The Gulf and Transition

US Policy Ten Years After the Gulf War:

The Impact of Changes in the Regional Military Balance
Anthony H. Cordesman
Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy

Revised November 2, 2000
Introduction

This transition study reflects the result of a long-standing project on Gulf net assessment, funded in part by the Smith Richardson Foundation. This project has already produced some eight books, including two major studies of Iranian and Iraqi military forces published in 1999 – *Iraq and the War of Sanctions* and *Iran’s Military Forces in Transition* (Praeger 1999). Additional detailed briefings and supporting data on the military balance in the Gulf, energy and economic trends, Iranian and Iraqi proliferation, and Gulf arms transfers can be found on the CSIS web page at www.csis.org under the sections market as “Gulf in Transition” and “Strategic Assessment.

This volume is intended to support US policy making and the reader should be aware that the sources used are deliberately chosen to rely as heavily as possible on current official US government documents and reports, unclassified intelligence reporting and estimates, and official international institutions like the World Bank. The goal is to provide data that policy makers are familiar with and can trust. The author, however, is solely responsible for the conclusions and suggestions made in this analysis and no attempt was made to coordinate its content with either any officials or experts in the US government or other policy analysts in the CSIS.
Table of Contents

MILITARY SECURITY, AND GULF STABILITY ......................................................................................... 1

The Evolving Military Balance in the Gulf .......................................................................................... 2
Table VII-1 ........................................................................................................................................ 4
Gulf Military Forces in 2000 – Part One ........................................................................................... 4
Table VII-1 ........................................................................................................................................ 5
Gulf Military Forces in 2000 – Part Two .......................................................................................... 5
Table VII-1 ........................................................................................................................................ 6
Gulf Military Forces in 2000 - Part Three ....................................................................................... 6
Figure VII-1 ...................................................................................................................................... 8
Major Measures of Gulf Combat Equipment Strength - 2000 .......................................................... 8
and SP/Towed/MRL Artillery .............................................................................................................. 8

The Iranian and Iraqi Challenge ...................................................................................................... 10

The Role of Saudi Arabia and the Southern Gulf States ..................................................................... 13

Developments in Iran: Focus Poverty, Asymmetric Warfare, and Proliferation ................................. 14
The Impact of Limited Iranian Arms Transfers .................................................................................. 15
Focused Poverty and Asymmetric Threats .......................................................................................... 16
Recent Iranian Purchases and Purchasing Efforts ............................................................................ 17
Iran’s Problems with Obsolescence .................................................................................................. 19
Iran and Conventional Warfighting .................................................................................................... 21
Iran and Asymmetric Wars .................................................................................................................. 24
Iran and Proliferation .......................................................................................................................... 25

Developments in Iraq: Bound by Sanctions and Ineptness .............................................................. 26
Iraqi Force Changes and Post-Gulf War Actions .............................................................................. 27
Modernization and Arms Transfers .................................................................................................. 28
The Impact of Military Sanctions ........................................................................................................ 29
Obsolescence in Iraqi Forces ............................................................................................................. 31

Iraq and Conventional Warfighting ................................................................................................... 33
The Problem of the Land Balance in the Upper Gulf ........................................................................ 34
The Critical Role of US Air and Missile Power ................................................................................ 35
The Defense of Kuwait as a “Close Run Thing” ................................................................................ 36
Iraq in Contingencies that Do Not Involve Kuwait ......................................................................... 38

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Other Ways Iraq Might Exploit the Situation ................................................................. 39
Iraq and Asymmetric Wars ......................................................................................... 42
Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction ................................................................. 45
The Problem of Terrorism, Proxy, and Unconventional Warfare ......................... 47
Developments in Southern Gulf Military Capabilities ....................................... 48
Future Trends in the Gulf Military Balance ......................................................... 51
Implications for US Policy ...................................................................................... 53
List of Figures and Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table/Figure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Table VII-1</td>
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<td>Major Measures of Gulf Combat Equipment Strength - 2000</td>
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Military Security, and Gulf Stability

Throughout this analysis it has been clear that the game of nations that shapes the struggle for power in the Gulf is shaped largely by the threats posed by Iranian and Iraqi strategic ambitions, Saudi Arabia’s need for status and security, and by the desire of the smaller Southern Gulf states to find some way to create the balance between the larger powers in the Gulf that provides the most security, status, and freedom of action. Military power is an important element in this game, but only one element among many. Further, most of the Gulf’s leaders tend to think of military power more in terms of political prestige and leverage, than in terms of conflicts and war fighting capabilities. Many also see their own military forces as a potential rival for power and as a threat which political control is more important than effectiveness.

At present, it is the added weight of US military capabilities, rather than the balance of regional forces that shapes the outcome of most contingencies. The US now maintains a significant forward presence in the region, to deter--"and if need be, defeat"—Iranian and Iraqi aggression. In 2000, it deployed an average of 30 naval vessels, 175 military aircraft, and between 17,000-25,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines in the CENTCOM area of operations.¹

Gulf leaders and military planners react to the role the US will play or not play in any given conflict. They react to the fact the US has emerged from the Cold War and the Gulf War with a major advantage in conventional forces, military technology, power projection capability and nuclear forces. The Gulf states do not think in terms of US military capabilities as an outside power or a wild card. They think of the US as the fourth player in a regional balance of power that is shaped largely by the evolving military capabilities of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the US. Other smaller Gulf powers, peripheral states, and the major external powers like China, Britain, France, and Russia can play a role, but not a major one.

Gulf nations also shape their forces in reaction to US conventional military superiority. They study the advances in US tactics, technology, training, battle management systems, and

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methods of war fighting, and shape many of their reaction to these developments is a key factor in each nation’s arms purchases accordingly. US conventional superiority is a key factor shaping Iranian and Iraqi efforts to proliferate, to improve their capabilities to use asymmetric warfare, and to substitute intimidation and "political wars" for the use of actual military force in ways that might provoke a major US military intervention. For every reaction, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

The Evolving Military Balance in the Gulf

The current balance of forces in the Gulf is summarized in Table One. It is important to understand that forces in this table are the product of a military build-up that is now well over a quarter of a century old. While these forces include a great deal of modern military technology, they are the products of an arms race that began long before the "revolution in military affairs" and which has been driven by many other factors. Military forces in the Gulf have been shaped by the Cold War, Nasserism, the fall of the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq, the Arab-Israeli War, British withdrawal from the Gulf, the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, and a host of minor regional quarrels.

Fortunately for the US and its Southern Gulf allies, this “revolution of military affairs” has presented major problems for Iran and Iraq. Both have faced major problems in modernizing their forces during the period in which terms like the "revolution in military affairs" have been in vogue. Iran has not had access to Western arms since 1979, and has never had free access to advanced Soviet/Russian arms. It lost 50-60% of its land order of battle in the climatic battles of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, and it has never had the funds or access to arms imports since that time to carry out a broad military build-up or modernize most of its forces.

Iraq lost much of its total strength in the Gulf War, and has had no meaningful access to arms imports since August 1990 – nearly a decade ago. Its forces have had to concentrate on internal security, Shi’ite resistance, and the Kurdish security zone. Rather than preparing for war, Iraq’s forces have been constrained by "no fly" and de facto "no drive" and no exercise zones.
They have also been subject to a series of further attacks – most notably in Desert Fox and its aftermath. Neither Iran nor Iraq has had the ability to directly challenge the US edge in conventional capabilities and have been virtually forced to see proliferation and asymmetric warfare as their only counters to US superiority in conventional military technology and tactics.

In contrast, the Southern Gulf has been able to make continuing arms purchases that have ensured a steady flow of new arms and technology diffusion. Nevertheless, the Southern Gulf states have made only limited progress in transforming their arms buys into effective deterrent and defense capabilities. They have often bought the most modern combat aircraft, armor, and ships available for their prestige and "glitter factor," but they have usually failed to provide readiness, sustainability, training, and effective battle management. They have favored national efforts and petty local rivalries over regional cooperation. The end result has been to institutionalize their military dependence on the US, leaving them vulnerable if the US and the West cut back their presence and power projection capabilities.
### Table VII-1

**Gulf Military Forces in 2000 – Part One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yemen</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Bahrain</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>Oman</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia*</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Arabia*</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Manpower</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Active</td>
<td>513,000</td>
<td>429,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>15,300</td>
<td>43,500</td>
<td>12,330</td>
<td>201,630</td>
<td>64,500</td>
<td>66,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>388,000</td>
<td>429,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>15,300</td>
<td>37,000</td>
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<td>126,500</td>
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<td>66,300</td>
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<td>National Guard &amp; Other</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>25,000</td>
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<td>Paramilitary</td>
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<td>50,000</td>
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### Army and Guard

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<th>Arabia*</th>
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<td>375,000</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>31,500</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>61,000</td>
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<td>Regular Army Manpower</td>
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<td>375,000</td>
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<td>25,000</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>75,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Main Battle Tanks</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>900</td>
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<td>Total Main Battle Tanks***</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>385</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>331</td>
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<td>Active AIFV/Rece, Lt. Tanks</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>2,387</td>
<td>578(20)</td>
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<td>340</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>172</td>
<td>2,630</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>380</td>
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<td>Total APCs</td>
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<td>340</td>
<td>140</td>
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<td>172</td>
<td>3,440</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>440</td>
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<td>ATGM Launchers</td>
<td>420+</td>
<td>480+</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>480+</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>Self Propelled Artillery</td>
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<td>150</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41 (59)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Towed Artillery</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>318(58)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>412</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRLs</td>
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<td>500</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64 (24)</td>
<td>220</td>
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<td>Mortars</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>2,000+</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>650+</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>600</td>
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<td>SSM Launchers</td>
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<td>36?</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light SAM Launchers</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>AA Guns</td>
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<td>5,500</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62</td>
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### Table VII-1

#### Gulf Military Forces in 2000 – Part Two

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<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Bahrain</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>Oman</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Arabia*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air Force Manpower</strong></td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Air Defense Manpower</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Combat Aircraft</strong></td>
<td>291</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>89(40)</td>
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<td><strong>Bombers</strong></td>
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<td>6?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>Fighter/Attack</strong></td>
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<td>130</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fighter/Interceptor</strong></td>
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<td>180</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recce/FGA Recce</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td><strong>AEW C1/BM</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td><strong>OCU/COIN/CCT</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td><strong>Other Combat Trainers</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transport Aircraft</strong>****</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tanker Aircraft</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Helicopters</strong></td>
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<td>500</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td><strong>Armed Helicopters</strong>****</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Helicopters</strong>****</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major SAM Launchers</strong></td>
<td>155</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Light SAM Launchers</strong></td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AA Guns</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>420(150)</td>
<td>-</td>
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Table VII-1

Gulf Military Forces in 2000 - Part Three

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yemen</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Bahrain</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>Oman</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Naval Manpower</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40,600*</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>15,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regular Navy</strong></td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naval Guards</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marines</strong></td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Major Surface Combatants</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Patrol Craft</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Missile</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revolutionary Guards (Boats)</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Submarines</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mine Vessels</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amphibious Ships</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landing Craft</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Ships</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naval Air</strong></td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td><strong>Naval Aircraft</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Wing Combat</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MR/MPA</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Armed Helicopters</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASW Helicopters</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAR Helicopters</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mine Warfare Helicopters</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Helicopters</strong></td>
<td>20?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Equipment in storage shown in the higher figure in parenthesis or in range. Air Force totals include all helicopters, including army operated weapons, and all heavy surface-to-air missile launchers.

* Iranian total includes roughly 100,000 Revolutionary Guard actives in land forces and 20,000 in naval forces.

** Saudi Totals for reserve include National Guard Tribal Levies. The total for land forces includes active National Guard equipment. These additions total 450 AIFVs, 730(1,540) APCs, and 70 towed artillery weapons.

*** Total tanks include tanks in storage or conversion.

**** Includes air force, army, national guard, and royal flights, but not paramilitary.

***** Includes in Air Defense Command

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Source: Adapted by Anthony H. Cordesman from interviews, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance (IISS, London); Jane’s Sentinel, Military Technology, World Defense Almanac; and Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance in the Middle East (JCSS, Tel Aviv)
Figure VII-1

Major Measures of Gulf Combat Equipment Strength - 2000

Total Main Battle Tanks and SP/Towed/MRL Artillery in Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Saudi</th>
<th>Bahrain</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>Oman</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Yemen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>2940</td>
<td>2550</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Fixed Wing Combat Aircraft and Armed Helicopters
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Fixed Wing Combat</th>
<th>Armed Helicopters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted by Anthony H. Cordesman from various sources and the IISS, *Military Balance*.
The Iranian and Iraqi Challenge

The previous chapters have shown that both Iran and Iraq are well aware of the steady improvement in US conventional war fighting capability and have learned the hard way developed a keen appreciation of Western military technology. Iran experienced military defeat by the US in the "tanker war" of 1987-1988, and Iraq experienced defeat in the Gulf War and in a long series of encounters like "Desert Fox" that go on to this day. At the same time, both Iran and Iraq have sought to break out of military containment, counter the US military advantage, increase their power and strength in the region, and obtain some degree of hegemony in the Gulf region.

While senior Iranian and Iraqi officials and officers rarely refer specifically to the weapons, technologies, and tactics that make up "revolution in military affairs," they are clearly aware that there are still a limited number of ways in which they can attempt to defeat the US advantage in conventional forces, military technology, power projection capability and nuclear forces:

- **Conventional build-up:** They can attempt to compete directly with the US by building up the quality and quantity of their conventional forces to the point where they can deter or defeat US action, or raise the cost of US action to an unacceptably high level.

- **Proliferation:** They can seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction as a deterrent to US military action, to create a capability to destroy critical regional and allied capabilities before the US can react, and to threaten US forces, allied territory, and even US territory with covert or proxy attacks.

- **Asymmetric warfare:** They can attempt to exploit methods of warfare where the US does not have a clear advantage. These include terrorism and the use of proxies; covert attacks; low intensity and highly political conflicts where the US lacks the political justification to escalate; armed support of opposition, ethnic, and insurgent movements in other countries; the use of civilians and civilian facilities as shelters and sanctuaries; and forms of warfighting like mine warfare and threats to the shipping channels in the Gulf where the US faces major problems in dealing with the kind of conflict involved. They also include terrorist attacks on US forces, allies, and territory.

- **Diplomatic "warfare:"** They can seek to use diplomatic means to limit US military action, force reductions in the US presence in the region, and force or persuade the allies and potential coalition partners of the US to limit their ties to the US. This "warfare" includes efforts to manipulate the Southern Gulf states, key peripheral states like Turkey, and outside powers like China and Russia, and the United Nations.
• **Confrontations and Wars of attrition and endurance:** They can attempt to engage the US in prolonged confrontations, low-level conflicts, and episodic crises where the US cannot take active advantage of its military superiority or escalate, and is trapped into a indefinite, costly, and frustrating process of containment that it cannot terminate or "win."

• **Adaptations of technology to areas of US vulnerability:** So far this threat seems to consist largely of information warfare and areas like cyberterrorism.

Iranian and Iraqi leaders seem to understand that they have no current capability to compete with the US in a direct conventional military build-up or even to obtain enough advanced military equipment to equip any given mission or military service. During the last decade, Iran and Iraq have faced continuing problems because of their losses in past defeats, sanctions and containment, and limited resources. As a result, the recent history of the Gulf is to some extent the history of Iranian and Iraqi efforts to exploit the other five ways of countering US conventional superiority.

Iraq has faced the most severe problems. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, it was the dominant regional military power in the Gulf. It had decisively defeated Iran during the spring and summer of 1988, in battles that cost Iran some 40-60% of its inventory of major land force weapons. Furthermore, the US and Britain had inflicted major losses on the Iranian Navy in the "tanker war" of 1987-1988, leaving it with little ability to challenge Iraq. Iraq had the only modern, combat effective armored and mechanized forces in the Gulf and an air force that was emerging as combat effective for the first time. It had massive missile forces and chemical warfare capabilities, was beginning to deploy large numbers of biological weapons, and was making substantial progress in developing a nuclear capability.

Iraq has managed to rebuild and reorganize its forces that survived the Gulf War, but it now has only about half the land and air capability it had when the air campaign began. It has not had any significant imports of arms or military technology since the summer of 1990, and Iraq’s efforts to acquire new military technology and develop its military industries have been severely limited by the impact of nine years of UN sanctions. As a result, it has had no practical opportunity to react to many of the lessons of the Gulf War.
At the same time, Iraq has faced severe problems in trying to counter US conventional military superiority by improving its capabilities for proliferation and asymmetric warfare. Most of Iraq’s missile, chemical, biological, and nuclear capabilities were either destroyed during the Gulf War or dismantled by UNSCOM and the IAEA, and there have been no visible signs of major new efforts to proliferate since UNSCOM and the IAEA left in December 1998. Iraq has not succeeded in developing a major capability to use unconventional warfare to threaten its neighbors, in exploiting the internal problems and divisions in neighboring states, or finding movements or "proxies" it can use as a substitute for conventional military power.

Iraq’s regime, however, has not changed in character or given up its efforts to challenge the US. While it generally claims to be a defensive power and rarely discusses its intentions or offensive action except in the context of broad political threats, it is likely to be a revanchist state as long as Saddam Hussein is in power. It has managed to force an end to UNSCOM and IAEA inspection. It is seeking to break out of sanctions, and will almost certainly seek to rebuild its conventional military power as soon as it can do so. It also retains enough conventional strength to remain a significant threat to all its neighbors.

Iran, in contrast, has partially recovered from its defeat in the Iran-Iraq War, and is again a major military power by Gulf standards. However, Iran is scarcely a modern military power by the standards of the US. Many of Iran’s post-Gulf War arms imports have done little more than offset the steadily greater obsolescence of its Western-supplied equipment, and it has had only limited imports of modern aircraft and armor.

Iran has reacted by developing military capabilities that are carefully focused on the potential weaknesses in US capabilities. The massive infantry-artillery dominated forces of the Iran-Iraq War are being replaced by forces shaped for specific missions. It has developed a substantial capability to threaten shipping through the Straits of Hormuz and the rest of the Gulf, and has developed a substantial capability for unconventional warfare that it can project into the
Gulf and throughout the region. It has steadily increased its missile, chemical, biological warfare capabilities, and is seeking nuclear weapons.

Unlike Iraq, however, Iran is in the middle of considerable political change. The election of President Khatami in May 1997, has revealed a major split between Iran’s "moderates," "traditionalists," and extremists. Iran has given its economy a higher priority than arms and has steadily improved its relations with its Southern Gulf neighbors. There is at least some prospect that the US and Iran can reestablish diplomatic relations over the next few years, although no one can predict the future course of the Iranian revolution and how "moderate" Iran will really become.

**The Role of Saudi Arabia and the Southern Gulf States**

For all the rhetoric surrounding the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Southern Gulf states remain as divided as they were at the start of the Gulf War. Their arms purchases reflect the same lack of effective standardization, interoperability, and focus on key missions as was the case before the Gulf War. Some Southern Gulf countries have made significant improvements in individual aspects of their military capabilities. The Saudi Air Force is a case in point. No Southern Gulf state, however, can boast of a cohesive effort to modernize all of its forces, or a coherent effort to advantage of the "revolution in military affairs." Southern Gulf military officers are certainly aware of US doctrine and technology, and US discussions of the "revolution in military affairs. Nevertheless, Southern Gulf military planning remains dominated by politics and petty rivalry, and far too many arms purchases focus on new technology and the "glitter factor," rather than effective war fighting capability.

Far too little real progress has been made per dollar in the effective defense of Kuwait and the Saudi border with Iraq, particularly in creating effective capabilities for armored and joint warfare. The Southern Gulf states have made only limited progress in dealing with mine warfare, other Iranian naval threats in the lower Gulf, and the asymmetric threats posed by Iran’s
Revolutionary Guards. Far too little emphasis has been placed on training, sustainability, interoperability, and effective battle management. As a result, many of the arms purchases made since the Gulf War have done little to improve military effectiveness.

The Southern Gulf states have also tended to exploit their strategic dependence on the US. The security the US has provided them through its conventional superiority and "revolution in military affairs" has allowed the Gulf states to pursue their own separate interests without creating either effective national forces or cooperative security efforts.

**Developments in Iran: Focus Poverty, Asymmetric Warfare, and Proliferation**

Iran is the most critical near-term threat to the US, although it has never clearly defined its intentions regarding the use of military force against either US forces in the Gulf or its regional neighbors. It is easy to talk about Iran as a nation that is seeking to be a hegemon or trying to dominate the Gulf, but Iranian official statements are almost exclusively defensive and talk about external threats to Iran. Iran has a regime that is hostile to the West and its neighbors in many ways, but this hostility does not translate into a predictable willingness to start a conflict or openly challenge the US and its allies in a conflict. Iran’s revolutionary rhetoric is mixed with statements describing its good intentions, and threats are mixed with defensiveness. Iran faces powerful limits to its ability to import arms, develop its weapons of mass destruction, and create effective military forces. It has to deal with the fact that every hostile or threatening act it takes is likely to provoke a reaction from the US, Southern Gulf states, and Iraq.

At the same time, many of the actions Iran has taken do improve its capabilities to challenge US power and give it some ability to exploit the "revolution in military affairs:"

- Iran has sought to modernize its conventional forces – although it has faced major problems because of its financial situation, the reluctance of Western states to sell it arms and technology, and US pressure to limit Russian and Chinese sales.
• Iran has built up a significant capability to challenge the flow of shipping through the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz that is highly dispersed, which can conduct covert and low level attacks which the US may find difficult to respond to for military reasons, and which can put pressure on the Southern Gulf states in "wars of intimidation" without actually leading to conflict.

• Iran has become a serious proliferator, although it has again faced serious problems in terms of acquiring the technology and weapons it needs.

• Iran and Syria fought a long proxy war against Israel in Lebanon, and Iran continues to support extremist and terrorist groups in Gaza and the West Bank. While this does not directly challenge the US, it effectively acts as a "war of attrition" that puts indirect pressure on the US by threatening a key ally and the Arab-Israeli peace process.

• Iran has attempted to counter US military strength by political attacks on US imperialism, ties to Israel, and secularism. At the same time, Iran has made major efforts since the election of President Khatami to improve its relations with the Southern Gulf states. It has called for a new Gulf security structure that includes Iran and excludes the US, and has attempted to reduce Southern Gulf ties to the US.

**The Impact of Limited Iranian Arms Transfers**

Iran is clearly aware of the threat posed by US technology and war fighting methods, and of the need to modernize its forces. While it has never published detailed force plans, there have been many reports of Iranian interest in major force modernization plans and in the advanced weapons and technologies that support the "revolution in military affairs". At various times, Iran has sought to procure a wide variety of advanced weapons, and been able to take advantage of some aspects of technology diffusion. On the other hand, Iran’s revolutionary economy has remained weak, and Iran’s mismanagement of its budget, development, and foreign debt has reduced Iran’s access to military technology and arms. “Sanctions” on arms purchases in the form of diplomacy and supplier regimes have been far for effective than economic sanctions. The US and its allies have blocked many transfers of advanced arms to Iran, particularly from Europe and the FSU.

The end result has been a decade-long period in which Iran has had comparatively few transfers of arms and technology. According to declassified US intelligence estimates, Iran signed new agreements worth $10.2 billion during the four-year period between 1987-1990 -- the time between the final years of the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War. Despite some reports of massive
Iranian military build-ups, Iran’s new arms agreements dropped sharply during the four-year period following the Gulf War, and totaled only $4.8 billion during 1991-1994.

Iran signed only $2.2 billion worth of new arms agreements during 1992 and 1999 -- a period heavily influenced by an economic crisis inside Iran, low oil revenues, and problems in repaying foreign debt. Iran ordered $400 million in arms from Russia, $1000 million from China, $500 million with other European states (mostly Eastern Europe), and $300 million from other countries (mostly North Korea). The drop in agreements with Russia reflected both Iran’s financial problems and the result of US pressure that had led President Yeltsin not to make major new arms sales to Iran. Iran’s new agreements with China and North Korea heavily emphasized missiles and missile production technology. Similar trends took place in deliveries. Iran took delivery on 3 billion dollars in arms in 1992-1995 and 1.7 billion dollars in arms in 1996-1999.

**Focused Poverty and Asymmetric Threats**

Iran’s has attempted to deal with these problems by focusing on acquiring weapons of mass destruction, enough advanced armored and air weapons to give its some defensive or deterrent capability, and on making larger purchases of systems that can threaten tanker traffic and the Southern Gulf. Iran has bought enough arms to rebuild its army to the point where it can defend effectively against a weakened Iraq. It has begun to rebuild its air force and land-based air defenses, and can put up a far more effective defense than in 1988.

It has restructured its regular forces and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps to improve the defense of its Southern Gulf coast and develop a far more effective ability to attack naval forces, tanker traffic, offshore facilities, and targets along the Southern Gulf coast. It is this "focused poverty" that makes Iran potentially dangerous in spite of its relatively low level of arms imports and the obsolescence or low quality of much of its order of battle.
Recent Iranian Purchases and Purchasing Efforts

Iran’s key purchases and procurement efforts reflect many of the priorities it needs to offset the US, British, and Southern Gulf edge in modern weapons. Reports of such efforts include the following developments: \(^2\)

**LAND**

- Russian, and Polish T-72 Exports. Some reports indicate Iran has procured as many as 380 T-72Ss from Russia, and 100 T-72M1s from Poland since 1990. This would give it an inventory of about 480 T-72s. The IISS, however, reports only 120 T-72s and 75 T-62s on hand in 2000, plus a possible additional 100 T-72 kits ordered in 1989 and delivered in 1998.
- Claims to be producing the Iranian-made Zolfaqar MBT, an M-48/M-60-like tank.
- Has upgraded to T-54/T-54 called “Safir-74. Claims to have upgraded Iraqi T-54s captured in Iran-Iraq War. Has 400 T-54/55 in inventory. Number of upgrades unknown.
- Purchased Russian BMPs. Inventory of 300 BMP-1s and 140 BMP-2s in 2000. The IISS, reports a possible additional 100 BMP-2 kits ordered in 1989 and delivered in 1998.
- Russia may be licensing Iranian production of T-72 and BMP-2.
- Claims domestic production of a Chinese version of the BMP called the Boragh.
- Claims Domestic production of an APC called the BMT-2 or Cobra.
- Possible purchase of 100 M-46 and 300 D-30 artillery weapons from Russia.
- Testing prototype of 122 mm self-propelled gun called Thunder.
- Has shown a modified heavy equipment transporter called the “Babr 400.”
- Russian and Asian AT-2s, AT-3s, and AT-4s. Does not seems to include 100 Chinese Red Arrows.
- Chinese and 15+ North Korean 146 mm self-propelled weapons
- Has 60 Russian 2S1 122 mm self-propelled howitzers in inventory.
- Growing numbers of BM-24 240 mm, BM-21 122 mm and Chinese Type 63 107 mm MRLs
- Iranian Hadid 122 mm - 40 round MRL
- Manufacturing Iranian Arash and Noor rockets (variants of Chinese and Russian 122 mm rockets)
- Manufacturing Iranian Haseb rockets (variants of Chinese 107 mm rocket)
- Manufacturing Iranian Shahin 1 and 2, Oghab, Nazeat 5 and 10 (may be additional versions), and Fajr battlefield rockets

**AIR/AIR DEFENSE**

- Keeping up to 115 combat aircraft that Iraq sent to Iran during Gulf War. Seem to include 24 Su-4s and four MiG-29s.
- Has 30 MiG-29s with refueling in inventory, may be receiving 15-20 more from Russia
- Has 24-30 Su-24s in inventory (probably Su-24D version), may be receiving 6 to 9 more from Russia

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May be negotiating purchase of AS-10, AS-11, AS-12, AS-14/16s from Russia

Has Su-25s (formerly Iraqi), although has not deployed.

May be trying to purchase more Su-25s, as well as MiG-31s, Su-27s and Tu-22Ms

Considering imports of Chinese F-8 fighter and Jian Hong bomber

Has 25 Chinese F-7M fighters with PL-2, PL2A, and PL-7 AAMs.

IISS reports that Iran bought 14 Y-7 transports and 10 F-7 fighters from China in 1996 and these were delivered in 1998.

Has purchased 25 Brazilian Tucano trainers and 25 Pakistani MiG-17 trainers. Uncertain report has bought 12 MiG-29UB trainers from Russia.

Has bought 12 Italian AB-212, 20 German BK-117A-3, and 12 Russian Mi-17 support and utility helicopters.

Iran claims to have fitted F-14s with I-Hawk missiles adapted to the air-to-air role

Claims to produce advanced electronic warfare systems.

IRGC claims to be ready to mass produce gliders.

**LAND-BASED AIR DEFENSE**

May be negotiating purchase of S-300 and more SA-14/16s from Russia

Has acquired four HQ-23/2B (CSA-1) launchers and 45-48 missiles, plus 25 SA-6, and 10 SA-5 launchers.

Has acquired Chinese FM-80 launchers and a few RBS-70s

More SA-7s and HN-5s man-portable missiles; may have acquired 100-200 Strelas.

Reports is seeking to modernize Rapier and 10-15 Tigercat fire units

May be modifying and/or producing ZSU-23-4 radar-guided anti-aircraft guns.

Claims to produce advanced electronic warfare systems.

**SEA**

Claims will soon start producing 6 multi-purpose destroyers.

Has taken delivery on three Russian Type 877EKM Kilo-class submarines, possibly with 1,000 modern magnetic, acoustic, and pressure sensitive mines.


Reports has North Korean midget submarines have never been confirmed

Has obtained 10 Hudong-class Chinese missile patrol boats with CS-802.

US Mark 65 and Russian AND 500, AMAG-1, KRAB anti-ship mines

Reports that Iran is negotiating to buy Chinese EM-52 rocket-propelled mine

Iran claims to be developing non-magnetic, acoustic, free-floating and remote controlled mines. It may have also acquired non-magnetic mines, influence mines and mines with sophisticated timing devices.
• Seersucker (HY-2) sites with 50-60 missiles - Iran working to extend range to 400 km.
• Has 60-100 Chinese CS-801(Ying Jai-1 SY-2) and CS-802 (YF-6) SSMs.
• Iran is developing FL-10 anti-ship cruise missile which is copy of Chinese FL-2 or FL-7.
• Boghammer fast interceptor craft

MISSILES
• Obtained up to 250-300 Scud Bs with 8-15 launchers
• Up to 150 Chinese CSS-8 surface-to-surface missiles with 25-30 launchers.
• Reports that China is giving Iran technology to produce long-range solid fuel missile
• Iran-130 missile (?)
• Has bought North Korean Scud Cs with 5-14 launchers
• South Korea reports Iran has bought total of 100 Scud Bs and 100 Scud Cs from North Korea.
• May be developing the Zelzal-3 missile with a range of 900 kilometers with Chinese and North Korean support.
• Iran may be planning to purchase North Korean No-Dong 1/2s
• Iran also interested in North Korea’s developmental Tapeo Dong 1 or Tapeo Dong 2.
• Claims will launch its first experimental satellite by 2000 with Russian aid.
• Reports of tunnels for hardened deployment of Scuds and SAMs.

CRRN/WMD
• Chemical weapons (sulfur mustard gas, hydrogen cyanide, phosgene and/or chlorine; possibly Sarin and Tabun)
• Biological weapons (possibly Anthrax, hoof and mouth disease, and other biotoxins)
• Nuclear weapons development (Russian and Chinese reactors)

Iran’s Problems with Obsolescence

At the same time, Iran still has a force structure filled with obsolete and obsolescent military equipment. It is far from clear that Iran’s procurements shown are offsetting the steady decay of Iran’s older equipment. Its Western equipment is now at least two decades old and received hard use during the Iran-Iraq War. Most of the equipment it bought during the Iran-Iraq War consisted of relatively low grade North Korean and Chinese equipment and few of its indigenous production efforts have yet gone beyond the prototype stage. Iran’s holdings of aging and obsolete equipment include.3

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LAND FORCES

- Chieftain tank 140 Worn, under-armored, underarmed, and underpowered. Fire control and sighting system now obsolete. Cooling problems.
- M-47/M-48 150 Worn, under-armored, underarmed, and underpowered. Fire control and sighting system now obsolete.
- M-60A1 150-160 Worn, under-armored, underarmed, and underpowered. Fire control and sighting system now obsolete.
- Scorpion AFV 70-80 Worn, light armor, underarmed, and underpowered.
- M-114s? 70-80 Worn, light armor, and underarmed, and underpowered
- M-113s 250 Combat worn, not modernized
- M-109 155 mm SP 150-160 Worn, Fire control system now obsolete. Growing reliability problems due to lack of updates and parts.
- M-107 175 mm SP 20-30 Worn, Fire control system now obsolete. Growing reliability problems due to lack of parts.
- M-110 203 mm SP 25-30 Worn, Fire control system now obsolete. Growing reliability problems due to lack of parts.
- AH-1J Attack heli. 100 Worn, avionics and weapons suite now obsolete. Growing reliability problems due to lack of updates and parts.
- CH-47 Trans. heli. 35-40 Worn, avionics now obsolete. Growing reliability problems due to lack of updates and parts.
- Bell, Hughes, Boeing, Agusta, Sikorsky helicopters 350-445 Worn, Growing reliability problems due to lack of updates and parts.

AIR FORCE

- F-4D/E FGA 35-50 Worn, avionics now obsolete. Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts.
- 60 F-5E/FII FGA 50-60 Worn, avionics now obsolete. Serious problems due to lack of updates and parts.
- F-5A/B 10-20 Worn, avionics now obsolete. Serious problems due to lack of updates and parts.
- RF-4E 8-15 Worn, avionics now obsolete. Serious problems due to lack of updates and parts.
- RF-5E 0-5 Worn, avionics now obsolete. Serious problems due to lack of updates and parts. (May be in storage)
- F-14 AWX 60 Worn, avionics now obsolete. Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts. Cannot operate some radars at long ranges. Phoenix missile capability cannot be used.
• P-3F MPA  5  Worn, avionics and sensors now obsolete. Many sensors and weapons cannot be used. Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts.

• Key PGMs  -  Remaining Mavericks, Aim-7s, Aim-9s, Aim-54s are all long past rated shelf life. Many or most are unreliable or inoperable.

• I-Hawk SAM  100  Worn, electronics, software, and some aspects of sensors now obsolete. Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts.

• Rapier SAM  30  Worn, electronics, software, and some aspects of sensors now obsolete. Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts.

• Tigercat SAM  15  Worn, electronics, software, and some aspects of sensors now obsolete. Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts.

**NAVY**

• Alvand FFG  3  Worn, weapons and electronics suite obsolete, many systems inoperable or partly dysfunctional due to Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts.

• Bayandor FF  2  Obsolete. Critical problems due to lack of updates and parts.

• Hengeman LST  4  Worn, needs full scale refit.

• Riazi MSC  2  Obsolete US ships.

• P-3F Orion MPA  3  1978. Now obsolete. Not modernized or upgraded since.

• SH-3D, AB-212 ASW  20  Worn, obsolescent ASW helicopters.

**Iran and Conventional Warfighting**

Iran is too weak to seek a direct conflict that involves the US, or to risk another war with Iran. It will also be years before Iranian arms imports and military production efforts can give it enough capability to deliberately initiate a conflict or reveal whether it has aggressive intentions. Iran can threaten shipping traffic in the Gulf, but its acquisitions do not give it any hope of winning a naval-air battle against US forces in the Gulf, and it has little chance of doing so in the foreseeable future.

Iran would have to rebuild and modernize both its regular navy and air force at levels of strength and capability it simply cannot hope to achieve in the next decade. Alternatively, it would need to develop its capabilities to deliver weapons of mass destruction to the point where it could
back its conventional military capabilities with a threat that might seriously inhibit US military action and/or the willingness of Southern Gulf states to support the US and provide air and naval facilities.

The "wild cards" determining the outcome of such contingencies are the US determination to act, the size of the US presence in the Gulf and US power projection capabilities at the time of a given crisis, Southern Gulf support for the US and willingness to provide the US with suitable facilities, and the political liabilities the US would face -- if any -- in terms of the response from nations outside the region. Far more is involved in a confrontation in the Gulf than military capability, and Iran would have far more contingency capability if the US could not respond for political or budgetary reasons.

Iran could also try to threaten US interests indirectly and through asymmetric wars. Iran has a major capability to engage in asymmetric warfare in the Gulf. It could covertly lay free floating mines, launch hit and run attacks against offshore oil platforms and shipping with its missile patrol boats, and invade and occupy offshore facilities with the naval branch of its Revolutionary Guards. At the same time, it cannot project power across in the Gulf in the face of US opposition, and has never really exercised large-scale over-the-beach amphibious operations. Furthermore, there is little present near-term prospect that Iran will develop enough power projection capability -- and supporting power from its navy and air force -- to win a conflict in the Southern Gulf that involves US forces, or to force its way in support of a coup or uprising.

At the same time, the US might still have problems in exploiting its military superiority and the "revolution in military affairs" to counter Iranian military involvement in the Southern Gulf:

- Iran might seek to exploit the fracture lines and political unrest within and between the Southern Gulf states. This is particularly true of the Shi’ite in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, but it might also prove true of future confrontations between Bahrain and Qatar and Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

- The US would face serious problems in responding to any change of government in a Southern Gulf state that resulted in a pro-Iranian regime and which sought Iranian military advice or an Iranian military presence. The US cannot save a Gulf regime from its own people or (openly) endorse such action by other Southern Gulf countries.

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• Iran’s process of creeping proliferation is making enough progress that the US and the Southern Gulf states must reach some degree of agreement on taking suitable counter-proliferation measures. A power vacuum in which Iran proliferates, the Southern Gulf states grow steadily more vulnerable, and US resolve seems progressively more questionable could give Iran far more capability to directly or indirectly intervene in Southern Gulf affairs.

• Iran might threaten regional stability by exploiting internal unrest and divisions in Iraq that are serious enough to split the Iraqi armed forces, and/or lead to a new Shi’ite uprising. Similarly, a major Kurdish uprising would greatly complicate Iraq’s ability to concentrate its forces to defend against an Iranian attack on Iraq’s center and south. At the same time, any Iranian victory over Iraq might prove to be more apparent than real. It would be dependent on US toleration of such an Iranian victory that did more than depose the present Iraqi regime. Further, the split between Persian, Arab, and Kurd seems likely to remain so great that Iraqi independence would rapidly reassert itself if Iran attempted to occupy or dominate a substantial part of Iraq.

The previous contingencies assume that Iran will take offensive action. If it does, it may well be confronted with a US-led attack on Iran. If this attack is confined to naval and coastal targets, particularly those Iranian military capabilities that potentially threaten Gulf shipping, there is little Iran can do militarily to resist US power other than try to ride out the attack by dispersing and hiding its smaller boats, anti-ship missiles, etc.

If a US-led attack includes strategic conventional missile strikes and bombings, there also is little Iran can do in immediate response other than escalate by using weapons of mass destruction. Such an escalation now would almost certainly end in increasing the risk and damage to Iran than deter or damage US forces.

Iran, however, does have potential countermeasures to US conventional superiority and ability to exploit the revolution in military affairs. It can respond over time with terrorism, unconventional warfare, and proxy wars. It is much easier for air and missile power to inflict major damage on Iran than it is to predict or control the political and military aftermath. The resulting casualties and damage will be extremely difficult to translate into an "end game."

Attacks on the Iranian mainland that went beyond a punitive raid would also be much more costly to the US, in spite of the "revolution in military affairs." A US-led coalition could defeat Iran’s regular forces, but would have to be at least corps level in size, and occupying Iran
would be impractical without massive land forces of several entire corps. Even limited amphibious and land attacks on the mainland would expose the invading forces to a much higher risk of low intensity and guerrilla combat with Iranian forces that would constantly receive reinforcement and resupply. Further, Iran’s use of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction would be politically easier to justify in a defensive conflict than an offensive one. Such attacks would probably end in futility, and in creating a revanchist Iran.

**Iran and Asymmetric Wars**

Iran may also be able to counter US capabilities and achieve some of its objectives through intimidation and direct and indirect threats. Iran’s ability to provide such threats and conduct "wars of intimidation," will improve steadily in the near to mid-term, in spite of its military weakness. In many cases, its neighbors may be willing to react to such intimidation by accommodating Iran to some degree. This is particularly true of those Southern Gulf states whose gas and oil resources are most exposed -- like Qatar -- or which see Iraq as a more serious threat - - like Kuwait.

Iran has steadily improved the capabilities of the IRGC and the Quds Force for unconventional warfare, including the potential use of chemical and biological weapons. Iran has also demonstrated that it is steadily improving its ability to conduct "proxy wars" by training, arming, and funding movements like the Hezbollah.

Iran also is steadily improving capabilities for information warfare and cyberterrorism, although it seems unlikely that it is capable of advanced attacks on protected US military and US government computer, information, and battle management systems. Iran probably has more capability to attack the US private sector and the systems of Gulf states. It also is almost certainly improving the defense of its own systems, which often are land-based and require little more than isolation from netted or open systems to provide a first line of defense.
These capabilities allow Iran to conduct the kind of low-level and/or covert asymmetric warfare where the "revolution in military affairs" as of yet has only limited value. At the same time, any use of such forces is unlikely to drive the US out of the Gulf, and would risk alienating the Southern Gulf or states without defeating them. The November 1995 bombing of the National Guard training center and June 1996 bombing of the Al Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia may have demonstrated American vulnerabilities, but it is far from clear that it provided anyone with strategic benefits. As for proxy wars, it is unclear what terrorist movements are willing to accept such Iranian support and pay the probable political price tag.

Iran and Proliferation

Iran’s effort to acquire chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons -- and suitable long-range strike systems -- are described in detail in the chapter IX. However, weapons of mass destruction do not necessarily make radical changes in Iran’s contingency capabilities. At the same time, Iran’s current success in proliferating does give Iran a post-Gulf War edge over Iraq. It also inevitably affects US, British, Israeli and Southern Gulf perceptions of the risks inherent in attacking Iran.

Much depends upon their perceptions of the risk in engaging Iran, refusing its demands, and dealing with Iranian escalation and/or retaliation. It seems unlikely that Iran’s "creeping proliferation" will reach the point in the near term where Iran’s capabilities are great enough to change US, British, Israeli and/or Southern Gulf perceptions of risk to the point where they would limit or paralyze outside military action. Further, it seems unlikely that Iran can continue to build up its capabilities without provoking even stronger US counter-proliferation programs, including retaliatory strike capabilities. The same is true of a response from Iraq and the Southern Gulf states. As a result, Iran’s "creeping proliferation" may end simply in provoking a "creeping arms race."

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Such arms races do not, however, always bring deterrence and stability. There are at least four contingencies that would challenge US regional influence that deserve attention:

- A successful Iranian attempt to buy significant amounts of weapons grade material that suddenly shifted proliferation from "creeping" to an active and regionally destabilizing threat and potential counter to US conventional capabilities.

- Iranian acquisition of highly lethal biological weapons and/or change in the US and regional perception of biological weapons.

- A case of lateral escalation in which Iraq found a way to end UN sanctions and/or reveal a substantial break-out capability of its own, creating the risk of a new Iran-Iraq War using weapons of mass destruction that could affect two countries with over 15% of the world’s oil reserves and which could spillover into other Gulf states.

- Iranian use of such weapons through proxies or in covert attacks where it had some degree of plausible deniability.

**Developments in Iraq: Bound by Sanctions and Ineptness**

The Gulf War did not change Saddam’s fundamental behavior. Neither did the "war of inspections," Desert Fox, or the long series of US and British air strikes that followed. At the same time, Iraq faces massive military problems. A near-decade of sanctions have blocked arms and technology imports for both conventional forces and weapons of mass destruction, and Iraq has never succeeded in building up regional alliances with other states or extremist movements of a kind that enhance its capabilities for asymmetric warfare.

Iraq’s leadership shows less realism and ability to focus on real-world war fighting needs than the leadership of Iran. Iraqi military officers probably understand most aspects of the "revolution in military affairs," at least in terms of the advantages of advanced technology. Iraq’s leadership has only demonstrated limited ability to agree on a cohesive pattern of military modernization in the past, and go beyond flooding the Iraqi military with imports and create an integrated approach to war fighting that gives proper weight to joint and combined operations, training, sustainment, and C4I.
Iraqi Force Changes and Post-Gulf War Actions

Iraq’s response to containment has been highly politicized, often to Iraq’s military disadvantage. Saddam Hussein’s extremism and recklessness has often served to reinforce and prolong UN sanctions, alienate Iraq’s neighbors, provoke new strikes on Iraqi forces, and ensure that Iraq cannot openly import arms and technology. At the same time, Iraq has taken actions that do challenge US power and ability to exploit the "revolution in military affairs:

- Iraq has reconstituted and reorganized the conventional forces that survived the Gulf War, concentrating its remaining assets on its first line heavy divisions and more modern aircraft. It remains the largest and more effective land force in the Gulf. It has used its forces to virtually destroy the remaining Shi’ite resistance in the marsh areas in the south, and to invade the Kurdish security zone in the North. It has also created the capability to rapidly deploy at least five heavy divisions against Kuwait.

- Iraq has gone on with its long-range missile and chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs even at the cost of prolonging UN sanctions and inspections for nearly a decade longer than was originally anticipated. It demonstrated during the crisis that led to Desert Fox that it was willing to absorb major US and British air and missile strikes to force an end to UNSCOM and IAEA inspections.

- Iraq has conducted highly political and asymmetric wars against its Kurds and Shi’ites. In the case of the Kurds, it has linked military containment (a large number of Iraq’s forces are deployed near the border of the security zone in the north) to continuing political efforts to exploit the divided Kurdish factions – a strategy that allowed it to invade the Kurdish security zone with the support of one faction against another and which made it extremely difficult for the US to make any direct military response. In the south, it effectively linked military, economic, and environmental warfare by combining small, dispersed land force operations with the draining of the marsh areas that rebel Shi’ites used as sanctuaries. In both cases, it used intelligence and security officers in conjunction with military forces to intimidate and subvert and sometimes to substitute paramilitary operations for conventional military operations. At the same time, Iraq has repeatedly probed the Kuwaiti border, testing US and Gulf resolve and keeping up a constant low-level pressure in an effort to intimidate Kuwait and its neighbors.

Iraq has not yet been particularly successful in these efforts. Its relentless refusal to comply with UN sanctions, lies about its efforts to proliferate and failure to comply with UN inspections and the terms of the Gulf cease-fire agreement, refusal to accept an "oil for food agreement" for half a decade, and Saddam Hussein’s clumsy political excesses have been something of a disaster. They have transformed a potentially clever mix of political counters to UN sanctions, US military superiority, and the "revolution in military affairs" into a self-inflicted wound. It is far from clear, however, that such tactics will be so ineffective if the future – even a
vainglorious Saddam Hussein, can learn -- and a quieter and subtler successor might exploit them with considerably greater success.

**Modernization and Arms Transfers**

Anyone who discussed military affairs with Iraqi officers during the Iran-Iraq War became aware of the fact that many mid-ranking and senior officers had an excellent understanding of developments in the West, the impact of military technology, and the need to adopt modern tactics. At the same time, it was also clear that Saddam Hussein showed only limited patience with the real-world constraints in shaping military forces, and took a highly ambitious and politically motivated approach to buying arms and shaping Iraq’s efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Iraq’s military elite never been composed of those commanders who performed best in combat or who provided honest cost and effectiveness solutions to modernizing Iraq’s military forces. It is composed of those who feed and support Saddam Hussein’s ambitions and preconceptions and who seem unambiguously loyal to his leadership and his person.

These problems severely limited Iraq’s ability to exploit its massive advantage over Iran in access to arms and military technology throughout most of the Iran-Iraq War, and Iraq has faced far greater problems since the UN first imposed sanctions on its imports of arms and technology in August, 1990. Since that time, Iraq has faced major problems in every aspect of its military modernization because of UN sanctions, the efforts of the US and other states to deny it the transfer of sensitive and dual-use military technologies, and the impact of post-Gulf War strikes on Iraq like Desert Fox. It has faced similar limits its deployments and training because of sanctions, the “no fly” zones, and nearly continuous engagement in internal security operations. At the same time, there have been recurrent purges and reorganizations in Iraq’s military forces that have been designed to ensure Saddam’s security, and enhance the efficiency of Iraqi internal security operations, almost all of which have undercut or disrupted Iraqi military professionalism.
The Impact of Military Sanctions

The most important factor limiting Iraq’s ability to react to the lessons of the Gulf War is that Iraq has always been a nation that has relied on massive imports of advanced weapons and technology to make up for its own mediocre military skills has had virtually no arms imports since 1990. Even before the Gulf War, Iraq would have needed about $1.5 billion a year of imports to sustain its military machine. Iraq’s massive equipment losses during the Gulf War have reduced its need for imports to sustain existing systems, but they have created a massive new set of requirements to rebuild Iraq’s forces and act on the lessons of the Gulf War.

Iraq does have major production facilities. These include the following key plants, facilities and research centers:

- Tank assembly plant operating under Polish and Czech licenses at Al-Amen.
- Major armor refitting center at Base West World (Samawa).
- Manufacture of proximity fuses for 155 mm and cluster munitions at April 7 (Narawan Fuse) Factory.
- Manufacture of 122 mm howitzers, Ababil rockets, tank optics and mortar sights at Sa'ad 5 (Sa'ad Engineering Complex).
- Manufacture of wheeled APCs under East European license, other armor, and artillery pieces at Al Taji).
- Manufacture and repair of artillery, vehicle parts, and cannon barrels at SEHEE heavy engineering complex (Al Dura).
- Aircraft assembly and manufacturing plant under construction at Sa'ad 38. (Fao)
- Manufacture of aerial bombs, artillery pieces, and tungsten-carbide machine tool bits at Badr (al Yusufiyah).
- Production of explosives, TNT, propellants, and some vehicle production capability at Al Hiteen (Al Iskandariyah).
- Production of cluster bombs and fuel-air explosives at Fao.
- Production of aerial bombs, TNT, and solid rocket propellants at Al Qaqaa.
- Manufacture of small naval boats at Sawary (Basra).
- Production and modification of defense electronics at Mansour (Baghdad).
- Production and modification of defense electronics, radars, and frequency-hopping radios at Sa'ad 13 (Salah al Din - Ad Dawr).
- Digital computer software, assembly of process line controllers for weapons plants, and plastic castings at Diglia (Zaafarniyah).
• Precision machining at Al Rabiyah.
• Manufacture of non-ferrous ammunition cases at Sa'ad 21 (Mosul).
• Liquid nitrogen production at Al Amil.
• Production of ethylene oxide for fuel-air explosives at PCI.
• Production of HMX and RDX explosives at Fallujah chemical plant at Al Muthanna.

Most of these facilities, however, are now more Potemkin showpieces than real military production capabilities. Iraq did develop significant ammunition, small and light arms, and gun barrel production facilities before the Gulf War, and many survive and still function. However, Iraq focused most of its military industry resources on weapons of mass destruction and its pre-1991 military production efforts were heavily prototype-oriented and largely prestige-oriented in nature. It left sophisticated service and maintenance activity largely (e.g. French and Russian aircraft) to foreign technical support teams. Did not attempt to develop major in-house capabilities. It did successfully import some T-72 kits, in theory as a transition to production facilities, but never actually developed the industrial base for such manufactures. Iraqi modifications sometimes succeeded, but most failed and had an “impress the maximum leader character.” For example, the Gulf War showed that most of its T-72 upgrades were technically incompetent.

It is also important to note that the assembly of major weapons has rarely led to effective technology transfer, or effective reverse engineering capability, without extensive on-going foreign support. The net impact of most such assembly activity is to create over-specialized facilities, waste resources. No developing state, including India and China, has yet demonstrated that it can successfully mass manufacture an advanced fighter plane or tank, even on a turn-key basis. In fact, few nations have made useful major equipment upgrades for armor and aircraft. Jordan and South Korea, Turkey are among few successes. Egypt, India, Pakistan are more typical.
Iraq has effectively been cut off from all major imports of parts and specialized equipment since 1990, although dual use items, civilian electronics and sensors, and computer gear are not effectively controlled. As a result, its black market imports, substitution, and local manufactures, can only provide an erratic and inefficient substitute for large scale resources.

As a result, Iraq faces a massive recapitilization problem. While it is impossible to make reliable estimates, it is difficult to see how Iraq could recapitalize and modernize its conventional forces for less than $35 to $50 billion dollars over a five to ten year period. Even if all sanctions stopped today, it would also take at least half a decade for Iraq to buy and receive deliveries on such orders. Like Iran, Iraq’s military industries also have severe limits in producing advanced military equipment, and Iraq has shown far more prototypes than it has ever produced and deployed. Iraq has had no choice other than to smuggle what it can, and seek to eventually transform its military industries from centers of vainglorious rhetoric to centers of actual production.

**Obsolescence in Iraqi Forces**

The Gulf War and the sanctions that have followed have left Iraq dependent on the following aging, worn, or obsolescent military systems:

**LAND FORCES**

- 600-700 M-48s, M-60s, AMX-30s, Centurions, and Chieftains captured from Iran or which it obtained in small numbers from other countries.
- 1,000 T-54, T-55, T-77 and Chinese T-59 and T-69 tanks
- 200 T-62s.
- 1,500-2,100 (BTR-50, BTR-60, BTR-152, OT-62, OT-64, etc
- 1,600 BDRM-2, EE-3, EE-9, AML-60, AML-90
- 800-1,200 towed artillery weapons (105 mm, 122 mm, 130 mm, and 155 mm).
- Unknown number of AS-11, AS-1, AT-1, crew-portable anti-tank-guided missiles.
- More than 1,000 heavy, low-quality anti-aircraft guns.
- Over 1,500 SA-7 and other low-quality surface-to-air guided missile launchers & fire units.
• 20 PAH-1 (Bo-105); attack helicopters with AS-11 and AS-12, 30 Mi-24s and Mi-25s with AT-2 missiles, SA-342s with AS-12s, Allouettes with AS-11s and AS-12s.
• 100-180 worn or obsolete transport helicopters.

AIR FORCE
• 6-7 HD-6 (BD-6), 1-2 Tu-16, and 6 Tu-22 bombers.
• 100 J-6, MiG-23BN, MiG-27, Su-7 and Su-20.
• 140 J-7, MiG-21, MiG-25 air defense fighters.
• MiG-21 and MiG-25 reconnaissance fighters.
• 15 Hawker Hunters.
• Il-76 Adnan AEW aircraft.
• AA-6, AA-7, Matra 530 air-to-air missiles.
• AS-11, AS-12, AS-6, AS-14; air-to-surface missiles.
• 25 PC-7, 30 PC-9, 40 L-29 trainers.
• An-2, An-12, and Il-76 transport aircraft.

LAND–BASED AIR DEFENSE
• 20-30 operational SA-2 batteries with 160 launch units.
• 25-50 SA-3 batteries with 140 launch units.
• 36-55 SA-6 batteries with over 100 fire units.
• 6,500 SA-7s.
• 400 SA-9s.
• 192 SA-13s

NAVY
• Ibn Khaldun.
• Osa-class missile boat.
• 13 light combat vessels.
• 5-8 landing craft.
• Agnadeen.
• 1 Yugoslav Spasilac-class transport.
• Polnocny-class LST.

Much depends on whether the West and other Gulf states understand the fact that they have a vital long-term interest in maintaining export controls on weapons and dual-use items, and
trying to resume some form of inspections by bodies like UNSCOM and the IAEA. They need to understand that they must make every effort to bloc Iraq from producing equipment that it cannot imports, and that arms control negotiations with Iraq will be an extension of the "war of sanctions" by other means, and that only strong military forces and counter-proliferation efforts can deter and defend against Iraq’s break out capabilities and a post-sanctions expansion of its proliferation effort. The world has to learn to live with the true nature of Iraq’s "strategic culture" and its unpredictability and opportunism.

**Iraq and Conventional Warfighting**

As is the case with Iran, it makes far more sense to talk about Iraqi capabilities in a range of contingencies than to talk about Iraqi intentions or to focus on specific scenarios. Iraqi rhetoric is now defensive to the point of being paranoiac, and clashes like Desert Fox have showed that Iraq is too weak to openly seek a direct conflict that involves the US or to risk another war. It will be years after sanctions are finally lifted before Iraqi arms imports and military production efforts can give it enough capability to deliberately initiate a conflict or reveal whether it has aggressive intentions.

Nevertheless, Iraq does have some near-term contingency capabilities that might allow it to exploit the limits to US capabilities and the "revolution in military affairs." Iraq's land forces still retain significant warfighting capabilities and much of the force structure that made Iraq the dominant military power in the Gulf after its victory over Iran. Iraqi forces can still seize Kuwait in a matter of days or occupy part of Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province, if they do not face immediate opposition from US, Kuwaiti, and Saudi forces.

**An Attack on Kuwait or Saudi Arabia**

USCENTCOM and US experts indicate that Iraq could assemble and deploy five heavy divisions south into Kuwait in a matter of days. It has a total of five Republican Guard divisions within 140 kilometers of Kuwait. Iraqi divisions now have an authorized strength of about
10,000 men, and about half of the Iraqi army’s 23 divisions had manning levels of around 8,000 men and "a fair state of readiness." Republican Guards divisions had an average of around 8,000 to 10,000 men. Brigades averaged around 2,500 men -- the size of a large US battalion.

A background briefing by USCENTCOM indicates that Kuwait could only rapidly deploy a few combat strength battalions to defend its territory, and Saudi Arabia would take days to deploy even one heavy brigade into areas north of Kuwait City. The tyranny of geography, Kuwait’s small size, and Saudi Arabia’s widely dispersed army give Iraq a natural advantage in any sudden or surprise attack.

The failure of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to make more than limited cooperative defense efforts compounds the problem, as does Saudi Arabia’s poor performance in modernizing its land forces and giving its air force offensive capability. While Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have developed relatively effective air forces at the squadron level, they cannot fight as integrated air forces without massive US assistance and would still face major problems in coalition warfare.

**The Problem of the Land Balance in the Upper Gulf**

The land balance in the Upper Gulf is the key weakness in US and allied capabilities and ability to defend Kuwait and Northwest Saudi Arabia, and a weakness where the delays in power projection potentially limit the US ability to exploit the "revolution in military affairs." The US has elements of one heavy brigade prepositioned in Kuwait, but it takes at least 14-21 days to fully man, deploy, and sustain this brigade. The US can deploy another two relatively light brigades in fully combat ready form in 18-30 days. Kuwait dreamed of a 12 brigade force after the Gulf War, but it only has two understrength active brigades and two reserve brigades. Its land forces total only 11,000 personnel, and this total includes 1,600 foreign contract personnel, most of whom are non-combatants. The total manpower of the Kuwaiti armed forces, including the air force and navy, total about one US brigade "slice" (combat manpower plus support). The Kuwaiti army has an active tank strength of only about 75 M-84s (Yugoslav T-72s) and 174 M-1A2s.
The Saudi army has reverted to a static defensive force that has limited effectiveness above the company and battalion level. Although it claims to have 70,000 full time regulars in the army, plus 57,000 active members of the National Guard, actual manning levels are significantly lower. Some of its M-1A2 tanks are still in storage, plus about 145 of its 295 obsolescent AMX-30s. As a result, Saudi Arabia relies heavily on its 450 M-60A3s. This is still a significant amount of armor, but it is dispersed over much of the Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia lacks the training, manpower quality, sustainability, and C4I/SR capabilities for effective aggressive maneuver warfare and forward defense. While there are reports of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) rapid reaction force, the reality is a few hollow allied battalions. As has been discussed earlier, the GCC is a military myth.

The Critical Role of US Air and Missile Power

Unless there are weeks of strategic warning, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the US will lack the land forces to stop Iraq without immediately committing massive amounts of air and missile strikes against the advancing Iraqi forces and Iraqi strategic targets. A force of five Iraqi divisions would compare favorably with total Kuwaiti forces of about four brigades, with only about a brigade equivalent combat-ready, and with a total forward-deployed US strength that normally does not include a single forward-deployed land brigade. The Saudi forces at Hafr al Batin are at most the equivalent of two combat-effective brigades which would probably take two weeks to fully deploy forward to the Kuwait and Saudi borders in sustainable, combat-ready form. The so-called GCC rapid deployment force is largely a political fiction with no meaningful real-world combat capability against Iraqi heavy divisions.

There is little prospect that this situation will improve in the near term. The US has not been able to preposition large numbers of equipment sets in or near Kuwait, and prepositioning brigade sets in Qatar and the UAE means that such forces would take at least a week to 10 days to deploy in combat-ready form in Kuwait. Kuwait is making only limited progress in its military
modernization, and the Saudi Army has made little progress in improving its capability to move quickly to the defense of Kuwait or to concentrate its forces along the Saudi border with Iraq.

As a result, the ability to deal with a sudden Iraqi attack on Kuwait is likely to depend on US ability to mass offensive air and missile power and use it immediately against Iraq the moment major troop movements begin without first seeking to win air superiority or air supremacy. It will depend on US willingness and ability to couple strikes against Iraqi leadership and strategic targets to this offensive in an effort to force Iraq to halt its offensive, and US ability to deter, defend, and retaliate against any Iraqi use of weapons of mass destruction. The US will also require the full support of Saudi Arabia and the other Southern Gulf countries to assist in the deployment and basing of US forces in the region, support from friendly local forces like the Saudi Air Force, and a firm and immediate Kuwaiti willingness to allow the US and Saudi Arabia to employ force.

Even then, preventing an Iraqi occupation of Kuwait City will be a difficult task, and the US could be confronted with an asymmetric war in which Iraq ruthlessly exploited the suffering of the Iraqi people to force a halt to US military action. Kuwaiti government security experts have, in fact, postulated a far worse case in which Iraq uses overt or covert attacks with biological weapons to effectively destroy Kuwait as a nation and create new facts on the ground.

**The Defense of Kuwait as a “Close Run Thing”**

Defending Kuwait will be an increasingly "close run thing" the moment Iraq can escape the effect of sanctions of its ability to modernize and rebuild its war fighting capability. Even today, Iraqi land forces might penetrate into Kuwait City in spite of US, Saudi, and Kuwaiti air power -- if Iraq was willing to take very high losses in reaching and seizing the city. If Iraq then took the Kuwaiti population hostage, it might succeed. USCENTCOM experts privately guess that the US would at best have a 50-50 chance. The only way that Iraqi forces could then be
dislodged would be through a combination of another land build up in Saudi Arabia by the US and allied forces, and a massive strategic/interdiction air campaign against targets on Iraqi territory.

The essential dilemma in any "second liberation" of Kuwait would be US, Saudi, and Kuwaiti willingness to act in the face of potential massacres of Kuwaiti civilians, versus the willingness of an Iraqi regime to accept massive damage to Iraq. It seems likely that the US and Saudi Arabia would show the necessary ruthlessness if the Kuwaiti government supported such action. Oil is too strategically important to cede such a victory to a leader like Saddam Hussein.

The outcome may change, however, as UN sanctions ease or end, and Iraq rebuilds more of its military capabilities. There are a number of ways in which Iraq might then increase the challenge it could pose to US capabilities and the "revolution in military affairs" without acquiring similar military technologies and capabilities:

- Iraq may somehow obtain nuclear weapons, or demonstrate the possession of highly lethal biological weapons.
- The US might be forced to reduce its forward presence and readiness in the Gulf to the point where it could not rapidly deploy air power, and/or had reduced its overall power projection capabilities. This could occur either as a result of US domestic political and funding issues, or added Iranian and Iraqi success in their diplomatic campaigns to limit the US role in the region.
- Iraq may choose a more limited and "acceptable" objective like restoring its pre-Gulf War border or demanding access to Bubiyan, Warbah, the Kwar Abdullah, and the Gulf. This might make it harder for the US to obtain support from its other regional allies and/or nations outside the Gulf.
- Improvements in relations with Saudi Arabia might create a situation where Saudi Arabia may not immediately and fully support US action and commit its own forces.
- A Kuwait government may feel it faces so serious an increase in the Iraqi threat that it would refuse to accept the cost of continuing to fight in the face of ruthless Iraqi action against a "hostage" Kuwaiti people.
Iraq in Contingencies that Do Not Involve Kuwait

The situation is far more favorable in any Southern Gulf contingency that does not involve Kuwait. Iraq has almost none of the assets necessary to win a naval-air battle against US forces in the Gulf, and has no prospect of acquiring these assets in the foreseeable future. It would have to rebuild, modernize, and massively expand both its regular navy and air force at levels of strength and capability it simply cannot hope to achieve for the next half-decade. Alternatively, Iraq could develop its capabilities to deliver weapons of mass destruction to the point where it could back its conventional military capabilities with a threat that might seriously inhibit US military action and/or the willingness of Southern Gulf states to support the US and provide air and naval facilities.

Unlike Iran, Iraq cannot conduct meaningful surface ship, naval air force, and amphibious operations. Currently, the Iraqi navy can only conduct limited mine warfare and land-based anti-ship missile attacks, and surprise raids on off-shore facilities. Its air force may be able to conduct limited anti-ship missile attacks using its Mirage F-1s, but would have to find a permissive environment to survive. Iraqi Mirage F-1s burdened with the AM-39 Exocet would be unlikely to survive Kuwaiti, Saudi, or Iranian air defenses without a level of air escort capability that Iraq cannot currently provide.

Iraq has little ability to intimidate its neighbors into accepting such operations as long as the US has the ability to use its air and missile power to inflict enough strategic damage on Iraq to create a massive deterrent to any Iraqi escalation to chemical or biological weapons, and back these capabilities with the ultimate threat of US theater nuclear escalation. There is little near-term prospect that Iraq will develop enough power projection capability -- and supporting power from its navy, air force, and weapons of mass destruction -- to win any conflict in the Southern Gulf where it does not attack by land into Kuwait or across the Saudi border. The only exception would seem to be a case where it operated in support of a coup or uprising, or when Iraqi volunteers operated in Southern Yemen in 1994. Any Iraqi attack on a Southern Gulf state is also
the contingency most likely to unite the US and the Southern Gulf states and to ensure European and other support for a strong US-Southern Gulf response.

This does not mean that Iraqi air and/or naval forces could not score some gains from a sudden, well-planned raid in the Gulf or challenge US military capabilities in some ways. Iraq could not sustain any initial success, however, and would probably accomplish nothing more than provoking a US, Southern Gulf, or Iranian reaction that would far offset any advantages Iraq could gain. The only exception might be a proxy unconventional or terrorist attack that allowed Iraq to preserve some degree of plausible deniability.

**Other Ways Iraq Might Exploit the Situation**

Like Iran, Iraq has other potential ways to challenge US and Southern Gulf military capabilities:

- Nothing can prevent Iraq from exploiting the fracture lines within and between the Southern Gulf states. Iraq has much less capacity than Iran to exploit the Shi’ite unrest in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, but it might be able to exploit future confrontations between Bahrain and Qatar and Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

- The US would face serious problems in responding to any change of government in a Southern Gulf state that resulted in a pro-Arab/pro-Iraqi regime and which sought Iraqi military advice or an Iraqi military presence. The US cannot save a Gulf regime from its own people or (openly) endorse such action by other Southern Gulf countries.

- Iraq’s process of creeping proliferation is making enough progress that the US and the Southern Gulf states must reach some degree of agreement on taking suitable counter-proliferation measures. A power vacuum in which Iraq proliferates, the Southern Gulf states grow steadily more vulnerable, and US resolve seems progressively more questionable, could give Iraq far more capability to directly or indirectly intervene in Southern Gulf affairs.

The challenges Iraq would pose to the US and its allies in such contingencies would be the US determination to act, the future size of the US presence in the Gulf, US ability to deploy its power projection capabilities at the time of a given crisis, US ability to extend its present advantages in conventional war fighting to counterproliferation and the deterrence of the use of weapons of mass destruction, and Southern Gulf support for the US and willingness to provide the US with suitable facilities. They would also be the political liabilities the US would face -- if
any -- in terms of the response from nations outside the region. Far more is involved in a confrontation in the Gulf than Iraq’s military capability, and Iraq will be able to acquire far more contingency capability if the US could not respond for political or budgetary reasons.

Similarly, much will depend over time on Iranian, Southern Gulf, and Western reactions to Iraq’s efforts to rebuild the naval strike capability of its air force, and to build-up a meaningful navy. A passive response would obviously strengthen Iraq. So would any indifference to Iraqi efforts to improve its access to the Gulf by renewing its pressure on Kuwait to grant Iraq access to Bubiyan and Warbah, or to secure the channels to Umm Qasr. Even then, however, it is difficult to see how Iraq can acquire much contingency capability to challenge US naval and air power.

Iraqi action against Iran would present a different set of challenges to US military capabilities. As is the case with Iran, the US would face major challenges in intervening in a new Iran-Iraq War, and such a conflict could pose a threat to the world’s energy supplies and US strategic interests. The cumulative impact of UN sanctions is slowly eroding the capabilities of Iraqi land and air forces relative to those of Iran, however, and Iraq now has only limited ability to use chemical warfare in another Iran-Iraq conflict. Iraq cannot hope to challenge Iran’s naval strength or deny Iran naval and commercial access to the Gulf.

The US faces only near to mid-term risks of direct military challenges to the west and northwest. At least in the near-term, Iraq is so weak that it seems unlikely that it would directly provoke Israel by doing anything more than sending limited forces to Jordan or Syria if another major conflict should somehow take place between Israel and its key neighbors. Iraq must also realize that it is extremely unlikely that Israel will show restraint in any future missile war, and would probably escalate to the use of nuclear weapons if Iraq made any attributable use of weapons of mass destruction against Israel’s civilian population or large formations of Israeli military forces.
Iraq is more likely to seek a tacit or open Turkish alliance against the Kurds than to seek military confrontation. There are, however, two possibilities for conflict. One is a future Iraqi-Turkish "alliance" in the form of coordinated operations against the Kurds in the northern border area. Such an "alliance" would offer Turkey the prospect of denying its rebel Kurdish factions sanctuary and bases in the Iraqi border area, and offer Iraq both support in suppressing its Kurds and the prospect that Turkey would cease its raids across the border. Both nations have a strong incentive to secure the area in order to allow them to improve trade and the security of Iraq’s pipeline through Turkey.

As is the case with Iran, the previous contingencies assume that Iraq will take offensive action. If it does, this might lead to a US-led attack on Iraqi soil that went beyond trying to terminate Iraqi aggression. If such a US attack is confined to naval and coastal targets, particularly those Iraqi military capabilities that potentially threaten Gulf shipping, there is little Iraq can do in the face of US military capabilities other than try to ride out the attack by dispersing and hiding its smaller boats, anti-ship missiles, etc.

If a US-led attack includes strategic conventional missile strikes and bombings designed to overthrow the regime, there is equally little Iraq can do in terms of an immediate response, other than to escalate to using weapons of mass destruction in ways that are more likely to end in increasing the risk and damage to Iraq than to deter or damage US forces. Iraq can, however, respond over time with terrorism, unconventional warfare, proxy wars, and "diplomatic wars." It is much easier to use air and missile power to inflict major damage on Iraq than it is to predict or control the political and military aftermath. The resulting casualties and damage would be extremely difficult to translate into an "end game."

Any US use of amphibious and land warfare to invade Iraq would be considerably more difficult. Iraq can probably mount a significant defense against amphibious attacks on its coastline and islands. It is impossible to dismiss a popular Shi’ite or Kurdish uprising in support of an
outside attack, but the most likely response would seem to be that Iraq’s population would unite or remain passive while US or Coalition forces were forced to advance over water barriers and through built-up areas. The Iraqi Army might collapse in the face of such an assault, but the Republican Guards is more likely to dig in and defend from positions co-located with Iraq’s civil population, which would limit the ability to exploit air power. Attacks on Iraqi territory that went beyond a punitive raid might be costly.

A US-led coalition could probably defeat Iraq’s forces, but would have to be at least corps level in size, and occupying Iraq would be impractical without massive land forces of several corps. Further, Iraq’s use of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction would be much easier to justify politically in a defensive conflict rather than an offensive one. Such outside attacks would probably end in futility, and in creating an even more revanchist Iraq.

**Iraq and Asymmetric Wars**

The previous contingencies assume that Iraq’s ability to challenge US strength will be determined largely by the conventional warfighting capabilities of Iraq’s military forces. Iraq may, however, be able to achieve some of its objectives through intimidation and/or direct and indirect threats. Iraq’s ability to provide such intimidation is now limited but Iraq certainly understands that asymmetric warfare is a potential counter to US superiority and the "revolution in military affairs," and it will seek to improve its capabilities once UN sanctions are lifted. In many cases, Iraq’s neighbors may be willing to increasingly accommodate Iraq to some degree. This is particularly true of those states that see Iraq as a more serious threat -- like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Much will depend upon regional perceptions of the long-term resolve of the US, the ability of the Southern Gulf states to avoid major divisions, and the willingness of the Southern Gulf states to show that they will support a firm US response to Iraq, even at some risk. Much will also depend on the ability of Iraq’s leadership to set achievable demands and avoid open confrontation.
In broad terms, it seems likely that Iraq’s ability to intimidate will slowly improve over time, but there is no way to predict how quickly or by how much.

Unlike Iran, Iraq has never demonstrated much capability to conduct "proxy wars" by training, arming, and funding Arab extremist movements. Iraq does sponsor some extremist and terrorist groups, but the end result has done little for Iraq. Iraq also lacks Iran’s bases, training centers, and staging facilities in other countries, and the political support of third nations like the Sudan and Syria which are close to the scene of such proxy conflicts. Similarly, Iraq can only hope to win proxy wars fought against vulnerable governments. Attempts to fight such wars will have little impact on a successful Arab-Israeli peace settlement, or in sustaining civil conflict in the face of a government that demonstrates that it has the capacity to govern and deal with its social problems.

Iraq must have some capability for information warfare and cyberterrorism, but it seems very unlikely that it is capable of advanced attacks on protected US military and US government systems. Iraq also probably has little capability to attack the US private sector and the systems of Gulf states. It is, however, steadily improving the defense of its own systems. Most are redundant, rely heavily on buried land-links and optical fibers, and are isolated from netted or open systems.

At the same time, any dramatic failure of the peace process or instability in the regimes in the Gulf and the region might allow Iraq to make more successful use of proxy wars in the future. So would the creation of a radical Arab regime in Jordan, Egypt, or Syria, which might turn to Iraq for support. Iraq also has a strong revanchist motive to use proxy warfare against Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Similarly, Iraq may seek to improve its capabilities for unconventional warfare, including the use of chemical and biological weapons. The practical problem that Iraq faces will be to find a place and contingency where it could exploit such capabilities that offer more return than using proxies, and which allows Iraq to act at an acceptable level of risk that the US and its allies would not retaliate.
The contingencies where Iraq might be able and willing to take such action include:

- Sending volunteers to Lebanon and Syria under circumstances where such conflicts had broad Arab support, and Israel was sufficiently preoccupied with other threats so that it could not retaliate;
- Actively supporting some opposition force in Iran if it appeared to be a safe way of limiting the Iranian threat or ending Iranian support for anti-Iraqi movements;
- Supporting an alienated Yemen that offered Iraq a low cost way of using unconventional forces to threaten or put pressure on Saudi Arabia;
- Support of some movement in Turkey likely to gain Iraq broader support in Turkey; and
- The outbreak of a civil conflict in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.

There is another and very different kind of asymmetric contingency which could seriously challenge US regional military capabilities, and create the kind of asymmetric war that the "revolution in military affairs" is not designed to fight. Iraq’s forces have already shown that they have the military strength to defeat its lightly armed Kurds in a matter of weeks if UN forces cease to protect them. The Iraqi army has effectively defeated all serious Shi’ite resistance. It would take a massive uprising, and possibly a major division within Iraq’s military forces, for any civil conflict to challenge the regime.

Power is now so centralized among Sunni tribal elites, who control virtually all senior posts in the military and security forces, that any struggle for power seems more likely to take the form of a coup and counter-coup than civil war. Nevertheless, no one can dismiss the possibility that Saddam Hussein will take another major military risk and end in making another strategic mistake. Saddam may well be able to survive the present situation, but not another major defeat. It is possible that the Iraqi military could split over the struggle for power after Saddam, and combine warlordism with regional and ethnic alliances. Any serious north-south split within the army could trigger a significant civil conflict, although it is impossible to predict the resulting balance of power and ethnic and political alignments. Such a struggle might also trigger limited Iranian and Turkish intervention.
As for the Iraqi opposition, its vainglorious claims to military effectiveness are largely meaningless, and it is unlikely that they could assist the US directly in unifying Iraq or creating a new and more desirable regime. The deeply divided Kurdish forces have proved to be more interested in fighting each other than Iraq, and every temporary alliance between the Barzani and Talibani factions has collapsed. The claims of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) to have set up a military force in the Kurdish Security Zone before Iraq reentered the area in 1996 and destroyed the INC’s operation, consisted of several hundred badly trained and equipped men organized into a force that would have required thousands to be effective. In spite of some US efforts to help create an opposition force, the only way the US could ever count on help would be if part of the regular Iraqi Army defected – something that seems very unlikely.

**Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction**

Iraq has much more serious history of proliferation than Iran. Iraq has seen proliferation as a counter to conventional superiority since the late 1960s. It sought weapons of mass destruction long before the Gulf War showed it what the "revolution in military affairs" and US conventional superiority could accomplish. As a result, it is scarcely surprising that Iraq sees proliferation as its key potential method of countering the US advantage in conventional forces and the RMA, and has been willing to pursue such options in the face of massive economic costs, UNSCOM and IAEA efforts to destroy its remaining capabilities, and the extension of UN sanctions.

In spite of the Gulf War, and nearly eight years of UNSCOM efforts before Iraq forced and end to the UN inspection effort, Iraq still presents a major threat in terms of proliferation. It is all too clear that Iraq may have increased this threat since active UNSCOM and IAEA efforts ended in December 1998. At the same time, Iraq’s present holdings of chemical and biological weapons seem to be so limited that they do not constrain US freedom of action, or do much to intimidate Iraq’s neighbors.
As is shown in Chapter IX, Iran now has a significant lead over Iraq. As a result, it seems unlikely that Iraq can reach the point, in the near-term, where its capabilities are great enough to change US, British, Iranian, Israeli and/or Southern Gulf perceptions of risk to the point where they would limit or paralyze outside military action. Further, it seems unlikely that Iraq can open build up major production and deployment capabilities without provoking strong US counter-proliferation programs, including retaliatory strike capabilities. The same is true of a response by Iran and the Southern Gulf states. As a result, Iraq’s acquisition of weapons of mass destruction may end simply in provoking an arms race even when UN sanctions are lifted.

Nevertheless, Iraq’s possession of such weapons inevitably affects US, British, Israeli and Southern Gulf perceptions of the risks inherent in attacking Iraq. Once UN sanctions on Iraq are lifted, Iraq may be able to rebuild its strategic delivery capabilities relatively quickly, and any sustained conflict involving weapons of mass destruction could have drastic consequences. This would be particularly true if Iraq could develop advanced biological weapons with near-nuclear lethality, or assemble nuclear devices with weapons grade fissile material bought from an outside source. There might be little or no warning of such strategic developments, and the US might not be willing to counter by extending theater nuclear deterrence to protect its Southern Gulf allies.

As is the case with Iran, there are several other developments that might allow Iraq to use proliferation to pose a near-term threat to US conventional capabilities in the region:

- A successful Iraqi attempt to buy significant amounts of weapons grade material. This could allow Iraq to achieve a nuclear break out capability in a matter of months. Both the US and the region would find it much harder to adjust to such an Iraqi effort than to the slow development of nuclear weapons by creating fissile material in Iraq. It seems likely that the US could deal with the situation by extending a nuclear umbrella over the Gulf, but even so, the Southern Gulf states might be far more responsive to Iraqi pressure and intimidation. Most, after all, are so small that they are virtually "one bomb states;"

- A change in the US and regional perception of biological weapons. Biological weapons are now largely perceived as unproven systems of uncertain lethality. Regardless of their technical capabilities, they have little of the political impact of nuclear weapons. Iraq might, however, conduct live animal tests to demonstrate that its biological weapons have near-nuclear lethality or some other power might demonstrate their effectiveness in another conflict. The successful mass testing or use of biological
weapons might produce a rapid "paradigm shift" in the perceived importance of such weapons and of Iraq’s biological warfare programs;

- Iraq might break out of UN sanctions and reveal a more substantial capability than now seems likely. Paradoxically, such an Iraqi capability would help to legitimize Iran and Israel’s nuclear, biological, and chemical programs and the escalation to the use of such weapons;

- Iraq might use such weapons through proxies or in covert attacks with some degree of plausible deniability. Terrorism and unconventional warfare would be far more intimidating if they made use of weapons of mass destruction.

The Problem of Terrorism, Proxy, and Unconventional Warfare

The US is probably more vulnerable to Iranian or Iraqi diplomatic warfare than to any other challenge to US capabilities and the military edge provided by the "revolution in military affairs." It also, however, is vulnerable to a direct military challenge, however, through terrorism, proxy, and unconventional warfare. The bombings of in Saudi Arabia have already demonstrated this vulnerability and there may have been some degree of Iranian involvement. The bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 have also shown that targets can be chosen outside the immediate theater of confrontation.

Failed regimes create their own violent opposition through their mistreatment of minorities, repression, and economic failures. These pressures interact in the Gulf with the economic costs of war and revolution, and with a broad failure to offer Gulf youth the education, job opportunities, and social role necessary to fully integrate one of the world’s youngest and most rapidly growing populations into its society. The "rentier," or welfare character, of Southern Gulf regimes and economies is rapidly becoming unaffordable, and Islamic extremism is often a natural refuge. These threats are likely to pose at least a low-level continuing threat to US and other Western power projection forces and other foreigners in the Gulf as the natural proxies for the regime. They would also be far more serious if they involved weapons of mass destruction.

Once again, there is no way to determine what Iran and Iraq will or will not plan in the future. Their official attitude toward terrorism is the usual one of denial, but this has scarcely proved to be the reality in the past. Further, Iran and Iraq’s efforts may well be improvised and
reactive -- suddenly escalating the scale of its use of unconventional warfare/terrorism in reaction to a given contingency or the failure of its military forces. This makes any effort to characterize their use of such delivery methods purely speculative -- whether in terms of warning against such threats or denying their existence.

**Developments in Southern Gulf Military Capacities**

In some ways, the challenge of coalition warfare is as important as preparing to meet Iranian and Iraqi threats. Chapter IV has shown that the US has important allies in the Gulf and needs the Southern Gulf states as coalition partners in virtually all contingencies. Unlike Iran and Iraq, the Southern Gulf states have also been the recipients of extensive arms transfers since the Gulf War. They have made massive purchases of arms since the Gulf War, many of which have consisted of first-line weapons and technology of the kind the US has exploited in its "revolution in military affairs."

The practical problem is each Southern Gulf state has acted largely on its own, often ignoring the need for standardization and interoperability, joint warfare, effective C4I systems and sustainment. There has been only a limit effort to achieve regional interoperability and battle management interoperability with the US. For example, Saudi Arabia remains the region’s largest arms buyer, although Saudi Arabia’s economic and budget deficit problems led to significant cuts in the rate of new arms orders in spite of the Gulf War. Saudi new arms agreements dropped from $45.7 billion during 1987-1990 to $2.2 billion in 1992-1995, and $7.1 billion in 1996-1999. Once again, the scale of these cuts in Saudi new orders has often been disguised in media reporting by the momentum of deliveries from past orders. Saudi arms deliveries totaled $26.3 billion during 1987-1990 and 31.3 billion in 1992-1995, and then leaped to $34.8 billion in 1996-1999 as deliveries caught up with the backlog of past orders.

Similar trends have affected the other Southern Gulf states. Kuwait, which ordered $6.1 billion worth of arms during 1992-1995, and only $1.1 billion during 1996-2000, but its deliveries
rise from $3.3 billion in 1992-1995 to $4.3 billion in 1996-1999. Bahrain and Qatar also followed in Kuwait’s pattern, although the UAE has emerged as a major sustained buyer. It ordered $7.3 billion worth of arms during 1992-1995, and $7.7 billion during 1994-1997. Most of these arms are still to be delivered; the UAE took delivery on $3.3 billion worth of arms in 1992-1995 and $4.5 billion in 1996-1999.

The qualitative problems accompanying the arms purchases currently being made in the Southern Gulf have been described in Chapter IV. It is all too clear that far too many Southern Gulf countries buy arms without a consistent strategy, proper regard for coalition warfare, or meaningful mission priorities. A review of the land force purchases since 1991 reveal far too many types of different weapons from different countries both between Southern Gulf states, and often within their force structures. If one looks through both the naval order of battle in the Gulf, and the performance characteristics of the ships purchased since 1991, many naval purchases seem to reflect a contest as to which country can buy the most complex frigate or corvette.

The problems in air orders of battle and land-based air defenses are less obvious, but there are far too many types of aircraft and short-ranged air defense systems that are not integrated into a common and fully computerized southern-Gulf wide system or concept of air operations. Only Saudi Arabia has fully integrated airborne sensor and battle management systems into its concept of air operations. Purchases for offensive air operations reflect a lack of meaningful reconnaissance and targeting capabilities, a failure to integrate battle damage assessment into the loop, and a lack of integrated concepts of joint warfare.

This is not to say that individual countries have not made major progress in some areas, but the fact remains that the Southern Gulf is one of the major threats to the Southern Gulf. It is not coincidental that the last two USCENTCOM annual seminars dealing with security assistance have focused on the need to provide for adequate training, infrastructure, and sustainability, and interoperability. They have stressed the fact that Southern Gulf states are buying too many major weapons too quickly and without a proper focus on key missions and warfighting capabilities.
This scarcely means that Southern Gulf should cease all modernization or halt its efforts to obtain a technological edge over Iran and Iraq. It should, however, buy more slowly and focus on key missions and on adequate training, infrastructure, and sustainability, and interoperability. The Southern Gulf does not need a "revolution in military affairs" half as much as it needs a focused evolution in actual warfighting capability.

Unfortunately, there is no unifying threat serious enough to catalyze collective action. Furthermore, each Gulf state still has a large backlog on undelivered arms orders which were placed with limited regard to mission priorities, interoperability, and collective defense. This backlog ensures that many problems will get worse over the next few years and not better.

It is also important to note that the Southern Gulf states are not the only option for regional strategic cooperation. The Bright Star series of exercises in Egypt involve massive combined exercises between US and Egyptian forces. The November 1995 series of exercises, for example, directly involved more than 5,000 troops, and included forces from Britain, France, and the UAE. The total forces involved in some form of training involved some 33,000 Egyptian troops and 22,000 US troops. The exercise phase involved 500 British troops, 500 French troops, and 200 from the UAE. It involved some 2,700 sorties by over 700 aircraft, and exercises by more than 100 tanks and a carrier battle group. Egypt could play a major role in the Gulf in many contingencies if it had US support in the form of C^4I/BM capabilities, sustainability, and combat coordination. The annual exercises in 1996-2000 have steadily refined these capabilities. The annual exercises in 1996-2000 have steadily refined these capabilities.

Iran and Iraq can never entirely ignore the capabilities of Israel -- particularly as advances in the peace process steadily cut the political liabilities that are likely to be triggered by Israeli intervention in a large-scale Gulf conflict. Further, Iran and Iraq must consider Israel’s nuclear deterrent and the risks inherent in any Iranian and Iraqi action in the Gulf that threatened to expand to cover Israel.
Future Trends in the Gulf Military Balance

There are four major trends in regional stability and the regional military balance that seem likely to shape the Gulf’s reaction to the "revolution in military affairs" well into the 21st Century:

- The first is that the Gulf states have made little progress since the Gulf War in dealing with their structural economic problems and political divisions. Iraq, whose economy had largely collapsed during the Iran-Iraq War, experienced a full collapse in 1991. Its Sunni, Shi’ite, and Kurdish factions are held together by one of the most repressive regimes since Nazi Germany. Iran’s per capita income has fallen to the levels Iran had in the mid-1970s, and it is unclear what Iran’s long-term prospects for development will be. The Southern Gulf has talked reform, but has failed to act, and its rapid population growth has cut per capita incomes far below the days of the oil boom. Ethnic, political, and economic problems have already helped lead to extremism and violence in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. If the Gulf states finally act on their promises of reform, there is no reason to assume their current problems will lead to significant civil unrest and violence. If they do not, internal civil conflict may become as serious a threat as Iran and Iraq.

- The second is that Gulf War has triggered a race in tactical technology, based in part on lessons drawn from the rapid US dominance of Iraq, and "revolution in military affairs." It is a race, however, that lacks consistency and cohesion. UN sanctions have limited Iraq’s ability to purchase new weapons and advanced technology, and Iran has faced major constraints in terms of resources and access to imports of advanced weapons. Far too often, Southern Gulf nations have bought individual weapons with a high "glitter factor," without proper regard for training, sustainability, maneuver capability, and joint warfare. It has stressed the national competition for the most prestigious arms over any aspect of interoperability. Nevertheless, some Gulf forces are beginning to focus on the "revolution in military affairs" and on acquiring mission-oriented packages of advanced technology, rather than on building up force numbers to the degree they emphasized in the past.

- The third is that Gulf War has left a heritage of Southern Gulf dependence on US power projection capabilities. This dependence is reflected in strengthened US prepositioning, improved deployment facilities, and in a series of bilateral and multilateral training and exercise efforts that are far more advanced than those carried out as part of the Gulf Cooperation Council. This dependence, however, creates growing doubts within the Southern Gulf states as to the cost-effectiveness of national defense efforts and arms purchases. It makes the US a natural target for dissidents and extremists, and has the critical weakness that the US has not been able to preposition land equipment in Saudi Arabia -- the most urgent area in terms of Southern Gulf vulnerability.

- The fourth is that Gulf War and "dual containment" have slowed the missile race and efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Instead, the Gulf seems locked into a process of "creeping proliferation" in which Iraq attempts to preserve the remnants of its pre-war capabilities, carry out new covert programs, and develop a "break out" capability for the time when UN sanctions are limited. Iran, in contrast, is actively pursuing the development and/or deployment of long range missiles. It is deploying chemical weapons and is carrying out covert biological and nuclear weapons programs, but at a slow and steady pace of development, rather than in the grandiose manner that Iraq pursued before the Gulf War. No Southern Gulf state has followed up Saudi Arabia’s purchase of obsolete long-range missiles from China, or shown signs of developing weapons of mass destruction. Several countries are, however, beginning to
explore theater missile defense and civil defense options. The US increasingly focuses on counterproliferation, and the "creeping proliferation" in the Gulf inevitably interacts with proliferation in the India-Pakistan arms race, the Arab-Israeli arms race, and the search to find a counterbalance to the conventional technology of the US.

Given these trends, it seems likely that neither Iran nor Iraq will pose direct near-term challenges to the capabilities of US forces. A combination of US, British, and Southern Gulf military forces should be capable of defeating virtually any war fighting threat from either state in the near-term if the US and Southern Gulf states act with sufficient speed, unity, and determination.

The only near term developments that could rapidly alter this balance would be:

- A major cutback in US power projection capability or Southern Gulf support,
- The institutionalization of a significant low level internal conflict in a Southern Gulf state that Iran or Iraq could exploit and which would confront the US with the fact that it cannot save a Gulf government from its own people,
- Iranian or Iraqi acquisition of biological weapons of demonstrated lethality approaching those of small nuclear weapons, and
- The sudden transfer of a nuclear weapon or sufficient fissile material for a "break out" in building a bomb -- a development that could radically change US and Southern Gulf perceptions of the risk in taking military action.

It should be clear from the preceding analysis, however, that Iran and Iraq clearly understand the potential gaps and weaknesses in the RMA, US, and coalition capabilities mean that the situation may be less favorable to the US and its allies in the mid-to-long term. Certainly, the US must look beyond over conventional military threats, and give high priority to dealing with proliferation, asymmetric warfare, diplomatic "warfare," and confrontations and wars of attrition and endurance. It is also almost axiomatic that Iran and Iraq will intensify their pursuit of these options in direct proportion to the extent that the US maintains or widens the "edge" that the "revolution in military affairs" now gives it in conventional warfighting capability. Furthermore, it is all too clear that US and other Western arms transfers have done little to create effective coalition partners, or to effectively integrate the "revolution in military affairs" into Southern Gulf
forces. Instead, the RMA has encouraged Southern Gulf dependence on the US, if not military parasitism, and encouraged the tendency of Southern Gulf states to treat military technology as prestige oriented toys and pursue petty local rivalries in a climate of perceived security.

**Implications for US Policy**

*The greatest single key to ensuring the stability of the military balance in the Gulf, and to maintain future peace, is to understand that the US must continue to play the role of the balancing power in region, and take the lead in ensuring any form of aggression will be checked.*

The US must also understand that its commitment to the Gulf may be as enduring as its commitment to NATO and involve a considerably higher risk of actual combat. US policy must be based on the understanding that US forces may have to remain in the Gulf for decades and probably with far less popularity than it had at the time of the Gulf War.

The US now has only one real military ally from outside the region – Britain – although Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Turkey are allies that can play a major role on the periphery of the Gulf. It faces inevitable tensions with those in the Southern Gulf that see the US as some kind of “imperialist,” those who oppose any kind of major Western presence for religious and cultural reasons, and those who oppose devoting resources to defense. The Gulf, however, is a vital US strategic interest, and not a popularity contest. As the previous chapters have shown, there is no credible military alternative to the US, and talk about purely Gulf security regimes is little more than gratuitous military nonsense.

The military role that the US must play is described in more detail in the following chapters. In brief, however, US policy must focus on the following steps:

- *Making a clear and unambiguous Presidential commitment to remain in the Gulf, defend our allies, and retaliate against any attacks upon them – including attacks with weapons of mass destruction.*
• A strong forward US military presence and an ongoing engagement strategy that treats our Southern Gulf allies as true partners.

• Maintaining strong, combat ready US power projection capabilities

• Maintaining sanctions on Iraqi arms imports, and efforts to limit arms transfers and transfers of dual use technology to by Iran and Iraq.

• Building Serious Southern Gulf contingency capabilities

• Correcting the present weaknesses in defending against a surprise, all out Iraqi land attack on Kuwait and the Saudi border.

The first point in this list is one that needs careful attention from the next Administration. The US cannot afford strategic ambiguity in a region that needs both clear and decisive leadership and clear and decisive deterrence. The US needs to go beyond ad hoc statements and reactions to individual events and crises and announce a clearly defined national policy towards the Gulf that both our allies and enemies can clearly understand. This is a region where you need to set clear rules and enforce them both to reassure your allies and to place clearly defined limits on the actions of your enemies.

The new US President should announce a “Bush or Gore Doctrine” that defines both “containment plus replacement’ and the overall US strategy in the Gulf. It should make it unambiguously clear that the US will remain in the Gulf, and will be prepared to support any Gulf state in resisting aggression, until a security structure can be established that includes all of the Gulf states and until it is clear that no Gulf state harbors any ambitions towards dominating its neighbors or acquiring its territory.
The new President should make a firm, long-term commitment to ensuring the security of the world’s principal source of oil exports. He should make it clear that oil is a global commodity and that the US is committed to ensuring that oil is normally sold at free market prices, that oil exporters can invest in increased production, and that the flow of exports is stable and secure. In making such a statement, the President should state that oil is critical to the global economy and growing interdependence created by US trade with Asia. At the same time, the US should state that it is not trying to impose a unilateral approach to Gulf security and will seek a steady expansion of the role of its European, regional, and Asian allies in helping to ensure the security and stability of the Gulf.

The US should state that it will work closely with its Southern Gulf allies and partners to maintain the proper level of prepositioning and rapid deployment capability, and training for joint operations. At the same time, it should state its interest in reducing its active military presence in the Gulf to the minimum level necessary to ensure these strategic aims once states like Iran and Iraq demonstrate their peaceful character. It should also state that its long-term goal is to return to the largely “over-the-horizon” posture it had before the Iran-Iraq War if all friendly Gulf states are satisfied that a regional security structure has reduced the need for a US presence. At the same time, the US should declare that it is making a firm and lasting commitment to its Southern Gulf allies that it will stay in the Gulf regardless of any acts of terrorism, and that it will meet proliferation with strong counter-proliferation capabilities.

All of these steps should be supported by a coherent and patient campaign to inform the peoples of the region as to the reasons behind US actions. The US should use all available media, and work with its allies to obtain outside support and reinforcement. Declaring a policy once is pointless. A clear and formal doctrine requires a continuing dedicated effort.

The US should also follow-up the formal declaration of such a new doctrine with an active engagement effort and in-depth reports or “white papers” that respond to key Arab and allied
concerns as they evolve. It should clearly describe the threats that the US is in the Gulf to counter. This reporting should outline US efforts to strengthen regional security capabilities by country, and it should make clear the fact that the US does not force arms on its allies or even dominate the arms trade in dealing with most states.

The US should make it clear that even the peak levels of US forces in the Gulf – now roughly 25,000 men and women -- are small relative to both the size of friendly military forces and the 700,000 men in Iranian and Iraqi forces, and that the permanent US presence in the Gulf is closely linked to cooperative security relations with its allies. Finally, the US should refute the charge that it is acting as a mercenary for the Southern Gulf states by showing that it places only a limited burden on its allies and that it is making major efforts to improve their military capability. Above all, we need to recognize that Desert Fox is only a not particularly successful round in a complex battle of politics, force, and perceptions that we must do much more to win.
2 Source: Estimate made by Anthony H. Cordesman based on the equipment counts in IISS, Military Balance, “Iran,” and discussions with US experts. Note that different equipment estimates are used later in the text. The IISS figures are used throughout this chart to preserve statistical consistency.
3 Source: Estimate made by Anthony H. Cordesman based on the equipment counts in IISS, Military Balance, “Iran,” and discussions with US experts. Note that different equipment estimates are used later in the text. The IISS figures are used throughout this chart to preserve statistical consistency.
5 Reuters, November 4, 1995, 1022.