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**WHY ARE WE STILL HERE?  
AN ANALYSIS OF USAF FORWARD PRESENCE  
IN SOUTHWEST ASIA**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

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This paper analyzes the US policy of forward presence as conducted by the US Air Force (USAF) in Southwest Asia. The thesis is that the way the USAF is being used to support forward presence is flawed and fails to support US policy goals. The opening discussion reviews the purposes of the strategy and how the Air Force has been used. Following that is an examination of sanctions enforcement, exclusion zones and the status of the desired goals. This highlights the failure of the USAF portion of forward presence to achieve any of the major goals of US policy against Iraq. The study then analyzes some of the costs incurred by the USAF and allies in executing this strategy. Examples of these costs include but the conduct of operations, the faster aging of equipment, and the loss of training. The paper concludes by explaining that the failure of the USAF in forward presence is in the application, not the concept. The USAF could and should be a key part of US forward presence. The key is to find a method that reduces the impact to the USAF while providing a clearer link to the national objectives.



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## **WHY ARE WE STILL HERE? AN ANALYSIS OF USAF FORWARD PRESENCE IN SOUTHWEST ASIA**

Shortly after the forces of Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the United States Air Force (USAF) deployed forces to the region. These forces were used well during the ensuing Gulf War and shortly afterwards began to redeploy to their home bases. However, this return flow ceased and has since evolved into a national strategy that significantly expands US military forward presence in the Gulf region.

The thesis of this paper is that the way the USAF is utilized to support the policy of forward presence is flawed and should be terminated because it fails in many ways. In fact, not only has the policy failed but it has negatively impacted the very forces used to conduct it. Specifically, the inability of USAF forward presence to support the goals of US foreign policy, especially when weighed against the costs of conducting the operations, requires a careful consideration of alternative ways of using the USAF that would better meet the nation's goals.

Strategic leaders utilize a system of ends, ways, and means to conduct national foreign policy. In Southwest Asia, military forward presence has taken the form of enforcing sanctions and enforcing the no-fly zones. The problem is that the USAF is unable to enforce sanctions and that neither the sanctions nor the no-fly zones are helping to achieve the national goals. To better understand the problem, I will examine the background of the policy and the purposes of forward presence; the methods and the goals of the policy from the USAF perspective; and the costs that are being incurred. The conclusion highlights that the problem is not with the tool but how it is being applied. Two alternatives are offered in the conclusion that show how the USAF could support forward presence better by using methods that are clearly linked to the ends.

### **FORWARD PRESENCE AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY**

Forward or overseas presence of the military has been a key part of the national strategy starting back as far as the Philippines in the early 20th century. Before examining whether the USAF is accomplishing the goals of forward presence, it is important to understand the purpose of the policy, how the reliance on it has changed, and how the use of forward presence in the Gulf region has evolved. This discussion shows that forward presence continues to be an important part of the national strategy but that its use must be selective.

A review of previous and current National Security Strategies (NSS) shows that the purposes of conducting forward presence have remained fairly consistent over the years. During the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the purposes as laid out in the National Security Strategy of 1987 were to discourage aggression, to contribute to regional stability, and to serve

as a statement of US will to support its allies.<sup>1</sup> Though the focus of our strategy is no longer on the Soviet Union, the US continues to use forward presence with similar purpose. In A National Security Strategy for a Global Age, the 2000 NSS, the purpose of forward presence is to "deter aggression and coercion, build coalitions, promote regional stability, support the development of indigenous counterdrug law enforcement capabilities, and serve as role models for militaries in emerging democracies."<sup>2</sup> While somewhat rephrased, the purposes are essentially the same and show that forward presence is still an important part of our strategy.

While forward presence has remained a part of the strategy, its use has been more selective following the Cold War. The 1992 NSS was the first to note that forward presence, as a function of forward defense, may change. It highlighted the growing pressures for change in global deployments due to concerns at home and operational restrictions abroad.<sup>3</sup> The 1992 National Military Strategy (NMS) expanded forward presence from the simple idea of basing forces overseas to include periodic and rotational deployments, access and storage arrangements, combined exercises, etc. It also stated that forces overseas will be reduced and that the ability to respond will "depend on judicious forward presence".<sup>4</sup> The interest in selective use of forward presence continues in the most recent NSS. It states "activities must be carefully managed to prevent erosion of our military's current and long-term readiness for larger-scale contingencies."<sup>5</sup>

Recognizing that forward presence is an important, if now selective tool, of national strategy, let us now briefly review how it has evolved in the Gulf region. During the Cold War, the 1987 NSS only mentioned support to Southwest Asia coming from naval forces in the Indian Ocean.<sup>6</sup> In addition there was a single sea base on the island of Bahrain and prepositioned equipment maintained in Oman since 1980.<sup>7</sup> Since 1990 and the Gulf War, this lack of American presence in the Gulf has changed significantly. During the buildup for the war, the United States fielded a force of seven Army brigades, three Navy carrier groups, and 14 tactical fighter squadrons.<sup>8</sup> Given the national desire to reduce overseas presence, the 1992 NMS observed that the "heightened level of presence in the Gulf is not permanent".<sup>9</sup> By 1995 the need for continued presence was recognized by then Secretary of Defense Perry, when he stated "it is not unusual for the United States to have 20,000 military men and women in the Persian Gulf at any one time."<sup>10</sup> The 2000 NSS continues to emphasize this point. "We will maintain an appropriate military presence in Southwest Asia using a combination of ground, air, and naval forces."<sup>11</sup>

Forward presence has been a consistent part of the US strategy, though its focus has changed with the threat. As the threat has decreased elsewhere and increased in the Gulf, the use of forward presence has shifted also. However, selective use of the military has become an important part of the discussion. Therefore, while the need for forward presence is readily apparent, the question is whether the ways that the USAF is being used as a part of it are successfully achieving the stated purposes.

### **LINKING THE ENDS TO THE MEANS**

The key to conducting a national strategy is that the means should be used in ways that achieve the ends. No tool works by itself and evaluating the success or failure of a single tool is difficult. However, the tool (the USAF) should be able to perform the stated missions, in the case of the USAF enforcing sanctions and the no-fly zones. If the tool is succeeding at the mission, there should be some indication that the ends are being achieved. The fact of the matter is that neither of these is occurring. In the case of sanctions, the USAF is unable to enforce them along with the fact that the sanctions themselves are ineffective. In the case of exclusion zones, the USAF can enforce the zones but the indications of achieving an end state are missing. Finally, the policy goals are not being achieved by either of the USAF missions.

### **USAF AS A POLICY INSTRUMENT**

The task of enforcing sanctions is a mission that the USAF is unable to accomplish. The task is defined in Joint Pub 3-07, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, which states that these are operations that employ coercive measures to interdict the movement of certain types of designated items into or out of a nation or specified area.<sup>12</sup> The guidance to start these operations came from UN Resolution (UNR) 661 that imposed the embargo in August 1990 and was then expanded by UNR 670 to include air transport in September 1990.<sup>13</sup> However, the ability of air to stop shipment is limited by the fact that all the air routes into the country are not covered. USAF Doctrine Document 2-3 provides another problem with air enforcement. "An air quarantine is difficult to achieve because enforcement is an 'all or nothing' proposition. Shooting down an aircraft may be the only way to truly enforce an air quarantine, but that action may not be morally or politically acceptable for the situation."<sup>14</sup> The effectiveness of the air embargo is then more a question of international support than a factor of military support. Civilian flights to Baghdad have started again and are not being stopped by the air blockade. As noted by George Tenet, "Saddam has had some success in ending Iraq's international isolation. Since August, nearly 40 aircraft have flown to Baghdad without obtaining

UN approval, further widening fissures in the UN air embargo."<sup>15</sup> It appears that the use of the USAF to enforce the sanctions is ineffective and cannot be linked to achieving national goals.

The second task of the USAF is to enforce exclusion zones. "An exclusion zone is established by a sanctioning body to prohibit specified activities in a specific geographic area."<sup>16</sup> The Joint Pub further notes that the purpose may be to modify a nation's behavior to meet the desires of the sanctioning body or to face the use or threat of force.<sup>17</sup> The basis for establishing the no-fly zones came from UNR 688, which stated that Iraq was mistreating its people. The USAF and its allies have effectively conducted these operations for the ten years since the end of the war. However, issues regarding the legitimacy of the operations, the purpose of the operations, and declining international support do bring their utility into question. The legitimacy issue focuses on the fact that UNR 688 doesn't mention using armed force. As noted by Sarah Graham-Brown, even the UN establishment was not in favor of military action under the resolution.<sup>18</sup> The purpose question is one of shifting focus. The 1997 NSS listed the purpose as support for minorities. The 1999 version changed this to support for UN resolutions and preventing aggression by Saddam. Support for resolutions is an open-ended purpose with several components that will be addressed in the Ends section. The continuing effort remains unclear as noted by Andrew Bacevich, a military expert at Boston University, "We just fly missions and drop bombs from time to time because we have been doing it for 10 years and no one can stop us from doing it."<sup>19</sup> Finally, only the United States and Britain now support the no-fly zones, the French having withdrawn their support due to "the end of the humanitarian mission" in the north and then due to the 1998 Desert Fox bombing in the south.<sup>20</sup> As previously stated, the key issue here is a question of linkage to the desired ends and therefore the national strategy. The remainder of this section focuses on these desired ends and the ability of the USAF roles to achieve them.

## SUPPORTING THE ENDS

### **Removal of Saddam**

Though the removal of Saddam Hussein wasn't a stated goal of the Gulf War, it has evolved from an unstated desire to a clearly stated goal in the 2000 NSS.<sup>21</sup> Many efforts have been directed towards this end, including sanctions, support for opposition groups, and some suggest even the no-fly zones. However, the end result of all this effort has been no change in the ruling regime. Sanctions have failed due to Saddam's control of the nation and of the food distribution process. In fact, he has effectively turned the sanctions against the United States by

his strict control. "By essentially conditioning the end of the embargo on Saddam's ouster, they (Bush and Clinton) once again played into his hands. Saddam has used this demand to divert the responsibility for the misery of sanctions away from himself and onto the United States, which he blames for all of Iraq's mishaps."<sup>22</sup> A complete review of the sanctions failure of sanctions is beyond the scope of this paper, but can be summarized by continuing violations, by a growing lack of international support, and by the impact on the Iraqi people and not the leader. The lack of support for the sanctions is critical to success and is decreasing. "Instead, economic sanctions are eroding as the world tires. Foreign airliners are flying to Baghdad in violation of a ban. Egyptian traders are doing a growing business in Iraq, as are Jordanians, Turks and Iranians..."<sup>23</sup> The discussion above highlighted the inability of the USAF to support the sanctions. The failure of the sanctions only serves to further distance the USAF from accomplishing national goals.

United States support of groups opposing Saddam has fluctuated. Early coup attempts after the war were considered internal affairs, but the failure of sanctions to remove the dictator have now brought support to opposition groups to the fore. The problems with this policy are the failure to understand how strongly Saddam controls the nation, to realize how little opposition exists, and to maintain support for his ouster in the region. First, Saddam has total control of the country "because of his ruthless personality, his foes' blunders, and his lethally effective mastery of the pillars of authority in Iraq: the Baath Party, the security establishment, the military, and his own family cliques."<sup>24</sup> In terms of opposition, "the opposition remains weak and divided; even its latest, modest plan to mount clandestine aid and propaganda operations inside Iraq, reluctantly funded by the outgoing Clinton administration to satisfy a congressional mandate, seems like a reach."<sup>25</sup> The fragile coalition that supported a new government relied in part on success in the Arab-Israeli peace process. US support for Israel in recent clashes with the Palestinians has impacted the ability of Arab leaders to support Saddam's removal. "It's not that they like Saddam, because they know he wants to dominate them. But they all have their own streets to worry about, and they don't want to be seen exerting energy against an Arab leader when they have Sharon to worry about."<sup>26</sup> Finally, neither the sanctions nor the no-fly zones offer any real support to opposition parties. The United States has been unwilling to offer easing of the sanctions as an incentive partly because it is unsure of the nature of any replacement, at best offering to discuss the topic with a new government.<sup>27</sup> Save for the Shi'a and Kurds, who will be discussed separately, the no-fly zones offer no support at all. Again, the inability of either application of US airpower to support the desired end state prevents the critical

linking of the ways to the ends. Achieving any sort of success is impossible for a strategy that hasn't made these links.

One final aspect of changing the regime is the thought that the no-fly zones themselves weaken Saddam in his supporter's eyes. This lack of support could potentially lead to a coup. F. Gregory Gause III points out that, "The tangible limitation of Iraqi sovereignty presented by UNSCOM and the no-fly zones, together with military actions to support them, do far more to weaken Saddam in the eyes of his security and intelligence services than do the sanctions."<sup>28</sup> This is an interesting proposition that would support continuing the USAF presence. However, the failure to see any changes in the regime as well as the earlier comments about Saddam's hold on the nation make this a doubtful method of causing his removal. Again, no clear link between the means and the ends is evident.

### **Supporting the Kurds and Shi'a**

The protection of minorities in Iraq is one of the other stated goals of US policy. As discussed earlier, this was one of the original reasons stated for the establishment of the no-fly zones. The question here is whether either the sanctions or the no-fly zones have actually aided in the task. Looking first to the sanctions, the policy has created indirect benefits for the Kurds on the one hand while making daily life more difficult for all minorities on the other. In a twist of fate, violating the sanctions benefits the Kurds. The London Daily Telegraph reported recently, "Yet life has never been so good for the Kurds, thanks to billions of dollars earned from taxes levied on a thriving illicit fuel and luxury goods trade with Iran, Iraq, and Turkey."<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, when the US enforces the sanctions, it actually makes life more difficult for the Kurds. Since the Kurdish areas are still part of Iraq, they are supposed to be supported by the Iraqi government. This ambiguity is due to the unwillingness on the part of the international community to recognize the northern areas as a separate nation, something contrary to the goals of Turkey and other allies.<sup>30</sup>

The question of actual protection by the no-fly zones is much clearer, if only in its failure. The problem is that airpower can't prevent abuses or attacks by ground forces. This became apparent in August of 1996 when the Iraqi army attacked and occupied the city of Erbil, the main Kurdish city in the northern no-fly zone.<sup>31</sup> Even the US State Department Human Rights Reports for 1996 noted as much when it "conceded that neither of the no-fly zones offered any protection on the ground for their populations."<sup>32</sup> Attack from the Iraqis is only part of the problem. The zones have actually protected Turkish forces in their continuing attacks on the Kurdish terrorists. "Since 1991, the Turkish army has continued to shell and bomb border

areas, periodically resorting to large-scale ground offensives into northern Iraq, backed by air strikes, to attack PKK bases. These attacks all took place within the northern no-fly zone, which only applies to Iraq<sup>33</sup> The no-fly zones are obviously incapable of providing the protection that was the ostensible reason for their implementation.

Support for the Shi'a has been lacking from the start. Though their support was ostensibly the basis for the southern no-fly zone, it has also been indicated that Iraqi recalcitrance towards weapon inspectors in 1992 was just as much a reason.<sup>34</sup> Even now, though the NSS still states support as a reason, the no-fly zone does not prevent ground attack by Iraqi forces. The sanctions continue to have a significant impact on the Shi'a and other refugees in the southern marshes. Recent reports highlight that these people are often unable to get ration cards due to their history of opposing the government and that they are probably getting no assistance from the government via the oil-for-food program.<sup>35</sup>

Protection of the Kurdish and Shi'a minorities has been a policy that has lacked clear support in the last ten years and has achieved little if any success. The use of the USAF to support this goal is ineffective. In the case of sanctions, not only can the USAF not enforce them, but the sanctions themselves rather than helping the Shi'a or Kurds have actually hurt them. In the case of the no-fly zones, the USAF is unable to prevent continued attacks by ground forces. Only by allowing attacks on any and all forces past the lines could the USAF be successful. Though untested by Iraq, such a wide-open application of force would be difficult to support in the international community. In truth, only the removal of Saddam or a military exclusion zone would provide complete protection of the minorities. Therefore, the problem is that the current use of sanctions and no-fly zones, whether conducted by the USAF or any other tool, is unable to accomplish the goal of protection.

### **Protecting access to oil**

Gulf oil has been a vital interest of the US and its allies since World War II. This interest is based primarily on the US allies' reliance on Gulf oil but also to the United States, which now gets 20-25% of its oil from the region.<sup>36</sup> The argument about keeping the oil flowing actually has two components: quantity and cost. As a commodity, oil cost is based on supply and demand. The demand is relatively constant, so a change in supply will impact the cost. It would appear that the goal of US policy is to preclude Iraq from being a factor in determining the flow or the cost, however this has not been the result. The no-fly zones have absolutely no impact in this regard. While the presence of US forces in the region may provide a deterrent effect, the no-fly zones themselves do nothing to protect access to oil. Other alternatives, discussed later, would

still provide the deterrent factor without the costs of conducting the no-fly zones. On the other hand, sanctions are significant factor.

Oil is the one significant export from Iraq and controlling its flow was an obvious aim of the sanctions. Especially when the money from oil sales has been used to purchase weapons and make Saddam the threat that he is. However, the failure of the sanctions has once again put Saddam in the driver's seat. First, the oil-for-food program was instituted due to humanitarian concerns from the sanctions. Though he doesn't control the money, Saddam once again controls enough flow to give him credibility. "Iraq is using the one card it has, and that's oil. It's a valuable foreign policy weapon..."<sup>37</sup> points out one political analyst. Additionally, a threat last fall to halt exports sent prices higher, to near record levels, further showing his ability to now control the markets and forcing the United States to respond. Violating the sanctions also gives Saddam money to spend as he sees fit. The above clearly shows that there isn't any real question about access to the oil in the region; Saddam needs to sell oil like everyone else. The fact of the matter is that keeping Saddam from being in control of and benefiting from his oil has failed and neither the sanctions nor the no-fly zones have had anything to do with the policy.

### **Stabilizing the region**

One of the purposes of forward presence is to stabilize the region. Stability is a factor of US influence in the region and Saddam's military capability. Both sanctions and the no-fly zones are aimed at these issues with mixed results. Sanctions have done little to limit the Iraqi military and have actually reduced the influence of the United States in the region. Following the Gulf War, the Iraqi military was significantly reduced. However, a military parade on 31 December 2000 showcased "dozens of advanced surface-to-surface and anti-aircraft missiles and more than 1,000 Russian tanks."<sup>38</sup> As Robin Wright of the LA Times notes, "Baghdad still has the most sophisticated military in the Gulf."<sup>39</sup> The reduction in US influence has been noted earlier but Saudi Prince Talal bin Abdel Aziz recently added that, "The reputation of the United States in the Arab region has dropped to zero."<sup>40</sup> This is largely due to the Arab-Israeli peace process but it also hinders the ability of the United States to pursue sanctions against another Arab nation.

The results for the no-fly zones are mixed. In terms of the military threat, the no-fly zones are now used to monitor and supposedly prevent Saddam's forces from coming further south. In this they have been effective. However, using fighter aircraft as reconnaissance platforms is a questionable practice, especially when contrasted with the risk and the availability of other methods to do the job. In terms of influence, the no-fly zones are not as effective. Not only has

support for the no-fly zones decreased, with only two nations currently participating, but the coalition partners now limit operations. As an example, Saudi Arabia no longer permits attacks on Iraq from its bases allowing only "defensive" missions.<sup>41</sup> Though the results are mixed, the no-fly zones are better connected to a national goal in this area than any other.

The use of sanctions and the no-fly zones are more effective with regards to stability and deterrence than in any other aspect of the policy. Even so, the fact is that other methods of conducting forward presence could produce similar results, with greater international support, and without the costs, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

### **Preventing the Development of WMD**

The issue of WMD is one of the most critical concerns in the national strategy. The threat is clear since Iraq has used these weapons in the past, though not in the 1991 Gulf War. The results of this policy however are less clear than in any other area. Since the removal of UNSCOM inspectors in 1998, there is no way to verify various reports of progress in the Iraqi WMD program. One example is noted by Claude Salhani, "Recent reports have been filtering out of Baghdad hinting that Iraq may have biological, chemical and even nuclear capabilities as well as the ability to deliver those threats beyond its borders."<sup>42</sup> George Tenet, the Director of Central Intelligence, provides more information to consider:

Our most serious concern with Saddam Hussein must be the likelihood that he will seek a renewed WMD capability both for credibility and because every other strong regime in the region either has it or is pursuing it. For example, the Iraqis have rebuilt key portions of their chemical production infrastructure for industrial and commercial use. The plants he is rebuilding were used to make chemical weapons precursors before the Gulf War and their capacity exceeds Iraq's needs to satisfy its civilian requirements.<sup>43</sup>

The sanctions and no-fly zones have obviously failed to prevent the continued development of Iraqi WMD. So what were they supposed to have accomplished? Gause describes the failure of sanctions in this effort. "But the more relevant question is not whether the sanctions impede Iraqi WMD plans, but rather to what extent. The evidence gathered by UNSCOM indicates that the answer is 'not very much.'"<sup>44</sup> He also proposes offering the removal of sanctions if inspectors are allowed back in the country. He noted "it is much better to have UNSCOM (or something like it) without sanctions than sanctions without UNSCOM."<sup>45</sup>

The no-fly zones have been used to conduct air strikes against WMD. However, as pointed out by Graham-Brown, air strikes "were acknowledged to be inappropriate, especially for targeting biological agents, since these are portable and can be stored in small amounts." She further noted that, "there would be no way of verifying the destruction of agents whose

exact volume and location were unknown."<sup>46</sup> This highlights the major problem with no-fly zone support; without verification, airpower is only capable of striking a target and not of determining whether it has actually hit a site producing WMD.

The end result is that the nation is now in the position of conducting a policy that has no end state in sight. Neither the sanctions nor the no-fly zones are able to verify that they have impacted the Iraqi WMD program. In fact, most information indicates that the capability still exists and is progressing. A policy with such marginal returns needs to be reconsidered.

### **Summary**

As already noted, it is critical for a national strategy to be based on the proper application of means in ways that will achieve the ends desired. For this paper, that means that the USAF (the means) should be conducting operations (the ways) that help achieve national goals (the ends). The problem is that none of these links exist in the current policy. As illustrated, the USAF is unable to enforce sanctions and can achieve only limited success in enforcing the no-fly zones. So the means are not capable of conducting the ways. Then, neither the sanctions nor the no-fly zones have been shown capable of supporting the United States desired end states. This shows that the ways are not linked to the ends. So the policy fails on the elemental level of connecting the ends, ways and means. Micah Zenko summarizes it best, at least for the no fly zones. "No-fly zones are a counterproductive mission in search of an overall strategy..."<sup>47</sup>

### **COSTS**

Recognizing the limited success of forward presence so far, it should be of some concern that the costs have, in contrast, been significant. In addition to the military costs discussed here, it should be noted that the United States also incurs other costs from lost trade with Iraq due to the sanctions and support to insurgent groups. US allies are also losing money due to the sanctions. For example, Turkey has reportedly "lost at least \$3 billion through Iraqi sanctions."<sup>48</sup> As significant as these wide-ranging costs are; the impact to the USAF of conducting this failed policy is even greater.

For this analysis, costs will be divided into the direct costs of conducting the operations and the indirect costs on the force of the long-term deployments. The direct costs focus on the dollars spent to conduct both the strike operations such as Desert Fox and the long-term aspects of maintaining the no-fly zones. The issue of risk is also addressed in this area. The indirect costs focus on the impact to the USAF in terms of equipment, personnel and training.

Conducting operations in the Gulf is not an inexpensive prospect. Even with support from the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments in terms of housing, fuel, and base support, the costs to the

United States are high. Consider first the costs of conducting Desert Fox. This operation was directed at known WMD facilities following the expulsion of the UNSCOM inspectors. Chris Hellman of the Center for Defense Information has provided a conservative estimate of \$500 million for this four-day operation.<sup>49</sup> For perspective, consider that the DOD budget for the entire year was \$700 million. However, the no-fly operations have been continuing now for ten years and the force structure in the region increased substantially in 1998. This effort does not come cheap. In testimony before the Armed Services Committee, General Ralph Eberhart, the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, stated that the service is spending about \$80 million a month in the Gulf.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the whole question of risk should be considered for these operations. As noted by a recent fighter squadron commander, there is no mission in Iraq that is worth losing an aircraft or worse a pilot.<sup>51</sup> Recognizing the United States aversion to risk in recent conflicts, this is not an understatement. These are some of the directly observable costs of conducting these operations. But as significant as these are, the indirect costs are potentially more damaging.

Indirect costs are occurring due to the extended operations with a reduced force structure. These costs will have a long-term impact on USAF readiness since it affects aircraft wear and tear, personnel retention, and lost training.<sup>52</sup> The problem with the aircraft is that the normal no-fly mission is two to two-and-a-half times as long as a normal mission at home. This increased wear and tear results in more maintenance being required as parts wear out and inspections based on flight time occur more frequently. History has also shown that the extended use of military equipment often results in lower equipment availability rates and potentially a higher incidence of equipment failure or accidents.<sup>53</sup> The USAF Chief of Staff Michael E. Ryan highlighted the personnel retention problem in a letter to Senator John McCain. "Airmen and units lose training to contingencies and must attempt to make up the lost training at the expense of recovery time and quality of life. Since 1991, contingency deployments have increased to four times that of the pre-war levels and have contributed to reduced retention rates which may affect readiness."<sup>54</sup> Finally, the issue of lost training impacts combat capability both for USAF units and for US allies. For the USAF, lost training is a factor of not being able to conduct combat training during no-fly zone operations. Even including the occasional bombing missions, the typical contingency operation does not provide realistic training, especially in the air-to-air arena. This loss of skill can require as much as 6 months of retraining to return to combat mission capability.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the opportunity to work with allies is lost while conducting the no-fly operations. Prior to the establishment of the no-fly zones, Large Force Exercises (LFEs) were conducted with the host nations of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain on a quarterly basis.<sup>56</sup>

These exercises provided not only a valuable training experience but also an additional opportunity for the military-to-military relationships that forward presence is meant to encourage.

The purpose of this section has been to show that the USAF sanction support and exclusion zone operations are expensive to the United States. Not only does it cost the United States in terms of dollars but it significantly reduces the capability of the US Air Force in terms of future readiness as well. A simple cost-benefit comparison between the failure of these efforts to achieve national goals and the costs of conducting them clearly indicates the need to consider other alternatives.

## **OPTIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Determining the absolute best use for the USAF as part of forward presence is too large a discussion for this paper. However, two brief examples, which eliminate the support for sanctions and the no-fly zones, show the potential benefits. Assume for the first example that the nation decides to reduce costs. In this case, all USAF forces could be withdrawn and the military-to-military relationship could be continued using deployments to conduct frequent exercises. These could be part of an Air Expeditionary Force workup in accordance with the new USAF expeditionary doctrine. The frequent presence of these forces and the ability of the USAF to deploy rapidly when needed would maintain deterrence. This option would limit costs for base support, reduce OPSTEMPO, improve training with allies and return some flexibility to the use of the USAF.

In the second example, assume that the nation is willing to accept some cost due to a concern with deterrence or access to the area. In this case, the nation could leave a significant fighter force in place but reduce the presence of the Low Density-High Demand forces that are currently over-tasked. The focus for the fighters would be on local training similar to what was occurring just after the Gulf War. This training would improve aircrew proficiency as well as permit multi-national exercises with host nations. This option would also limit some of the OPSTEMPO problem on the most affected forces while providing local combat support if needed. It also has the advantage of improving rather than reducing the combat capability of the forces.

In conclusion, the 2000 National Security Strategy states that if vital interests are threatened the nation will use military force decisively. It also states that if important interests are threatened, "military forces should only be used if they are likely to accomplish the objectives, (and) the costs and risks are commensurate with the interests at stake..."<sup>57</sup> The no-fly zones being maintained by the USAF do none of the above. A policy that doesn't meet the

nation's goals or strategy is a policy that should be ended. It is in the best interests of the nation to find a better policy that will not only have a chance of success but also do so without damaging a national asset, the US Air Force.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Reagan, National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington, D.C.: The White House, January 1987), 26.

<sup>2</sup> William J. Clinton, A National Security Strategy for a Global Age (Washington, D.C.: The White House, December 2000), 16.

<sup>3</sup> George Bush, National Security Strategy of the United States: 1990-1991 (Washington, D.C.: The White House, March 1990), 87-88.

<sup>4</sup> Colin L. Powell, The National Military Strategy of the United States (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, January 1992), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Clinton, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Reagan, 27.

<sup>7</sup> William J. Perry, United States Security Strategy for the Middle East (Washington, D.C. The Pentagon, 3 May 1995), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Powell, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Perry, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Clinton, 58.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, Joint Pub 3-07 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 16 June 1995), III-3.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Graham-Brown, Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 1999), 57.

<sup>14</sup> Department of the Air Force, Military Operations Other Than War, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Air Force, 3 July 2000), 13.

<sup>15</sup> George Tenet, "Worldwide Threat 2001: National Security in a Changing World," 7 February 2001; available from <[http://www.cia.gov/cia/public\\_affairs/speeches/UNCLASWWT\\_02072001.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/UNCLASWWT_02072001.html)>; Internet; accessed 22 February 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, III-4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Graham-Brown, 106.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, "Containing Iraq: A Forgotten War," 25 October 2000; available from <<http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2000/e20001025containing.htm>>; Internet; accessed 25 October 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Graham-Brown, 119-120.

<sup>21</sup> Clinton, 59.

<sup>22</sup> Ofra Bengio, "How Does Saddam Hold On?" in Regional Strategic Appraisals: Selected Readings – AY 2001 Middle East (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2001), 225.

<sup>23</sup> Gerald F. Seib, "Bush's Key in Curbing Iraq: Follow the Money," 21 February 2001; available from [https://ca.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/ebird?doc\\_url=/Feb2001/e20010221money.htm](https://ca.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/ebird?doc_url=/Feb2001/e20010221money.htm); Internet; accessed 21 February 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Bengio, 223.

<sup>25</sup> "Facing up to Iraq," 29 January 2001; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Jan2001/e20010129facing.htm>; Internet; accessed 29 January 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Robin Wright, "Bush May Find His Father's Foe a Formidable Adversary," 17 January 2001; available from <http://www.latimes.com/news/politics/elect2000/pres/news2/20010117/t000004608.html>; Internet; accessed 22 January 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Graham-Brown, 65.

<sup>28</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, "Getting It Backward on Iraq," in Regional Strategic Appraisals: Selected Readings – AY 2001 Middle East (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2001), 214.

<sup>29</sup> Amberin Zaman, "West's Overtures to Saddam Alarm Kurds," 30 November 2000; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Nov2000/e20001130wests.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 December 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Graham-Brown, 72.

<sup>31</sup> Zaman.

<sup>32</sup> Graham-Brown, 119.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>34</sup> Graham-Brown, 109.

<sup>35</sup> Graham-Brown, 204.

<sup>36</sup> Bhushan Bahree, Alexei Barrionuevo and Thaddeus Herrick, "Iraq Says It is Moving Toward Accord on an Oil-Export Issue, and Prices Ease," 5 December 2000; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Dec2000/e20001205iraqsays.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 December 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Betsy Pisik, "Iraqi Trade Doing Fine Despite Sanctions," 25 October 2000; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Oct2000/e20001025iraqi.htm>; Internet; accessed 25 October 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Wright.

<sup>39</sup> Wright.

<sup>40</sup> Susan Sachs, "Saudi Prince Urges Reform, and a Move from Shadow," 4 December 2000; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Dec2000/e20001204saudi.htm>; Internet, accessed 8 December 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Graham-Brown, 118.

<sup>42</sup> Claude Salhani, "Analysis: Saddam Still a Threat," available from [http://www.countrywatch.com/cw\\_wire.asp?vCountry=081&vCOUNTRYNA=Iraq&UID=4](http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_wire.asp?vCountry=081&vCOUNTRYNA=Iraq&UID=4); Internet; accessed 5 March 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Tenet.

<sup>44</sup> Gause, 213.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>46</sup> Graham-Brown, 87-88.

<sup>47</sup> Micah Zenko, "Firing Blanks at the Iraqi Military," 29 March 2001; available from <http://ebird.dtic.mil/Mar2001/e20010330firing.htm>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2001.

<sup>48</sup> Pisik.

<sup>49</sup> "The Cost of Containment," 22 December 98; available from <http://archive.abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/iraqcost981222.html>; Internet; accessed 18 February 2001.

<sup>50</sup> "Iraq Deployment Costs Top \$600 Million," available at <http://www.usatoday.com/news/index/iraq/iraq214.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 March 2001.

<sup>51</sup> Lt. Colonel Stephen Ruehl, student U.S. Army War College, interview by author, 16 February 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Colonel Harold W. Moulton II, 3rd Operations Group Commander, telephone interview by author, 27 Sep 2000.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Goure and Jeffrey M. Ranney, Avoiding the Defense Train Wreck in the New Millenium (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1999), 35.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>56</sup> Personal experience of the author, 81st Fighter Squadron, Chief of Current Operations, Dhahran AB, Saudi Arabia, Mar-Jun 1992.

<sup>57</sup> Clinton, 19.

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