.S. forces, however, and it is the headquarters and home port for the U.S. 5th Fleet. At present, the U.S. stations some 5,000 troops in Bahrain, and has a 60-acre facility in Manama, Bahrain's capital. Bahrain provided major basing facilities and support to U.S. forces during the "Tanker War" with Iran in 1987-1998, the Gulf War of 1990-1991, and the Iraq War in 2003. In addition, in 2002, President George W. Bush called Bahrain, a major non-NATO ally.³

Bahrain also can rely on assistance from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia not only provides economic aid, it can rapidly reinforce Bahrain's internal security forces. Reports that Saudi security forces have deployed to aid Bahrain in the past seem incorrect, and based on confusion regarding the appearance of the uniforms of some of Bahrain security forces, but there is little doubt Saudi Arabia could deploy by air, sea, or using the long causeway that connects Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain's government has had considerable continuity, although it has a history of sectarian tension. Bahrain was ruled by Shaikh Isa al-Khalifa from 1971 until he died in March 1999. His son, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, then peacefully succeeded the throne. Shaikh Hamad has been seen by many as representing the "young" reform oriented generation of the Gulf States. Following his accession to the throne, he established a committee to study and implement internal political reforms. The committee issued a "National Action Charter," which was presented to the Bahraini public in a referendum in February 2001 and it was endorsed by 94.8 percent of voters. Shaikh Hamad declared that Bahrain was a constitutional monarch, and changed his title to King on February 14, 2002.

These moves toward reform have not prevented Bahrain from having growing internal security problems. Bahrain is a nation with a strong Shi'ite majority ruled by a Sunni minority. There are no reliable figures on the percentages of Shi'ite versus Sunni in Bahrain's native population, and accurate census data on foreigners seem to date back to 2001. It seems likely, however, that some 75-80 percent of Bahrain's native population, and 70 percent of all Muslims in Bahrain, are Shi'ites.⁴ This split led to problems at the time the British withdrew from the Gulf in 1971, and helped provoke a political crisis that led Shaikh Isa to suspend the operations of the national assembly. It led to new tensions during the Iran-Iraq War, and Shaikh Hamad's political and social reforms have led to new Shi'ite efforts to seek a large degree of the nation's wealth and political power.

Bahrain's relations with its neighbors have generally been good, but there have been tensions – particularly with Iran and Qatar. Saudi Arabia provides Bahrain with protection and supply of oil, and Saudi Arabia has not presented a threat to Bahrain. Bahrain's relations with Kuwait and the UAE have also been cordial.

Bahrain had a long territorial dispute over reefs and Islands with Qatar that sometimes led to bad relations and even low-level clashes. This situation seems to have been resolved by the

International Court of Justice in The Hague on March 16, 2001, but there may still be some lingering tension.

Bahrain's most serious problems, however, have come from Iran, which is a Shi'ite state that has sometimes exploited Bahrain's sectarian divisions and made historical claims to the island. Bahrain was a former garrison of the Persian Empire until the al-Khalifa family took over the islands from modern day Kuwait. Bahrain has been ruled by the al-Khalifa dynasty since the 18th century. The al-Khalifa family signed a treaty with Britain making Bahrain a British protectorate in the 1830s, which lasted until Bahrain gained its independence from Great Britain in 1971.⁵

The Shah attempt to renew Iran's claims to Bahrain after Britain "withdrew" from the Gulf in 1971, but come under intense political pressure from the U.S. and UK, and relinquished his claims. Iran made a limited attempt to reassert its claims when the Shah fell from power in 1979, but its new revolutionary government appeared to give up these claims in 1980.⁶ Iran then sponsored Bahrain Shi'ite radicals and seems to have provided some arms and support for a coup attempt in the early 1980s. Iran has recently supported Bahraini Shi'ite dissidents. There are also some small Neo-Salafi Sunni Islamist extremist elements active in Bahrain, but they have not presented a significant threat to either the regime or U.S. forces.

Military Spending & Arms Imports

Bahrain does not have large oil reserves like many of its neighbors in the Gulf, it is not a wealthy state, and has not been a large military spender in absolute terms. Bahrain has, however, slowly built up a mix of regular, paramilitary, and internal security forces that have a significant capability to deal with internal threats. It also reacted to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait by making increases in its military manpower and arms holding by the mid 1990's.⁷

Since the 1980s, Bahrain has spent 4-5 percent of its GDP on defense. Bahrain's defense budget was \$202 million (or 5 percent of its GDP) in 1990, \$253 million (6.9 percent) in 1995, \$315 million (4.6 percent) in 2000, \$315 million (4.3 percent) in 2001, \$331 million (4.3 percent) in 2002, \$460 million (4.9 percent) in 2003, \$473 million (4.4 percent) in 2004, and \$526 billion (3.5 percent) in 2005.⁸ In recent years, its military expenditures have been closely monitored by the newly established parliament. The first deputy chairman of the National Assembly has stated that Bahraini defense spending should be minimal, given the amicable relations it has in the region.⁹

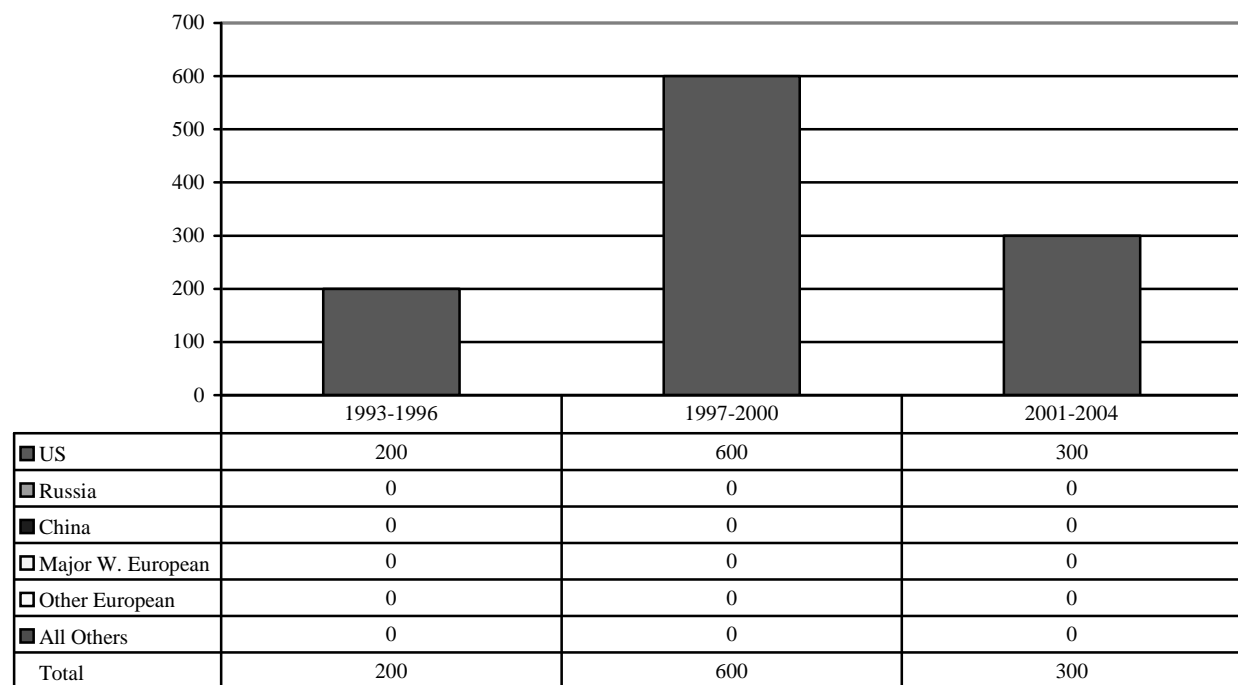
Bahrain's largest military partner is the United States. **Figure 1** reveals that the U.S. was the only state to deliver arms to Bahrain between 1993 and 2004, delivering a total of \$1.1 billion. Bahrain has selectively modernized its military forces along defensive lines and in ways that have enhanced the interoperability of its forces and those of the US. For example, it bought 6-8 I Hawk surface-to-air missile batteries in the 1990s, and ordered 10 F-16C/D with advanced air combat munitions like the AMRAAM in 2000. (It also bought 30 ATACMs launchers more to give it long-range artillery capability in its dispute with Qatar than to deal with Iran or other outside threats.)

Figure 2 shows that the United States was also the only state Bahrain made agreements with between 1993 and 2001, agreeing to \$300 and \$600 million respectively. The increase of \$300 million between 1997 and 2000 is explained by the purchase of the Oliver Perry class frigate.

The 1997-2000 period was the peak of Bahrain's arms importing, and arms deliveries to Bahrain have decreased since the year 2000.

Figure 1: Bahrain's Arms Deliveries by Supplier, 1993-2004

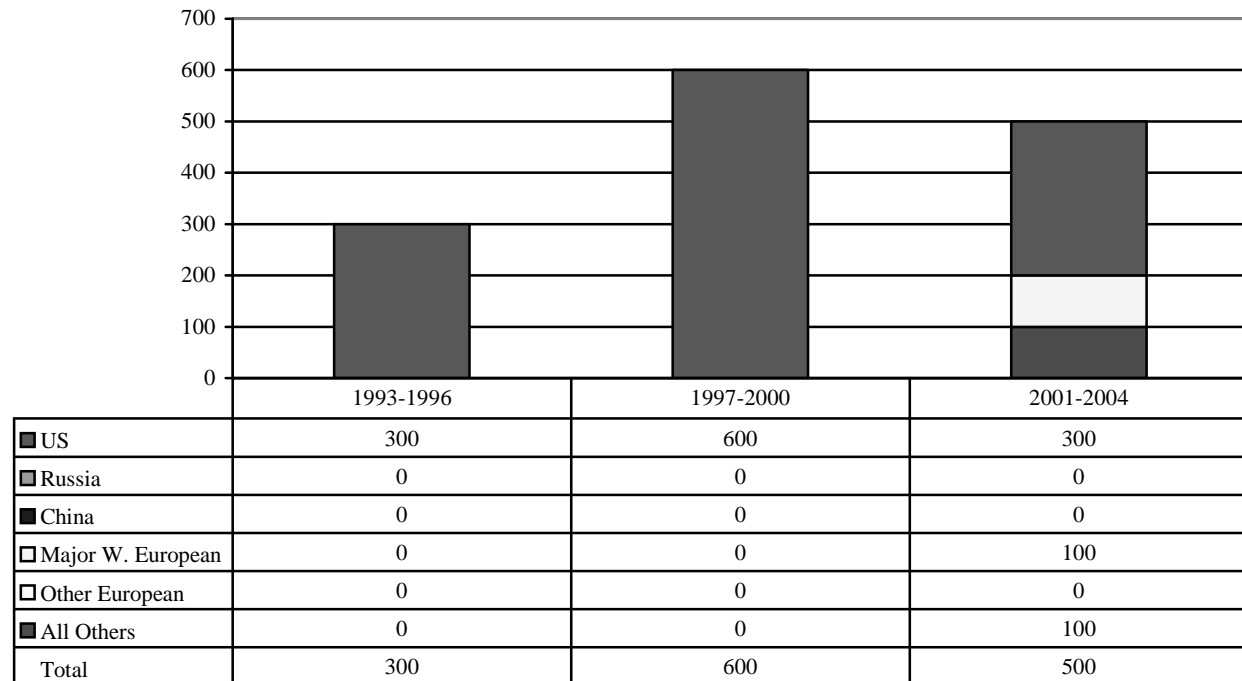
(In Current Million \$US)



Source: Richard F. Grimmett, *Conventional Arms Transfers To Developing Nations, 1997-2004*, CRS, August 29, 2005; and Richard F. Grimmett, *Conventional Arms Transfers To Developing Nations, 1993-2000*, CRS, August 16, 2001.

Figure 2: Bahrain's New Arms Agreements by Supplier, 1993-2004

(In Current Million \$US)



Source: Richard F. Grimmett, *Conventional Arms Transfers To Developing Nations, 1997-2004*, CRS, August 29, 2005; and Richard F. Grimmett, *Conventional Arms Transfers To Developing Nations, 1993-2000*, CRS, August 16, 2001.

Military Manpower

The combined manpower of all of Bahrain's military, paramilitary, and security forces only totals 21,360 men, a relatively small number compared to other states in the region. This total includes Bahrain's 8,500 man army, its 1,200 man navy, 1,500 men in its air force, and an estimated 10,160 internal security personnel. The security forces are comprised of three groups: 9,000 nationally controlled police, 260 Coast Guard personnel, and 900 National Guard soldiers.

The combined number of Bahraini troops has remained approximately the same for the past six years. As **Figures 3-7** show, the largest increase in troops came during the 1990's. Bahrain more than quadrupled the size of its police force from 2,000 to 9,000. Bahrain also increased its army manpower from 5,000 to 8,500 during the 1990's; navy manpower from 600 to 1,000; and its air force from 450 to 1,500. For its size, the Bahraini military is well equipped, but it is dependent on foreigners to handle complicated technical jobs, especially in the navy.¹⁰

According the CIA, only 6,000 young men became old enough to be eligible for military service in 2005. The number of eligible men will increase over the next decade, as Bahrain has a young population—28 percent of which are below the age of 14.¹¹

The Bahraini Army

Bahrain's small army has 8,500 men and its combat units include one armored brigade, one infantry brigade, one artillery brigade, one Special Forces battalion, one Amiri Guard battalion, and one air defense battalion with two missiles and on AA gun battery.

Figure 3 shows that Bahrain's army reached its current level of strength before 2000. Since that time, it has not increased its manpower, due to improved relations with Qatar, who settled its

territorial dispute with Bahrain over the Hawar Islands in 2001, and Iran, who had been accused of inciting the Shi'ite majority to rebel.¹² Over the past 16 years, Bahrain has modernized its army with modern American battle tanks, increasing their amount of M-60 A3's from 54 to 180.

Figure 3 also shows that Bahrain has focused the modernization of its army by buying systems like main like battle tanks and long-range guided artillery rockets while reducing the number of artillery and APC's. Bahrain cut its total artillery weapons from 101 in 2000 to 43 in 2006; and its APCs from 340 in 2000 to 235 in 2006.

Armor and Anti-Armor Weapons

According to the IISS, Bahrain's major combat equipment includes 140-180 M-60A3 main battle tanks; 22 AML-90 and 8 Saladin, 8 Ferret, and 8 Shorland armored reconnaissance vehicles; 25 Dutch YPR-765 AIFVs, and 235 APCs: 115 M-113s, 110 Panhard M-3, 10AT-105 Saxon, 3 M577 Armored Command Vehicles, and 2 M578 Armored Recovery Vehicles.¹³

This is a difficult mix of armor to support, and its 8 Saladin, 8 Ferret, and 8 Shorland armored reconnaissance vehicles, and 110 Panhard M-3s are obsolete to obsolescent. Its tanks do, however, give it armored mobility to deal with a small amphibious threat.

Bahrain's major holding of anti-tank missiles and other anti-tank weapons include have 15 TOW-2, 25-30 RCL 106mm M-40A1, and six 120mm Mobat.¹⁴

Artillery

Bahrain is one of the few Gulf countries to radically modernize some aspects of its artillery strength. It still has a significant amount of conventional artillery for a power its size. It has between thirteen and sixty-two Sp 203mm 110A2, twelve 81mm mortars and nine 120mm mortars, eight 105mm Towed artillery, and between fourteen and eighteen 155mm M198 Towed Artillery.¹⁵

Bahrain also has nine 227mm MRLS multiple rocket launch systems and 30 ATACM tactical missiles.¹⁶ While Bahrain may have bought this system because of the dispute it then had with Qatar, it is a highly effective system for dealing with a small invasion or amphibious landing.

The ATACMS is fired from a modified M270 MLRS (Multiple Launch Rocket System) launcher, and maximum range is about 165 kilometers (100 miles).¹⁷ Its range and lethality depend on the generation of the missile involved. The first missiles supplied had a single-stage solid-fuel rocket motor, and were guided to the target by a ring-laser gyro based inertial system. The warhead section consisted of 950 M74 anti-personnel/anti-materiel (APAM) bomblets that the warhead could distribute over an area of 33,000 square meters.

It is not clear whether Bahrain has modernized and expanded its ATACMs inventory. An improved version of the missile is available that is designated the MGM-140B ATACMS Block IA. It has GPS in its guidance system and provides a major increase in accuracy. Its warhead carries 275 M74 bomblets, rather than 950, but its range increases to 300 kilometers (185 miles). The MGM-140B entered service in 1998. A still more modern version carries the BAT (Brilliant Anti-Tank) guided submunition, and has been designated the MGM-164A. There is also a version that substitutes a 500 lb unitary HE warhead for the M74 bomblets.

Anti-Aircraft Weapons

Bahrain has also strengthened its air defenses. **Figure 3** shows that Bahrain has increased its SAM count from 60 fire units in 1990 to 73 in 2000, and 93 in 2006. Air raids on major are a more realistic threat for Bahrain, and it has focus its limited resources on a key threat.

Bahrain's Anti-aircraft weaponry includes 6-8 I-Hawk MIM 23 B SAM launchers, and 18-20 portable Stinger missiles. They also possess 60 RBS 70 portable SAMs, 7 Crotale low level SAM launchers, 12-15 Oerlikon 35mm guns, and 12 Bofors L/70 40mm.¹⁸ In spite of various planning efforts, Bahrain still does not have a fully integrated air defense system with any of its Gulf neighbors, although it does have some data links.

Overall Assessment

Bahrain's total army forces are roughly the equivalent of one heavy brigade. It has good equipment numbers well equipped for its size, but has to maintain so many diverse types of equipment that it is difficult to sustain and support. It has moderate levels of combat readiness and training, and is largely suited to service as a local deterrent against neighbors such as Iran and Qatar, with whom Bahrain has had poor relations in the past. The army has very limited ability to deploy outside Bahrain.

Figure 3: Bahraini Army's Force Structure, 1990-2006

	1990	2000	2005	2006
Manpower	5,000	8,500	8,500	8,500
<i>Active</i>	5,000	8,500	8,500	8,500
Combat Units				
<i>Armored Brigade</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Infantry Brigade</i>	2	1	1	1
<i>Special Forces Battalion</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Artillery Brigade</i>	2	1	1	1
<i>Amiri Guard Battalion</i>	0	1	1	1
<i>Air Defense Battalion</i>	0	1	1	1
Tanks	54	131	180	180
<i>M-60A3</i>	54	106	180	180
AIFV	0	25	25	25
<i>YPR-765</i>	0	25	25	25
RECCE	38	46	46	46
<i>Aml-90</i>	22	22	22	22
<i>Ferret</i>	8	8	8	8
<i>S52 Shorland</i>	0	8	8	8
<i>Saladin</i>	8	8	8	8
APC	103	340	235	235+
<i>M-113A2</i>	0	220	115	115
<i>AT105 Saxon</i>	10	10	10	10+
<i>M-3 Panhard</i>	93	110	110	110
Artillery	53	101	43	43
<i>SP 203mm M-110</i>	0	62	13	13
<i>MRL 227mm MLRS</i>	0	9	9	9
<i>MOR 81mm</i>	9	18	12	12
<i>MOR 120mm</i>	0	12	9	9
<i>TOWED 105mm</i>	8	8	8	8
<i>TOWED 155mm M-198</i>	14	28	18	18
Anti-Tank	0	51	46	46
<i>TOW -2A/TOW-2B</i>	0	15	15	15
<i>RCL 106mm M-40A1</i>	30	30	25	25
<i>120mm Mobat</i>	6	6	6	6

SAM	60	73+	93	93
<i>SP Cotate</i>	0	7	7	7
<i>I-HAWK MIM23-B</i>	100+	8	8	8
<i>FIM 92-A Stinger</i>	60+	18	18	18
<i>RBS-70</i>	40+	40+	60	60
Guns	0	27	27	27
<i>35mm TOWED Oerlikon</i>	0	15	15	15
<i>40mm TOWED L/70</i>	0	12	12	12

Source: IISS, *Military Balance*, various editions including 1989-1990, 1999-2000, 2004-2005, 2005-2006.

Note: "+" indicate the numbers listed may be slightly less the actual unit or weapon in stock.

The Bahraini Air Force

Bahrain realizes that its best lines of defense lie in air and seapower, and has resisted the temptation to rely solely on the U.S. and Saudi Arabia for its security. The Bahraini air force has 1,500 men, at least 33 combat aircraft, 30 armed helicopters, and a total of seven squadrons.¹⁹ Bahrain benefits from U.S. aid and support in maintaining its air force.

Figure 4 shows the recent growth of the Bahraini Air Force. After the Gulf War, Bahrain tripled its air force manpower from 450 to 1,500 over a period of ten years. It more than doubled its number of squadrons from 3 to 7, and it increased its number of F-16 fighters by 10 between 1990 and 2000.

It is reported that Bahrain is procuring a new combat trainer, the Hawk 129 (a variant of the Australian Hawk 127), which should be ready for manufacture and delivery by the end of 2006.²⁰

In regards to its other training craft, as part of its military expansion after the first Gulf War, Bahrain acquired the 3 Firefly training craft. It also created its helicopter force during the 1990's. In 1990, Bahrain had 16 utility helicopters, but since the year 2000, it has maintained a steady fleet of 46, which includes 24 attack helicopters.

Combat Air Strength

The Bahraini Air Force had one fighter attack squadron in 2006, with 8 F-5Es and 4 F-5Fs. These are aging systems, but still capable in the close support role. Its main combat strength consisted of two fighter squadrons with 17-18 F-16C and 4 F-16D fighters.

It had 24 AH-1Es and 6 TAH-1Ps attack Helicopters.²¹ Ten of the twelve AB-212 helicopters are attack helicopters.²² Combat helicopters again give it range and mobility and an advantage in defending against any threat coming in from the sea. If properly employed, they allow Bahrain to support both its navy in coastal actions and its ground forces in the case of an invasion. They can also be used for internal security purposes.

Bahrain has Sidewinder, Kegler, Sparrow, and Maverick missiles, but their exact number is elusive. Neither the IISS nor Jane's Sentinel are certain of how many tactical or air to surface missiles.

Other Helicopters and Transport Aircraft

Bahrain has 3 T67M200 Firefly training craft, a Boeing 727 supply ship, an Avro RJ85 communications plane (Jane's claims there are two), and a Gulfstream II and III for royal flights.²³

Bahrain also has 2 Boeing 747 communications craft.²⁴ In addition to its combat helicopters, Bahrain has three scout BO-105, 1 one UH-60L Blackhawk communications ship, and the aforementioned 12 AB-212 support helicopters.²⁵ Jane's Security Sentinel mentions that Bahrain has helicopters not reported by the IISS Military Balance, including 1 UH-60A Blackhawk and 1 Bell 430 communications ship.²⁶

Overall Assessment

Bahrain has made a well-planned transition to advanced combat aircraft, and pilot training standards are moderate to good. Bahrain has lost only one plane since 200, an F-16C.. Readiness is acceptable, and Bahrain has stocks of modern air munitions. A new contract with the U.S. will help it maintain its Air Force

Bahrain is dependent on the United States for assistance in battle management, air control and warning, and targeting and battle damage assistance. In July of 2005, Bahrain requested a U.S. Foreign Military Sales package of \$159 million for repairs and maintenance of their F-16 fighters.²⁷

Figure 4: Bahraini Air Force's Force Structure, 1990-2006

	1990	2000	2005	2006
Manpower	450	1,500	1,500	1,500
<i>Active</i>	450	1,500	1,500	1,500
Total Number of Squadrons	3	7	7	7
Total Combat Aircraft	2/24	3/34	3/33	3/33
Fighter Interceptor	1/12	2/22	2/21	2/21
<i>F-16C Fighting Falcons</i>	1/8	2/18	2/17	2/17
<i>F-16D Fighting Falcons</i>	4	4	4	4
Fighter Ground Attack	1/12	1/12	1/12	1/12
<i>F-5E Tiger II</i>	1/8	1/8	1/8	1/8
<i>F-5F Tiger II</i>	4	4	4	4
Other Jets/Aircraft	2	3	7	7
<i>Boeing-727</i>	0	1	1	1
<i>Gulfstream II</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Gulfstream III</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>RJ-85</i>	0	0	1	1
<i>Trg 3 T67M Firefly/Slingsby</i>	0	0	3	3
Helicopter	1/16	4/47	4/47	4/47
Attack Helicopter	0	24	24	24
<i>AH-1E Cobra</i>	0	3/24	3/24	3/24
TRG Helicopter	0	6	6	6
<i>TAH 1P-Cobra</i>	0	6	6	6
UTL Helicopter	1/16	1/16	1/16	1/16
<i>AB-212</i>	1/12	1/12	1/12	1/12
<i>BO-105</i>	4	3	3	3
<i>UH-60L Black Hawk</i>	0	1	1	1
SPT Helicopter	0	1	1	1
<i>VIP S-70A Black Hawk</i>	0	1	1	1
Missiles/Tactical/ASM	?	?	?	?
<i>AGM-65D/AGM-65G Maverick</i>	0	?	?	?
<i>AS-12 Kegler</i>	?	?	?	?
<i>AAM AIM-7 Sparrow</i>	0	?	?	?
<i>AAM AIM-9P Sidewinder</i>	?	?	?	?
<i>ATGW BGM-71 TOW</i>	0	?	?	?

Source: IISS, *Military Balance*, various editions including 1989-1990, 1999-2000, 2004-2005, 2005-2006.

Note: All “?” refer to weapons that Bahrain is believed to possess, though the exact numbers in their possession are unknown. Numbers listed with a slash mark indicate how many squadrons the craft are broken down into.

The Bahraini Navy

The Bahraini Navy has 1,200 men, which is a relatively large force for a small country. **Figure 5** shows Bahrain steadily increased the size of its navy during the 1990's, buying the 4 Ajeera supply ships and its Oliver Perry class frigate. Bahrain has also not lost or decommissioned a ship over the past 15 years. It increased its navy personnel between 1990 and 2000 from 450 sailors to 1,000, and then it added an additional 200 sailors between 2000 and 2005.

Surface Combat Forces

The Bahraini Navy is based at Mina Salman, and has a combat strength of 1 frigate, two corvettes, four missile patrol craft, and four inshore patrol craft.²⁸ It has 4 Ajeera utility craft.²⁹ The frigate, the Sabha, is an ex-Oliver Hazard Perry class ship with Harpoon ship-to-ship missiles and Standard anti-aircraft missiles. It is equipped with torpedoes, a 76mm gun, and modern radars and fire control systems. The ship entered Bahraini service in 1997. It is active, but does not have helicopters and cannot adequately perform its ASW mission without them.

Bahrain's two Al Manama class corvettes are 632-ton ships with two twin MM-40 Exocet launchers, and a 76mm gun. They have 40mm AA guns and can carry a helicopter, but are not equipped with any. They have moderate radar and combat electronics capabilities and entered service in the late 1980s. The four Ahmad El Fateh class missile patrol boats are 259-ton vessels equipped with two twin MM40 Exocet launchers and a 76mm gun. Bahrain has four gun-equipped patrol boats: two of 205 tons and two of 33 tons. Its 4 Ajeera class supply ships carry a 420-ton load. According to Jane's, it also has 3 LCU landing craft.³⁰ Its small coastguard has 21 light patrol boats, a support craft, and a landing craft (LCM).³¹

Overall Assessment

The navy is not capable of independent operations against a power like Iran, but is capable of defending the state against piracy and smuggling.³²

Bahrain has reasonable manpower quality, readiness, and sustainability and good training and at sea rates by regional standards, but for communications and technical jobs it relies on expatriates and foreign experts.³³ It has, continued to train native sailors in technical tasks, and does not wish to stay dependent on foreign nationals.³⁴

Furthermore, unlike the fleets of some neighboring states, most of Bahrain's ships are fully combat capable, and have the necessary equipment to use their missile systems.

Figure 5: Bahraini Navy's Force Structure, 1990-2006

	1990	2000	2005	2006
Manpower	600	1,000	1,200	1,200
<i>Active</i>	600	1,000	1,200	1,200
Principal Sea Combatants	2	3	3	3
<i>Sabah Frigate ,carries Hel and SAM</i>	0	1	1	1
<i>Al Maanama Corvette with SAM</i>	2	2	2	2
Patrol and Coastal Combatants	11	8	8	8
<i>PCI Swift Al Jarim</i>	0	2	2	2
<i>PFC Al Riffa</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>PFM Ahmed el Fateh</i>	4	4	4	4
<i>PFI</i>	5	0	0	0
Amphibious Craft/ ACV/ Utility Craft Air	0	1	1	1
<i>Tiger</i>	0	1	1	1
Logistics and Support	0	4	4	4
<i>SPT Ajeera</i>	0	4	4	4

Source: IISS, *Military Balance*, various editions including 1989-1990, 1999-2000, 2004-2005, 2005-2006.

Note: The year 1990 combines Bahrain's unknown PFI class with its patrol class.

Paramilitary, Security, and Intelligence Forces

Bahrain's most pressing threat is internal, not external. Bahrain can rely on close defense cooperation between the United States, Britain, and regional military powers such as Saudi Arabia. In contrast, Bahrain's internal sectarian divisions make its internal paramilitary and security services critical to insuring internal stability.

Accordingly, Bahrain's monarchy has created a police force larger than its army. There are currently 9,000 police controlled by the Bahrain Police and Public Security Department.³⁵ The Ministry of Interior controls the coast guard, which has 250 personnel.³⁶ The National Guard was formed in 1998, and it is a lightly armed elite group of 3 battalions, trained to defend key facilities such as power plants.³⁷ Their current number is 900, but Bahrain is planning on increasing the number to 2000 within the next few years.³⁸

The paramilitary forces of Bahrain also possess 1 BO-105 scout helicopter, 2-3 Bell 412 Hueys, and 2 Hughes 500 public security helicopters.³⁹ In the coast guard, Bahrain has 20 patrol crafts under 100 tons of various caliber and speed, 1 PCI, a Tiger Hovercraft, and 2 maintenance support ships.⁴⁰

Figure 6 shows that Bahrain has maintained the same number of craft since 1990, with the exception of the 20 small patrol boats. The Bahraini coast guard became faster and more mobile in the 1990's in an attempt to prevent smuggling and piracy off Bahrain's shores. Aside from the creation of the National Guard in 1998, the most notable increase over the past 16 years is the rise in Bahrain's police force. In 1990, there were 2,000 police for the whole state. By the year 2000, this number increased to 9,000. It has since stayed at the same level since 2000, but Bahraini government has announced that it is going to increase the police force further after 2006.⁴¹

The increase in police personnel noted in **Figure 6** occurred because of the political turbulence in the 1990's. In 1994, there were nationwide demonstrations following the arrest of popular Shi'ite cleric Ali Salman. The ruler at the time, Sheik Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa (father of King Hamad), attempted modest ethnic tolerance reforms in 1996, but opposition groups dismissed them as inadequate.⁴² There were also a series of arson attacks and demonstrations in 1998.⁴³ This turbulence forced the monarchy to rely on its police force, and the police manpower rose until the ascension of King Hamad in 1999.

Main Security and Paramilitary Forces

Bahrain has a broad mix of municipally and nationally run agencies, some of which share the responsibility for the same forces, or servicing Bahrain's security forces. While the nature of some of these forces is classified, Jane's has developed the following analysis of Bahrain's internal security apparatus:⁴⁴

- **Police and Public Security Department:** Founded in 1926, this branch handles Bahrain's 9,000 police troops. These troops are supplemented with elite security training, intelligence and counterintelligence units. They also have an Emergency squad to handle various disasters. The police are equipped with standard police gear, armored personnel carriers, and Bahrain's 2-3 Bell 412 Twin Hueys. The director general of police and the director of Security and Intelligence services head the branch.

- **Bahrain Security and Intelligence Service (BSIS):** This organization helps to run the police, but it also gathers intelligence on domestic groups. It helps control public dissent, and is run with foreign assistance. It is run with the aid of British, Pakistani, Saudi, Palestinian, and Jordanian contract officers, in addition to Bahraini officials.
- **Bahraini Coast Guard:** This branch is small compared to the police, with 260 personnel. It is run directly by the ministry of interior, and it handles Bahrain's 21 small patrol craft, as well as its generic support vehicles.
- **National Guard:** Created in 1998, this is a new addition to Bahrain's forces. Its current number is 900, but there are plans to expand it to 2,000 members shortly. The National Guard is trained by British forces, and there purpose is to deter attacks from foreign groups. The foreign forces that Bahrain fears are al-Qaeda and Iran. They fear that al-Qaeda may attack industrial centers, and Bahrain has accused Iran of encouraging violence among the Shi'ite population during the 1990's. At first, the National Guard was sharing the same equipment as the Defense Forces, but moves have been made to import equipment just for them.
- **National Emergency Control Center (NECC):** The NECC was established in March of 2003, and was built around the possibility that Iraq might use chemical weapons as the U.S. began its invasion. It is designed to handle biological and chemical attacks, as well as natural disasters.
- **Mukhtars (Mayors):** In August 1999, the Ministry of Interior appointed 18 Mukhtars, local officials who all observe a section of the capital, Manama. Their duties are to handle security within the capital, but they also assess the loyalty of the citizens within their assigned area.

All of these groups are intended to cooperate in handling Bahrain's security and paramilitary detail together. The Police and Public Security Department dates back to the colonial era, while others, such as the National Guard, the Mukhtars, and the NECC were created within the last decade. Other agencies, like the Intelligence and Security Service, operate with heavy foreign support.

Like virtually all internal security forces in the region, Bahrain's police and its internal security apparatus have been accused of human right abuses. The U.S. Department of State annual human right report summarized the role of Bahrain's internal security services and the Ministry of Interior as follows:⁴⁵

The MOI is responsible for public security. It controls the Public Security Force and the extensive security service, which are responsible for maintaining internal order. The Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) is responsible for defending against external threats and also monitors internal security. There were no reports of corruption within the MOI and the BDF, although corruption was difficult to assess given the lack of transparency in activities and budgets.

There continued to be no known instances of police officers being punished for human rights abuses committed during the year or in any previous year.

...In May 2004, King Hamad ordered an investigation into police conduct during a demonstration the previous day in which two civilians were injured by rubber bullets. Results of the investigation were not issued by the end of the year ... There were no reports of investigations of reported police misconduct during demonstrations in June, July, and November in which demonstrators were reportedly beaten.

According to the MOI, its Disciplinary Court convicted three police officers in 2004 for criminal activities of property theft and disobedience. The press reported on a number of cases of police officers facing charges for various crimes, including theft, during the year.

Overall Assessment

Bahrain has faced internal stability threats ever since it gained its independence from the British. The recent threat from al-Qa'ida has not been a major threat to Bahrain per se, but that does not preclude the prospects of future attacks. Bahrain's paramilitary and internal security apparatus's capabilities are evolving and is adapting to the changing nature of threat.

Bahrain is expected to more than double its National Guard manpower from 900 to 2000. While numbers may not give the true nature of capabilities of Bahrain's overall internal security apparatus, it does indicate the Bahraini security community adaptability to potential terrorist threat, protect its important infrastructure, and insure stability.

Internal security forces cannot, however, replace effective political, social, and economic reform. The tensions between Bahrain's ruling Sunnis and Shi'ite majority can only be dealt with by creating more and better jobs for its youth, by opening up its political system to more Shi'ite participation, and by other national reforms that benefit all of its population. One key step may be to reduce Bahrain's dependence on foreign labor and create more jobs for its own citizens.

Figure 4: Bahraini Paramilitary Force Structure, 1990-2006

	1990	2000	2005	2006
Manpower	2,250	10,150	10,160	10,160
<i>Police</i>	2,000	9,000	9,000	9,000
<i>Coast Guard</i>	250	250	260	260
<i>National Guard</i>	0	900	900	900-2,000*
UTL Helicopters	5	5	5	5
<i>BO-105</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Bell 412 Twin Huey</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>Hughes 500</i>	2	2	2	2
Patrol and Coastal Combatants	6	21+	21+	21+
<i>PCI</i>	6	1	1	1
<i>20 vessels less than 100 tonnes</i>	0	20+	20+	20+
Amphibious Craft/ACV/Utility Craft Air Cushion	1	1	1	1
<i>Tiger</i>	1	1	1	1
Logistics and Support/Landing Craft	3	2	2	2

Source: IISS, *Military Balance*, various editions including 1989-1990, 1999-2000, 2004-2005, 2005-2006.

Note: "+" indicates the numbers listed may be slightly less the actual unit or weapon in stock.

*** The National Guard manpower is estimated to expand to 2,000.

Bahrain's Continuing Strategic Challenges

While external threats from Iran, and the possibility of hostile posturing by other Gulf States, cannot be discounted, Bahrain's most urgent and most important challenge is ensuring internal stability. Bahrain's King is reform minded, and its economy is diversifying to avoid a crisis as oil reserves dry up. However, its Shi'ite majority is tired of being underrepresented in the

government. Bahrain also faces external threats from al-Qaeda and Iranian subversion, but it has no conventional enemies seeking open war.

As a result, Bahrain not only needs a strong internal security apparatus, but internal economic, social, and political reforms.

Socioeconomic Challenges

Bahrain's economy has grown in the past few years, with a real GDP growth rate of 5.9 percent in 2005, up from a growth rate of 5.4 percent in 2004.⁴⁶ Bahrain has also diversified its economy. It has put an emphasis on non-oil based industries such as aluminum manufacturing, tourism, and banking. Bahrain has more off-shore banks than any other Gulf state. For example, Bahrain is turning its smelter at Alba into the largest aluminum smelter outside the former USSR. Still, Bahrain's largest source of revenue is its oil, which accounts for 60 percent of its income, and 20 percent of its GDP.⁴⁷

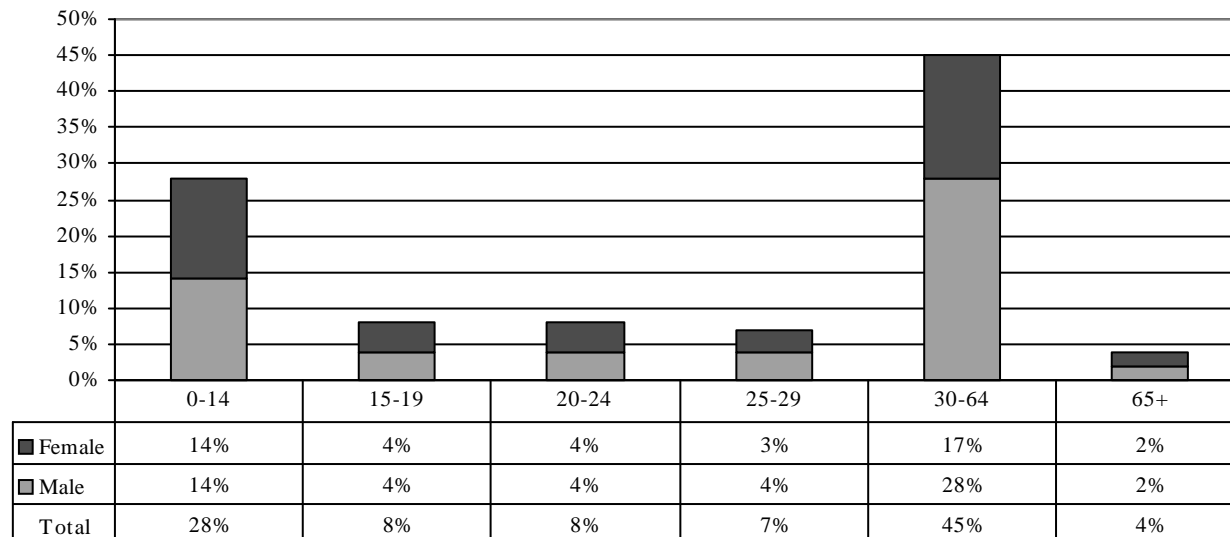
The key problem is to find jobs for Bahrain's youth, particularly its Shi'ite poor and lower middle class, and to sustain the growth and diversification of Bahrain's economy. Bahrain's small oil reserves are depleting at high rates. Bahrain's oil production was 188,300 barrels per day in 2005, down from 208,000 barrels per day in 2004.⁴⁸ Bahrain produces 47,100 barrels per day of petroleum, and it receives approximately 150,000 barrels per day from Saudi Arabia's Abu Saafa oil field.⁴⁹

Bahrain's oil reserves are estimated at 125 million barrels, all of which are located in the Awali oil field. The Awali was the first oil field to be discovered in the Gulf (1932), but it hit its peak production of 75,000 barrels per day in the 1970's, and has been declining ever since. In early 2006, it was producing 35,000 barrels per day.⁵⁰

Curbing the problem of unemployment will be a serious strategic challenge. A report carried out by the Crown Prince's Court and the Economic Development Board in 2004 stated that if Bahrain's economic growth remained the same, then there would be an unemployment rate of 35 percent by the year 2013.⁵¹ Bahrain's industries have grown, and while unemployment is still at 15 percent, Bahrain's overall economic growth has been seen as a positive sign.⁵²

Like the other Gulf States, and practically all of the MENA countries, Bahrain is facing a "youth explosion." Bahrain has a disproportionate amount of young people coming of age within the next ten years. This is nowhere as large as a state like Yemen, which has 47 percent in the 0-14 age group.⁵³ As **Figure 7** shows, however, 28 percent of Bahrain's population is between the age of 1 and 14. Still, the category of 0-14 is the second largest demographic group. It is important, however, to note that more than half of the population is under the age of 29; while 45 percent of the population are between the age of 30 and 64.

The population between the age of 30 and 64 largely represent people who would be considered part of the labor force, while the population between the age of 0 and 24 (44 percent of the total) are those who would be considered coming of age and entering the labor market. Employing this youth, largely depends on Bahrain's ability to diversify its economy and privatize key sectors that have been run by the government. The importance of dealing the demographic and unemployment challenges go beyond their economic value. A large and unemployed youth population represents a fertile recruitment pool for both sectarian tension and conflict and extremist recruiting.

Figure 7: Bahrain's Demographic Distribution, 2006

Source: IISS, *Military Balance 2005-2006*.

Relations with Neighboring States

Bahrain had an unsettled dispute with Qatar over the Hawar Islands, and the neighboring waters, until 2005. In March of that year, however, the International Court of Justice in The Hague awarded the Hawar islands to Bahrain. Qatar accepted the decision and acknowledged settlement.⁵⁴ The main source of hostilities between the two states was then removed. In October of 2005, Qatar agreed to supply Bahrain with natural gas from its North Field. This should help alleviate the problems caused by Bahrain's diminishing oil reserves. The two states also reached an agreement on joint anti-crime prevention on November 16, 2005.⁵⁵

Relations with neighboring Saudi Arabia have long been good, as Saudi Arabia has provided Bahrain with \$50 million in aid every year since 1992.⁵⁶ Relations did sour slightly in 2004 when Saudi Arabia increased its oil revenue from the Abu Saafa oil field, but refused to give Bahrain an increased share in the profits. Bahrain still receives some of the field's original production, but was irritated not to share in the enhanced profit.⁵⁷

The one neighbor with whom Bahrain has relatively poor relations with is Iran. As has been mentioned earlier, Iran relinquished its claims to Bahrain back in 1980, but Bahraini security officials fear that Iran still attempts to incite the impoverished Shi'ite population.⁵⁸ In addition to the tensions that occurred during the time of the Shah and the Iran-Iraq War, Bahraini officials accused Iran of backing a Shi'ite rebellion to overthrow the government in 1996. Bahrain announced that its serviced uncovered an Iranian plot to destabilize Bahrain, acting through a local Shi'ite group called the Bahraini Hezbollah.⁵⁹

Relations improved slightly under the tenure of President Mohammed Khatami.⁶⁰ The current President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has soured relations, however, by appointing military officers to senior positions in his Cabinet who were allegedly responsible for supporting the Shi'ite rebellions.⁶¹

Bahrain maintains positive and non-confrontational relations with the rest of its neighbors. It is not militarily strong enough to force its will on any state, and its dependence on Qatari natural gas provides a strong incentive for Bahrain to maintain peace.

Political Unrest

The reform movement led by King Hamad in 1999 has helped reduce tensions with the nation's Shi'ite majority, which has sought greater representation in the government since Bahrain's independence in 1971. The new constitution created in 2001 called for a constitutional monarchy. A year later in 2002 Bahrain held its first parliamentary elections in 30 years.⁶²

The elections scarcely, however, ended Bahrain's political quarrels. Political parties are illegal, but its four opposition "societies" -- Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society (the largest political party in Bahrain), the National Democratic Society, the National Democratic Action Association, and the Islamic Action society -- all boycotted the parliamentary election.⁶³ The groups who boycotted claimed that the al-Khalifa dynasty had gerrymandered districts by giving sparsely populated Sunni areas too many seats in the parliament. They also claimed that the government let non-Bahraini Sunni's vote.⁶⁴

The incomplete promises of better Shi'ite representation, combined with a period of high unemployment for native Bahraini's (unemployment is 15 percent nationwide) led to a protest in the city of Eisa on November 28, 2005.⁶⁵ The police mishandled the demonstration, apparently by assaulting a protestor. The demonstration became a riot shortly thereafter, and the police put down the mob.⁶⁶

Although such violence has been comparatively rare, it was a sign of frustration at the lack of the government's effective reforms. Shi'ite Muslims are still viewed as suspect by the ruling Sunni, and it is worried that they have ties and loyalties to Iran, which gives them spiritual leadership.⁶⁷ The Sunni minority and foreigners still corner the more lucrative aspects of the job market, the latter account for 64 percent of Bahrain's total workforce.⁶⁸

Opposition groups have also been disappointed by the lack of follow through in reform.⁶⁹ In January 2005, even after King Hamad had made new appointments to his cabinet, the royal family still controlled almost half of the twenty-one seats, including the most power issues such as energy, foreign policy, Islamic affairs, and the interior ministry.

The unrest caused by the lack of reform, and the 15 percent unemployment rate (most of which is Shi'ite) has made the continued use of police necessary. The Ministry of Information, which handles intelligence, has also taken the action of registering all Web sites operating out of Bahrain in order to prevent the spread of anti-government information.⁷⁰

Bahrain's Struggle Against Terrorism

As yet, there have been no al-Qa'ida terrorist attacks committed on Bahraini territory, and Bahrain has not had a major terrorist attack occur in nine years.⁷¹ In 2005, however, gunmen killed Bahrain's top envoy to Iraq, Hassan Malallah al-Ansari, in Baghdad. Even though this act of violence occurred outside of Bahrain, security personnel believe Bahrain could be vulnerable to attacks, and government officials have two primary concerns.⁷² First, officials fear that Iranian provocateurs will compel members of the Bahraini Shi'ite community to form violent terror cells. Second, they fear attacks by al-Qaeda on industrial centers and U.S. Naval facilities. The

scheduled increase in National Guard's numbers to 2,000 is designed to deal with these external threats.

The National Guard was created to prevent foreign sponsored militant groups, especially al-Qaeda, from attacking vulnerable facilities. Bahrain's alliance with the U.S. and the presence of the 5th fleet make Bahrain more susceptible to terror attacks. Fears of al-Qaeda attacks were heightened in 2003 by the discovery of an alleged al-Qaeda cell within Bahrain's security forces. The cell was discovered with the aid of the Syrians in February 2003, and two of the five arrested suspects were native Bahrainis.⁷³

Bahrain has done more to counter this threat than increase the size of the National Guard. In April 2005, King Hamad announced that he would create a "Terror Law". This law was designed to severely punish any terrorist act that was initiated outside the country. King Hamad also increased the salaries of the police force to encourage officers to stay in their posts.

Bahrain has actively cooperated with Saudi Arabia, other regional powers, the US, and various international organizations in fighting terrorism. Bahrain sent Crown Prince Salman to Jordan in November 2005 in response to the suicide bombing that occurred there. That month, it hosted a meeting of the GCC Interior Ministry Undersecretaries to make proposals for joint GCC counter terror measures. For its own part, Bahrain has increased security around the King Fahd Causeway, which links the island to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁴

Ongoing Internal stability

The dominant issue facing Bahrain's internal security is the sectarian tension between its Shi'ite majority and its ruling Sunni minority. King Hamad's commitment to his economic, social, and political reforms have been hailed as important first steps in the efforts to ease the tensions. While historically the tensions have turned into violent encounters between Bahrain's security services and the Shi'ite, currently, the issues lies in the government's ability to balance between security and increasing political and economic participation of the Shi'ites.

The Shi'ite population is underrepresented in the government and impoverished. The King's reformation of Bahrain's constitution offers a permanent and non-violent solution to the troubles of the Shi'ite. The test of these reforms will be the 2006 parliamentary elections. Unlike the 2002 election, where four political societies boycotted, all the major political societies are registered for the election. The issue of segregation is a societal problem, where areas such as the island of Riffa` forbid Shi'ites from living.⁷⁵ In terms of greater representation, Shi'ite political societies like Al-Wefaq complain that the government has gerrymandered districts in favor of the Sunni minority.⁷⁶

One example of this tampering is the southern governorate. This area is sparsely populated with Sunni (398 represented by a nominee), but it receives six seats, while the densely populated Shi'ite northern governorate (13,655 represented by a nominee) receives nine seats.⁷⁷ Shi'ite societies also allege that in the 2002 election, Saudi based members of the Sunni Al-Dawasir tribe were allowed to vote. The Shi'ites saw this as another move to undercut their influence.⁷⁸ Assuming the Shi'ite political societies can increase their influence in the parliament, King Hamad will be pressed to resolve this discrepancy sooner than later.

In addition to political reforms, Bahrain's unemployment will continue to result in demonstrations like those that occurred at Eisa in November 2005.⁷⁹ Bahrain's economy is

growing, but until Shi'ites have job opportunities, there will likely continue to be unrest. Foreign Shi'ite movements inspired by Iran and Iraq will also press Bahrain. The war in Iraq has created strong sentiments against the U.S. forces stationed in Bahrain. The Shi'ite population of Bahrain has also been empowered by the rise of Iraq's Shi'ite majority.⁸⁰

As is stated before, King Hamad's commitment to reform will be the key factor in determining how many of Bahrain's religious and ethnic issues are addressed. One of the handicaps impeding his efforts is his uncle, Sheik Khalifa, who serves as prime minister. Khalifa is firmly entrenched politically, and his faction is very reluctant to yield power to the Shi'ite.⁸¹

The challenge to King Hamad will be allowing enough necessary reforms to balance the needs of the population, implement the necessary reforms, but keep the social cohesion of his country. The following summarize what Bahrain will likely face in the foreseeable future:

- **Continued internal reform:** King Hamad is under considerable pressure from his own citizens to address the inequalities in the Bahraini political system. Thus far, he has proven himself willing to make necessary reforms to prevent his nation from becoming overcome with conflict. To prevent unrest, however, King Hamad may have to address the issue of gerrymandering. The Shi'ite political "parties" have demonstrated a strong resolve to pressure the King for reform, and the 2006 parliament elections could give them a large public mandate.
- **Demographic time bomb:** Like all other states in the region, Bahrain is facing explosive demographic dynamics. Its population is young, 28 percent of them exist within the 0-14 age category. All of these young people will become eligible for work within the next few years. If these young people do not find work, they may become restless and ferment instability. This will be a dilemma that King Hamad may have to face if his population continues to feel resentment towards the U.S. presence and religious persecution.
- **Continued economic growth and diversification:** The Bahraini economy is growing, but at its current rate it will not grow fast enough to provide its youth with jobs. Bahrain will likely continue to move away from an oil-based economy by strengthening its aluminum and banking industries. Bahrain's economy also employs a large number of non-nationals. For the sake of employing his own population, a meaningful solution to Bahrain's dependence on a non-national labor force must be found.
- **Counterterrorism:** The anti-terror legislation created by King Hamad in 2005 is a preventive step against foreign militant groups such as al-Qaeda. Bahrain has already announced that it will increase its police force and National Guard in anticipation of possible attacks. Additional security measures will likely follow. Bahrain will also continue to shield its Shi'ite population from any future Iranian attempts to increase religious tension.

Balancing Internal Security and Conventional Military Needs

Bahrain must balance its conventional military needs and internal security problems in order to deal with these shifting priorities. Although its forces and military spending are limited in comparison with its neighbors, Bahrain is one of the larger regional military spenders in the Middle East in terms of military spending as a percentage of its GDP. Between 2000 and 2004, Bahrain used an average of 34 percent of its current expenditures on Defense and Security.⁸²

As is noted earlier, Bahrain has attempted to curb its military spending, but with planned increases in both the National Guard and police force, decreasing spending will be difficult.⁸³ But these areas are necessary to improve Bahrain's internal security apparatus' capabilities to deal with these "new" threats. Bahrain is vulnerable to attacks from al-Qaeda and other militant groups. This, along with general unrest in the Shi'ite population, makes domestic security a primary concern for Bahrain.

Qatar no longer threatens the Hawar islands, and Iran has made no efforts to reestablish territorial claims to Bahrain. This means that if King Hamad wishes to decrease military spending, Bahrain could reduce spending on conventional forces in order to sustain increased spending on security forces. Still, with Bahrain purchasing new aircraft and maintenance packages from the US, it may prove impossible to reduce defense spending.⁸⁴ Bahrain also must consider both the potential implications of U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, and Iraqi instability, and Iran's growing asymmetric warfare capabilities and potential status as a nuclear power.

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⁷ "Executive Summary, Bahrain," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, The Gulf States*, December 19, 2005, p. 3.

⁸ IISS, *Military Balance*, various editions.

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¹¹ CIA, "Bahrain," *The World Factbook*, 2006, available at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ba.html>

¹² "Security, Bahrain," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, The Gulf States*, November 29, 2004, p. 13; and "Bahrain Risk: Political Stability Risk," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, April 22, 2004, p. 13.

¹³ IISS, *Military Balance 2005-2006*; and "Army, Bahrain," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, The Gulf States*, November 16, 2005, p. 4.

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¹⁵ IISS, *Military Balance 2005-2006*; and "Army, Bahrain," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, The Gulf States*, November 16, 2005, p. 4

¹⁶ "Army, Bahrain," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, The Gulf States*, November 16, 2005, p. 4.

¹⁷ This description is adapted from the *Encyclopedia Astronautica*, available at <http://www.astronautix.com/lvs/atacms.htm>.

¹⁸ IISS *Military Balance*, 2006; and "Army, Bahrain," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessments, The Gulf States*, November 16, 2005, p. 5.

¹⁹ IISS *Military Balance*, 2006.

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- ²³ IISS, *Military Balance 2005-2006*.
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- ²⁵ IISS, *Military Balance 2005-2006*.
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