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USCENTCOM and the Future: Establishing the Right Strategic Priorities

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USCENTCOM: Living with a Dysfunctional Strategic Mess

- **Four key subregions, all linked to key players outside the USCENTCOM area.**
- **One vital strategic interest: Energy security on a Global basis, but limited in practical terms to Gulf.**
- **One key outside player for strategic and domestic political reasons: Israel.**
- **War on terrorism forces to engage in otherwise major overextension of US strategic resources: Central and South Asia.**
- **Regional, Pan-Arab, and Islamic rhetoric disguises need to deal primarily on nation-by-nation basis.**
- **Security issues are as much ideological, religious, political, economic, and demographic as military.**
- **We are not Muslims, Arabs, seen as a regional model, and trusted. We are merely needed.**

The Five USCENTCOMS: Arab-Israeli, Gulf, Central Asia, South Asia, & Periphery



The Five USCENTCOMS

Arab-Israeli: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon
(and Israel)

Gulf: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman,
Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen (Turkey,
Red Sea states, Horn, major oil importers)

South Asia: Pakistan (and India)

Central Asia: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan,
Uzbekistan (and China and Russia)

Complex Mix of Evolving Threats

- **New Arab-Israeli conflict: Palestinian implosion, regime implosion in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon.**
- **Asymmetric warfare and “Wars of Intimidation”**
- **Iranian Missiles and Proliferation**
- **Iraqi Instability**
- **Conventional Military Threats and the Lack of Unity and Mission Focus in the GCC**
- **Energy and Critical Infrastructure**
- **Terrorism: Region-wide impact of Neo-Salafi Islamist extremism. Franchising of Al Qa’ida, Sunni vs. Shi’ite tension, and its impact inside and outside the region**
- **War in Afghanistan, potential destabilization of a nuclear Pakistan, and impact on proliferation and Islamist extremism in entire region.**
- **Central Asia regime implosion, Russian & Chinese pressure.**
- **Demographics, governance, economic, religion, and social change**

Key Challenges

- **Focus and prioritize US military posture and commitments on key strategic priorities.**
- **Create a stable, sovereign, secure Iraq**
- **Collective deterrence and defense against Iran**
- **Aid Arab-Israeli peace while preparing for continued failure.**
- **Looks towards future in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon & Syria.**
- **Create a cooperative approach to fighting terrorism.**
- **Reduce the US profile by strengthening local forces and GCC while remaining key ally.**
- **Seek collective approach to energy and critical energy security, lines of communication.**
- **Win in Afghanistan without becoming overcommitted in South and Central Asia and to the “great game.”**
- **Re-engage broadly with friendly Arab states and military. Rebuild US reputation and relationships.**

Focus on Key Strategic Priorities

- **Key strategic priority is global energy security through 2030: The practical focus is the Gulf.**
- **Second priority is threat of terrorism, Islamic extremism, hostile regimes and non-state actors.**
- **Third priority is Arab-Israeli stability: support peace, avoid and contain conflict.**
- **Fourth priority is to limit US commitments, over extension of US forces by building up friendly, stable regimes, and local forces and military capabilities.**
- **Fifth priority is to avoid unnecessary tension and engagement with key regional actors: Russia, China, Turkey, India,**

Create a Stable, Sovereign, Secure Iraq

- **Bring new realism and drive to creating a fully independent and effective Iraqi military.**
- **Put Iraqis visibly in lead.**
- **Accept withdrawal schedule on combat units, but emphasize keeping US role in trainers, enablers, IS&R until no longer needed.**
- **Zero-base role in police, criminal justice, and rule of law training.**
- **Forces back to bases, keep advisors/embeds forward when can.**
- **Step aside from internal Iraqi power struggles. Seek Arab proxies, allied help. Push for Iraq in GCC,**
- **Major campaign and engagement to show will leave, are transferring lead, value of US training, aid in creating full sovereign defense capability.**
- **Civil-military partnership remains key, as does US economic and governance aid. Saudi-Kuwait loan and reparations issue.**

Collective Deterrence and Defense Against Iran

- **Defuse war scares; address military options with leaders in realistic terms.**
- **Come to grips with risk of Israeli strikes; have clear back up plans for full range of possible Iranian responses.**
- **Refocus training and mission planning on Iran's asymmetric options, always in defensive, unidentified third country sense. Make national as well as GCC.**
- **Focus on key mission priorities. Push hard for interoperability in both operations, plans, and procurement.**
 - **Missile and air defense.**
 - **IS&R with emphasis on Gulf, local waters, coastal and border coverage.**
 - **ASW. Mine warfare, critical infrastructure.**
 - **Counter-terrorism, infiltration, use of proxies and non-state actors.**
- **Develop real world options to live with Iranian nuclear-missile forces and WMD. Examine "Extended Deterrence"**
- **Create programs to work with Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan.**
- **Tailor engagement programs to minimize Sunni-Shi'ite tensions outside Iran.**

Arab-Israeli

- **Work with USCENTCOM states to encourage peace process, but plan for continued failure and backlash.**
- **Keep USCENTCOM and Israel at arms length.**
- **Use NDU dialogue, military exchanges in staff colleges, Support dialogue outside USCENTCOM framework.**
- **Preserve Israel's military "edge," but**
- **Discourage any attacks, military adventures.**
- **Should USCENTCOM find ways to help-Dayton Mission and train Palestinian Security Forces?**
- **Prepare for possible backlash from:**
 - **Israeli strike on Iran.**
 - **New Israeli-Gaza/Hamas conflict.**
- **Prepare for Israeli-Iranian nuclear/missile arms race.**
- **Prepare for proxy wars and non-state actor campaigns against Israel from within USCENTCOM area.**

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Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria

- **Plan for post-Mubarak Egypt; what can be done to sustain relationship.**
- **Do not take Jordan for granted; key area for engagement, incentives, reassure will aid Jordan maintain independence.**
- **Work Lebanese force development realistically and as key to influence and stability.**
- **Engage Syria. No illusions, but do not isolate or demonize.**
- **Use engagement to limit Iranian influence where possible.**
- **Work closely with country teams to support them, ensure their programs and USCENTCOM programs are compatible.**
- **Make better use of US attaches.**

Create a Cooperative Approach to Fighting Terrorism

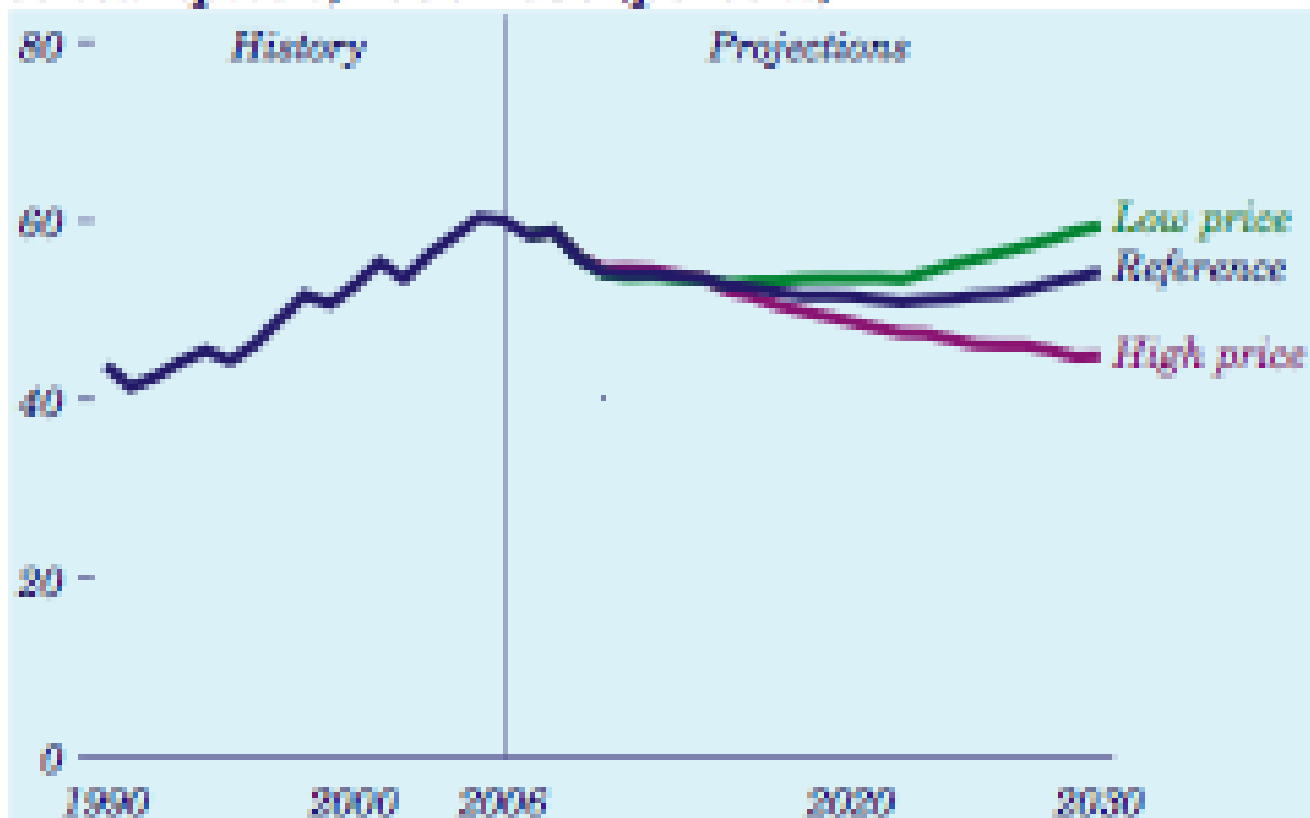
- Sustain and expand current training, intelligence, and other cooperative efforts.
- Engage with regional countries more directly to find out what programs they have we should encourage, aid, and strengthen.
- **Provide an annual assessment stressing progress, threat, and what is still to be done. Make the USCENCOM case.**
- **Stress at all levels that US efforts are not:**
 - **Anti-Islamic.**
 - **Anti-Arab**
 - **Directed at regime change or creating clients.**
- **Work to inform CODELs, outside USG personnel, US and regional think tanks, media.**
- **Work closely with country teams to support them, ensure their programs and USCENCOM programs are compatible.**

Reduce US Profile in Gulf; Strengthen Allies

- **Roll back numbers of forward deployed US forces wherever possible as withdraw from Iraq.**
- **Strengthen US training and exercise programs, and give Gulf states visible lead.**
 - **Engage with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and UAE.**
 - **Rebuild and strengthen military relations with Saudi Arabia.**
- **Boost training inside US. Pay careful attention to visa complaints, tensions, hostile feedback.**
- **Work with Gulf states to develop interoperable plans and capabilities rather than sell arms.**
- **See if can expand role in GCC military, cooperation with command.**
- **Work closely with country teams to support them, ensure their programs and USCENTCOM programs are compatible.**
- **Revitalize mil-to-mil country exchange programs in region and at USCENTCOM headquarters.**

Net Import Share of U.S. Liquid Fuels Consumption, 1990-2030 – 2008 Estimate

Figure 90. Net import share of U.S. liquid fuels consumption, 1990-2030 (percent)



Collective Approach to Energy Security, Critical Energy Security, LoCs

- **Plan for 50% energy import dependence thru 2030.**
- **Strategic dialog with Saudi Arabia, expand to GCC**
- **Improved Gulf offshore and coastal IS&R, air and missile defense, mine warfare and AS&W, offshore and coastal defense.**
- **Regular joint exercises: Expand to Gulf of Oman and Red Sea.**
- **Aid in improving active and passive defense – with new emphasis on passive defense.**
 - **Carry out a comprehensive, regularly revised vulnerability study: define the base in terms of conventional military, asymmetric, and non-state actor/terrorist risks.**
 - **Examine electric grids, pipeline networks, desalination and water systems, alternative ports.**
 - **Develop explicit GCC-wide and multi-national options.**
 - **Expand role in dealing with piracy & other threats in Yemen, Indian Ocean. Horn of Africa, Southern Red Sea states.**
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“Win” in Afghanistan

- **Win equals defeat of Taliban, Hekmatyer, Haqqani & Al Qa’ida to point Afghanistan and Pakistan stable enough to leave.**
- **More carrots than sticks in dealing with both regimes, but must find delicate balance of both.**
- **Strategic dialog with Afghanistan and Pakistan – then seek to make joint.**
- **US surge only option for short-term success.**
 - **Need resources for build, hold, and win in key districts.**
 - **Matching Pakistani action**
 - **War for perceptions more than defeat of threat.**
- **Building up host country forces is key to mid-term success.**
 - **New realism in dealing with ASF**
 - **Special forces, targeted aid to Pakistani forces.**
- **Need to recast aid activity to deal with war and real-world short term needs. (SIGAR?)**

Avoid Overcommitment in Central and South Asia

- **Get out of Afghanistan and Pakistan as soon as can, and make shift to advisory role without major US bases declared policy.**
- **Avoid entanglements on India-Pakistan, trying to deal with entire region.**
- **Beware of energy fantasies that do not serve our interests. Will never be that large an exporter.**
- **The only way to win the “Great Game” with Central Asian states is not to play.**
 - **Minimal long-term US military presence.**
 - **Advisors and aid.**
 - **Ideological and development battles will have to be won locally and they are the battles that matter.**
- **Reassure Russia and China.**

Reengage with Friendly States

- **Explicitly analyze local critiques of US posture, polls on local resentments and anger.**
- **Understand we will always be outsiders, if not crusaders. Ideological and political battles must be won locally.**
- **Focus on making US partner that serves local and regional interests.**
- **Strategic dialogs with key states; regular joint planning meetings – ideally with a host country sponsorship.**
- **Engage in ways that reverse worst impacts of last eight years.**
 - **Perceptions US is anti-Islam, anti-Arab.**
 - **Careless in targeting, identifying terrorists, dealing with detainees.**
 - **Ideological and development battles will have to be won locally and they are the battles that matter.**
 - **Ease visa barriers, major increase in training in US.**
 - **Work at pace local reformers find practical, let them take the lead.**