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AFTER THE PERSIAN GULF WAR:  
A MULTINATIONAL GULF SECURITY FORCE

BY

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## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS			
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE						
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable) AWCAB		7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 227 AVON DRIVE CARLISLE, PA 17013			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable)		9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS			
			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) AFTER THE PERSIAN GULF WAR: A MULTINATIONAL GULF SECURITY FORCE (Uncl)						
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) LTC MATHLAS KNORR						
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Individual Study Proj.		13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1991/MARCH/11		15. PAGE COUNT 24
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION						
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) PERSIAN GULF - MIDDLE EAST - GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL - PEACEKEEPING - COLLECTIVE DEFENSE			
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP				
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) The crisis in the Persian Gulf poses a serious threat to world order. Predictions of Iraqi actions were inaccurate and the unprecedented world response was surprising. A vision of peace, security and stability in the future is equally perplexing. A complete U.S. military strategy including both peacekeeping and collective defense would shape this vision or strategy. Peacekeeping is essential but only part of the strategy; it is an interim solution. Peacekeeping was not intended to function as a regional collective defense. This paper focuses on collective defense. Collective defense is needed to enhance Gulf Cooperation Council security and protect U.S. interests. Collective defense can be achieved through several military options most of which were used prior to the Gulf War. The continuing post-war threats and volatile environment dictate a military option with the highest assurance of success and immediate, tangible results. A forward-deployed force is the only option that meets the criteria. This force called the Multinational Gulf Security Force (MGSF) replaces the current military structure. The MGSF consists of air, ground and naval						
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS				21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL	

Block #19 - Abstract

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

AFTER THE PERSIAN GULF WAR: A MULTINATIONAL GULF SECURITY FORCE  
AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: After the Persian Gulf War: A Multinational Gulf Security Force

FORMAT: Individual Study Project

DATE: 11 March 1991 PAGES: 24 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The crisis in the Persian Gulf poses a serious threat to world order. Predictions of Iraqi actions were inaccurate and the unprecedented world response was surprising. A vision of peace, security and stability in the future is equally perplexing. A complete U.S. military strategy including both peacekeeping and collective defense would shape this vision or strategy. Peacekeeping is essential but only part of the strategy; it is an interim solution. Peacekeeping was not intended to function as a regional collective defense. This paper focuses on collective defense. Collective defense is needed to enhance Gulf Cooperation Council security and protect U.S. interests. Collective defense can be achieved through several military options most of which were used prior to the Gulf War. The continuing post-war threats and volatile environment dictate a military option with the highest assurance of success and immediate, tangible results. A forward-deployed force is the only option that meets the criteria. This force called the Multinational Gulf Security Force (MGSF) replaces the current GCC military structure. The MGSF consists of air, ground and naval components from Arab, GCC and Western nations including U.S. participation. The most important element, the ground force, has multinational corps with uninalational divisions. It is a sophisticated, lethal force that provides what the GCC cannot -- a credible self-defense. The MGSF is the key to a successful collective defense.

## INTRODUCTION

Conceivably, the crisis in the Persian Gulf posed the most serious threat of global war since World War II. For a conflict its magnitude, predictions of Iraqi actions were inaccurate and the unprecedented world response was surprising.

A vision of peace, security and stability in the Persian Gulf in the future is equally perplexing. All the elements of power -- economic, military and political -- will play a role in deciding what shapes this vision or strategy. This paper involves the military component of the overall strategy.

A complete U.S. military strategy to achieve U.S. interests and ensure Gulf security would include, among other elements, peacekeeping and collective defense. Although important, a detailed discussion of peacekeeping is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead the focus is on collective defense.

Specifically collective defense can be achieved through a forward-deployed multinational force. This force consists of Arab, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)<sup>1</sup>, and Western participants and includes a U.S. presence. Combined air, ground and naval components provide what the GCC alone cannot -- a credible self-defense.

In order to arrive at the necessity for such a force, several important factors were considered. First the paper reviews the national interests and objectives of the key players to clarify what is at stake. Second is a brief discussion of the region's environment. Then comes an analysis of the future

military threats to GCC security and U.S. interests. Next is a discussion and comparison of peacekeeping and collective defense theories. Finally, in applying practice to theory the paper describes the forward-deployed multinational force and proposes several advantages.

### INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE KEY PLAYERS

An analysis of interests and objectives gives direction to strategy formulation. Nations with similar objectives may have similar strategies for achieving their national interests. Conversely, nations with divergent objectives will probably have conflicting strategies.

An examination of Iraqi actions over the last decade indicates Iraq's interests or aims have been:

- dominance in the Gulf region;
- enhanced leadership in the Arab world; and
- security, sovereignty and economic prosperity.

To meet these aims, Iraq's objectives through two recent wars have been to succeed in its claims to islands and expanded borders; to improve access to oil, oil facilities and ports; and to develop one of the strongest military powers in the world.

It is unclear whether Iraq's aims or objectives will change in the future. Iraq's military power has been degraded, but is

still strong in comparison to its neighbors. Unless future military sanctions are imposed or Saddam Hussein is removed, Iraq has the potential for improving its military power in the near future.

The interests of the GCC states are:

- economic prosperity through oil exports and goods and services imports;
- modernization (not "Westernization"); and
- security and sovereignty through moderate military relations with the West, amicable relations with neighbors and a viable defense.<sup>2</sup>

GCC long-term objectives have stressed achieving security through political and economic means over military means. Although capable of its own internal security, the GCC has relied on ad hoc arrangements for support against external threats.<sup>3</sup> Iraq's invasion of Kuwait vividly demonstrated the GCC's informal approach to security is not viable in the future.

Returning to a pre-war military status is inadequate for GCC security. Because of this, I believe the GCC in the future will modify its objectives by placing a higher priority on military effectiveness and multinational participation.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional US interests in the Gulf remain:

- the free flow of oil;
- freedom of the seas;
- limited Soviet influence in the region;
- regional security;
- safety of US citizens abroad;

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- regional economic stability; and the
- survival of Israel.

Although U.S. interests will not markedly change, some objectives will. Previously, we superficially tried to maintain a balance of power through managing an Iran-Iraq-GCC plus superpower triad. The Gulf War invalidated this moderate approach. The War demonstrated the vulnerability of the GCC and highlighted the imbalance of power in the region. We should more actively seek to improve GCC security to deter against future aggression.

An analysis of the Soviets indicates their interests over the years have been:

- limited power projection;
- minimal ethnic or religious turmoil within the Soviet Union created by bordering Middle East countries;
- neutralized Western influence in the region;
- regional stability; and
- security of the motherland from regions contiguous to its borders.

It appears some Soviet objectives may change. A less ambitious, less ideologically motivated Soviet Union with interests in a free market economy may not try to transform other states to Marxism or a Soviet ideology.<sup>5</sup> Increased emphasis is being placed on avoiding conflicts and solving disputes peacefully.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the Soviets will give greater

support to UN authority and show Post-Cold War success is more effective through peace than war.<sup>7</sup>

How does a comparison of interests and objectives between the key players affect our strategy? There is close congruence between GCC and U.S. interests and objectives. This suggests a unity of effort and high degree of cooperation between the GCC and U.S. in achieving mutual security aims after the war.

The uncertainty of future Iraqi interests and objectives and her military capability conflict with GCC security and U.S. interests. If Iraq continues to pursue her pre-war aim, closer ties between the U.S. and GCC would be expected.

U.S.-Soviet interests are different, but improved U.S.-Soviet relations and changing Soviet objectives provide an opportunity for closer U.S.-GCC security ties. Due to improved superpower relations and internal concerns, the Soviets do not desire to rekindle a waning superpower rivalry. Now the Soviets are less likely to oppose a U.S. presence in the Gulf.

Soviet objectives in the Middle East are somewhat peripheral to their global interests.<sup>8</sup> Their support of Third World countries is decreasing and Gulf power projection is not a priority. They do, however want to have influence too.

The Soviet's superpower image has been tarnished by internal turbulence and a Cold War defeat. Perhaps some face saving measure -- Soviet participation on a UN peacekeeping or a Soviet solution to the Palestinian-Israeli problem -- would regain their international prestige.

Interests are influenced by the environment and both shape future strategy. The environment must be analyzed for any strategy to succeed. The Middle East environment, influenced by ancient and modern dynamics, has caused and will continue to cause regional instability.

### THE MIDDLE EAST ENVIRONMENT

For centuries the Middle East has been inherently unstable. Empires have risen and fallen with different groups laying claim to the same ground. Power was based on the sword; the ruler was to be feared and obeyed. Brutal rulers who kept order, however were preferred to endless conflict.<sup>9</sup>

Thomas Friedman best explains how these archaic ways have permeated modern society. He wrote,

They always know . . . when the modern veneer of nation-statehood is stripped away, it still comes down to Hama Rules: Rule or die.<sup>10</sup> These "tribe-like" politics are characterized by a harsh, survivalist quality.<sup>11</sup> A clear message must be sent. If they violated you in any way, you would make them pay, and pay dearly.<sup>12</sup>

The tribal psyche is also responsible for the frightening arms proliferation in the region. As Helena Cobban wrote, "Mideastern states . . . are today dominated by deep fears for their very survival. They have driven the arms acquisition process that has made the region such a powderkeg."<sup>13</sup>

Added to the "tribe-like" dynamics are other factors causing a constant struggle for political and military dominance. Borders were artificially imposed and drawn from convenient geometric lines not based on geography, ethnic, historical, linguistic, or religious bonds.<sup>14</sup> "Instead of the state growing out of the nation, the nation was supposed to grow out of the state."<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, nationalism is competing with other sources of power for creating a unified identity within a nation. The result is internal discontent between the "haves" and "have nots", traditionalists and modernists, and between fundamentalists and secularists. Rulers never feel they are really in control.

Many Arab countries do not accept the boundaries or lands carved up long ago by colonial powers. In fact most borders and islands in the Gulf are disputed today. This has created significant external friction between oil and non-oil states.<sup>16</sup>

Combined these factors create an extremely complex and potentially volatile environment. Many causes of discontent will remain unchanged after the war and continue to add to regional instability.

## FUTURE MILITARY THREATS TO GCC SECURITY AND U.S. INTERESTS

Military threats coupled with a volatile environment exacerbate regional instability. The capabilities of both the military threat and the counter to this threat must be examined. After the war, the military threat to GCC security and U.S. interests will continue to grow.

Several Middle East Third World countries are quickly becoming second rate powers that could become first rate threats -- "mini-superpowers".<sup>17</sup> Air forces are sophisticated, navies are small but high tech and ground forces are large and well equipped. Many -- Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria -- have ballistic missiles with a chemical, biological capability and a developing nuclear capability.<sup>18</sup>

What is threatened? These military powers pose threats to inland and offshore oil facilities, ports, lines of communication (LOCs) and other military and civilian infrastructure. Weapons of mass destruction and state-sponsored terrorism threaten political stability. Most significant the Gulf War demonstrates the very survival of the GCC and U.S. interests are at stake.

A closer look at the Gulf region reveals Iraq will emerge from the war severely reduced militarily, but as a viable national power in the Middle East. Iraq's stature based on its own assessment of victory with Saddam Hussein as its hero, has appealed to many Arabs in the Middle East. Iraq is still a

direct threat to Gulf oil; neighboring territories (borders and islands); LOCs and GCC political stability and sovereignty. Even if Iraq's overall military power was cut in half, it would be about three times stronger than the GCC and as strong as Iran.<sup>19</sup>

Iran poses a significant threat to oil facilities, ports and political stability. It is about three times as powerful as the GCC with strengths in ground forces, air defense, attack helicopters, and navy.<sup>20</sup>

Since Iran's defeat in the eight year war with Iraq some no longer consider it a military threat. A huge population, large oil revenues and current position of uninterrupted recovery give Iran the potential for rebuilding military power soon. Iran's military power has diminished, but in a Gulf perspective, neither the GCC nor any country within it are a match for Iran.

Iran and Iraq are not the only military threats. There is a 360-degree threat to Western oil supplies and Gulf LOCs. Yemen and Ethiopia are potential air, naval and missile threats to Saudi Arabian territory and ports along the Red Sea coast.<sup>21</sup>

A comparison of Iraq acting with Yemen against the GCC shows a serious military imbalance. The same comparison against Saudi Arabia is even worse. Combat power ratios for the threat coalition are about three times greater than the GCC and six times greater than Saudi Arabia.<sup>22</sup>

What about GCC capabilities? In general, the GCC has been individually and collectively weak and its defense has lacked

coordination and interoperability. GCC states have had an internal rivalry for military status based on acquiring the most prestigious arms. Their military power, however is only an illusion; in reality they have only token forces. Most significant, GCC states do not have a large population base or enough trained manpower to sustain a major ground conflict. Unlike Saudi Arabia, the others have failed to build an adequate basing or logistics infrastructure.<sup>23</sup>

A moderate military threat can become significantly stronger against an inadequate counterthreat. An insufficient, incapable GCC self-defense enhances the military threat of its adversaries.

The lack of current threatening intentions toward the GCC provides a false sense of security in the future. Serious consideration must be given to capabilities not merely intentions. As Thomas McNaughton said, "Enemies can also be friends often at the same time."<sup>24</sup> The military threat is not confined to the Gulf, focussed solely on Saudi Arabia, or expected to disappear after the war with Iraq.

#### WHY COLLECTIVE DEFENSE AND WHY NOT PEACEKEEPING ONLY?

The foregoing analysis of interests, environment and military power indicate continued threats to GCC security and U.S. interests. We need to ensure the Middle East will not

violently explode again. Political, economic and military strategies are all required to contain the explosion.

I believe a feasible U.S. military strategy should include both peacekeeping and collective defense. It is important to discern the theoretical differences between the two.

In the context of this paper, peacekeeping refers to familiar, UN-sanctioned peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping is conducted with consent of the belligerents to facilitate negotiations and monitor ceasefire or truce agreements.<sup>25</sup> The purpose of UN peacekeeping is "not to create peace but to contain war so others can search for peace in stable conditions."<sup>26</sup>

UN peacekeeping has neither the authority nor capability to enforce peace alone. Usually small, neutral countries contribute forces which are lightly armed or unarmed and act as observers.<sup>27</sup> Peacekeeping involves conflict resolution; collective defense involves crisis prevention.

Conceptually, collective defense refers to a NATO-like, regional security arrangement. Collective defense is a way to deter or defend against specified or unspecified military threats, buy time for negotiations, or allow for an escalatory response to aggression.<sup>28</sup> The idea is to build a credible self-defense in order to protect the nations' vital interests.

There are several reasons why collective defense is needed in addition to peacekeeping. First, although the UN has had some small success in peacekeeping, it is not capable of

collective defense. As Burns and Heathcote said, "The UN can act as an international policeman only against minor criminals. Any other policy would be overambitious."<sup>29</sup>

Next the superpowers never intended the UN to function as a collective, regional security system. The UN Charter has no basis for collective defense. Chapter VI calls for "pacific settlement of disputes and Chapter VII allows for collective enforcement against violent transgressors of international order."<sup>30</sup>

The veto clause allows superpowers to take individual or collective actions to pursue their national interests. In order to remain impartial the UN must represent international interests. To maintain its credibility, The UN cannot represent the interests of a state or special group of states.

An impartial peacekeeping force intended to establish peace is not the same as a more permanent security force established to protect national interests. UN peacekeeping forces are not intended to be fighting forces. They are normally small country contingents lightly armed or unarmed and trained in police actions. Commanders, staffs and soldiers lack the training and professionalism necessary for large unit operations with sophisticated equipment and complex tactical tasks.<sup>31</sup>

Finally the UN is facing a challenging financial crisis. Without increased revenues there are serious doubts about the UN's ability to manage its cash flow. This could jeopardize support of any peacekeeping operations it undertakes.<sup>32</sup>

In sum, Ramesh Thakur wrote,

The task of providing military defense properly belongs to a coalition of allies . . . Not only was the UN not designed to cope with this sort of problem, it was constitutionally debarred from doing so. There is a value in having both NATO-like alliances and the UN, for the two kinds of international organization serve quite distinct types of function.<sup>33</sup>

From a practical standpoint, UN peacekeeping in the Gulf is essential after the cessation of hostilities. This peacekeeping, however has limited value. Peacekeeping will not secure the vital interests of the U.S. or guarantee GCC security. Collective defense would supplement and subsequently replace UN peacekeeping.

#### THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF COLLECTIVE DEFENSE

There are numerous means available to achieve collective defense when applying practice to theory. Typical U.S. means or military options include:

- air and naval basing rights;
- arms control, sales or transfers, or arms embargo;
- forward-deployed forces;
- prepositioned equipment;
- rapid-reinforcement forces;
- over-the-horizon forces; and
- training assistance and exercises.

The most important military options give the best assurance of successful collective defense. These options can be selected based on several new factors and assumptions emerging from the Gulf War. New factors or givens are:

- GCC security against post-War threats is inadequate.
- The GCC desires to improve external security through increased multinational assistance and participation.
- A U.S. presence signals strong resolve and commitment resulting in a credible collective defense.
- A world response to a similar, future crisis may not parallel Desert Storm.

Two key assumptions also influence the selection of military options.

- The Gulf War is not the "war to end all wars".
- U.S. interests in the Gulf remain vital and require an increased presence to achieve a higher degree of security.

All the military options listed, except for arms control and forward-deployed forces, were used to assist with GCC security prior to the Gulf War.

Based on new factors and assumptions, however only forward-deployed forces provide the highest degree of success with immediate, tangible results.

#### THE MULTINATIONAL GULF SECURITY FORCE

A forward-deployed multinational force ensures successful collective defense. Call it the Multinational Gulf Security

Force or MGSF. The MGSF is a cooperative, NATO-like structure replacing the current GCC military structure. The MGSF has combined forces from Arab, GCC, and Western nations including a U.S. presence. There are air, ground and naval components which integrate former GCC capabilities.

The MGSF's collective strengths would offset current GCC military weaknesses. This force would provide sufficient trained military manpower and high tech equipment and skills needed, but lacking in the GCC.

GCC states would fully participate in the MGSF with forces and especially with host nation support and required basing. Additionally the GCC would be fully responsible for internal security to include: anti-terrorism, coastal defense, police actions and security of civilian and government facilities.

The MGSF has combined air, ground and naval components. The ground force is the single most important element needed to correct the worst weakness in GCC security. Ground forces would consist of two multinational corps. One corps would be multi-Arab with possibly Egyptian, Syrian and GCC forces. The other corps would consist of Western forces including U.S. participation. Israel could not participate.

Divisions and separate brigades would be un-national. The U.S. would provide one heavy division and an over-the-horizon marine reserve.

The U.S., as well as others, would provide permanently stationed air and surface naval forces integrated into a common

self-defense. Other high tech equipment and personnel -- air defense and intelligence assets -- would also be provided.

The MGSF would be a highly credible military deterrent capable of performing difficult missions with sophisticated, lethal forces. Its missions would apply to external, not internal military threats. The MGSF would be concerned with survival of the nation, not survival of the government.

Appropriate missions would include:

- deter and defend against enemy ground attacks;
- provide air defense, close air support and counter-air;
- provide intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance; and
- secure LOCs and offshore oil facilities.

A clear mandate encompassing the military relationship between GCC states and the MGSF would specify important aspects to include: structure, political and military objectives, policy making and decision authority, command and control, and host nation support.

NATO and the MFO could be used as structural models. A political council and subordinate military committee established at national level would be independent of the GCC. Each would have representatives from all participating nations (including GCC states).

The MGSF would be subordinate to the military committee. There is a single commander in chief (CINC) responsible for all forces in the MGSF. The CINC and MGSF staff positions would be

permanently allocated, but divided among participating nations. Senior U.S. commanders would be U.S. service component commanders in peacetime and MGSF subordinate commanders, among others, in wartime.

Logistics would be a difficult, but not insurmountable problem. Bilateral, GCC host-nation, and parent nation arrangements would all be involved. Details concerning basing rights, prepositioned equipment, facilities, supplies and other logistics responsibilities would be spelled out in the terms of reference or other letters of instruction supporting the mandate.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Many conditions threaten GCC security and U.S. vital interests and have global ramifications. Although complete results of the Persian Gulf War are not yet in, suffice it to say an Iraqi threat continues to loom as long as Saddam Hussein is in power. There also is a 360-degree military threat to Persian Gulf oil and LOCs. Finally, a volatile environment will continue to add to regional instability.

Improved U.S.-Soviet relations and compatible U.S.-GCC objectives favor achieving our regional, national interests. The Soviets should not strongly oppose a multinational presence

In the Gulf. Mutual U.S.-GCC objectives including security of the GCC, its oil, and its LOCs favor closer ties between us. Aside from political and economic ways, how can these objectives be achieved?

Peacekeeping and collective defense form the military part of the answer. An interim, UN peacekeeping force is essential. Its purpose is to contain hostilities and achieve peace between identified belligerents. UN peacekeeping, however is not intended to provide collective security. The UN cannot represent national interests and must be impartial to retain its credibility. The solution would not be complete without collective defense.

Collective defense would deter war, or if deterrence failed, defend and take actions to achieve a favorable outcome. I believe a credible collective defense could have saved Kuwait or prevented an invasion and could spare the GCC and the world a similar fate in the future.

Collective defense can be achieved through several military options most of which were used prior to the Gulf War. Based on the threat, environment, and assumptions previously discussed, only a forward-deployed force provides the highest degree of success with immediate, tangible results.

A NATO-like structure with political council and military committee would replace the current GCC military structure. The MGSF is part of this structure and subordinate to the military committee. The MGSF has combined air, ground and naval

components and provides what the GCC cannot -- a credible self-defense.

The MGSF has some advantages resulting from unique opportunities that may never be replicated.

First, a large force is needed. No one nation, including the U.S. is totally capable of providing this force. A one-nation force would be neither politically or economically realistic nor internationally acceptable or palatable to the GCC. A multinational force, already in being through world consensus, would be feasible on all counts.

Second, the MGSF would leverage favorable relations, equipment and supplies, and military systems and procedures existing from the Gulf War. The MGSF, augmented by GCC states, would have the trained personnel, high tech equipment and the size of force critically needed for a viable self-defense.

Finally, the MGSF would quickly reestablish a balance of power and regional security. A visible U.S. presence is important; a U.S. presence has been a proven deterrent elsewhere.

The importance of U.S. vital interests and GCC security and reality of the Gulf War demand a successful collective defense. A Multinational Gulf Security Force would be the key to its success.

## ENDNOTES

1. GCC refers to the six moderate Gulf states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
2. Anthony A. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, pp. 68-70.
3. Thomas L. McNaugher, Arms and Oil, pp. 157-158.
4. Fouad Ajami, "The Summer of Arab Discontent," Foreign Affairs, Winter 1990, p. 19.
5. Alain Gresh, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Policy," Middle East Report, November/December 1990, p. 10.
6. Graham E. Fuller, "The Middle East in US-Soviet Relations," Middle East Journal, Summer 1990, p. 420.
7. Augustus R. Norton and Thomas G. Weiss, "Superpowers and peace-keepers," Survival, May/June 1990, p. 213.
8. Fuller, p. 420.
9. Thomas L. Friedman, From Beirut to Jerusalem, p. 94.
10. Ibid., p. 104.
11. Ibid., p. 87.
12. Ibid., p. 88.
13. Helena Cobban, "The Hard Road to Peace," World Monitor, November 1990, p. 62.
14. Friedman, pp. 98-99.
15. Ibid., p. 99.
16. Richard W. Murphy, "Mideast Strategies for Stability," World Monitor, October 1990, pp. 67-68.
17. Dore Gold, "Changing Superpower Strategic Relations in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East," IDF Journal, Winter 1990, p. 23.
18. International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1989-1990, Chart attached in rear entitled, "Middle East Conventional Forces with SSM Ranges."

19. Combat power ratios were computed from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1990-1991, pp. 100-122. Kuwait was not included in GCC totals because recovery from the Gulf War will take some time.

20. Ibid.

21. Cordesman, p. 539.

22. International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1990-1991, pp. 100-122.

23. Cordesman, p. 491.

24. McNaugher, p. 125.

25. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-20, p. 4-1 (hereafter referred to as "FM 100-20").

26. Ramesh Thakur, International Peacekeeping in Lebanon, pp. 230-231.

27. Gustav Hagglund, "Peace-keeping in a modern war zone," Survival, May/June 1990, p. 236.

28. McNaugher, pp. 20-21.

29. Arthur L. Burns and Nina W. Heathcote, Peacekeeping by U.N. Forces, p. 189.

30. Ramesh Thakur, "International Peacekeeping, UN Authority, and US Power," ALTERNATIVES, October 1987, p. 461.

31. Hagglund, p. 236.

32. Norton and Weiss, p. 218.

33. Thakur, Ramesh, ALTERNATIVES, p. 472.

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