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Environmental Planning, Prevention And Disaster Response In The Arabian Gulf

USCENTCOM's Regional Environmental Security Conference

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Environmental Security: A Keystone for Cooperative Action

Environmental problems exacerbated by natural or man-made events can contribute to regional instability and conflict. Such environmental security related disasters hinder economic progress, displace populations, and facilitate the growth of undesirable elements and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Failure to respond to these events in a coordinated, timely and effective manner impacts a governments legitimacy and its ability to govern and function. For these reasons environmental security initiatives are key security cooperation vehicles for the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM). Over the past three years USCENTCOM has conducted four conferences in its area of responsibility. Two Central Asia conferences established the relationships that allowed access to the bases required to fight the war against terrorism. In the Arabian Gulf region environmental security efforts complement USCENTCOM's Cooperative Defense Initiative (CDI) activities, and offer a valuable venue for broadening regional security cooperation.

The nations of the Arabian Gulf Region have a special responsibility beyond the local and regional benefits of environmental security, because the security of this region is essential to the continued developmental capacity of much of the rest of the world. Successful efforts to prevent, or if necessary, to effectively respond to natural or man-made disasters in this region are of global concern. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States first addressed these responsibilities at the initial Arabian Gulf Environmental Security Conference conducted in Muscat, Oman in April 2000. This conference identified major concerns and actions perceived as likely to impact military activities in the Arabian Gulf region. Using these identified concerns as focus points, the Qatari Armed Forces and USCENTCOM, with assistance from the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment (DUSD (I&E)), the National Defense University's Near East-South Asia Center for



MG Al-Attia, Chief of Staff, Qatar Armed Forces, Opens the Conference.

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Strategic Studies (NESA), and the U.S. Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership (USAWC/CSL) conducted the second GCC-U.S. Environmental Security Conference, *Environmental Planning, Prevention And Disaster Response In The Arabian Gulf*, September 15-18, 2002 in Doha, Qatar. Attended by delegations from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan, this event supported the pillars of the new national security strategy: strengthening alliances to defeat global terrorism; deterring WMD threats; and developing agendas for cooperative action.

Developing the Agenda for Cooperative Action

It was the goal of this conference to design a framework for a regional approach to environmental disaster prevention and response and put in place a long-term, sustainable process for achieving a regional capability. To achieve the desired endstate five workshops were convened to identify the specific actions required to implement the major recommendations of the April 2000 conference (Figure 1), and to look in detail at managing the health and disease consequences of intentional and accidental environmental events.

“The Role of the Armed Forces in Environmental Security” April 16-17, 2000, Muscat Oman	
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	
1	Arrive at consensus on a unified definition of the concept of ES and it’s relevant aspects
2	Intensified efforts to exchange “environmental intelligence” and “lessons-learned” from our collective U.S. and GCC experiences.
3	Establish a regional monitoring and warning center to notify the national centers in order to help coordinate relief efforts
4	Invite Civil authorities from the US and GCC member states who are involved with the preservation of environment to future seminars.
5	Organization of a follow-on seminar designed specifically to address issues of technology development for environmental security planning and enhanced mil-to-mil collaboration in technology R&D, weapons acquisition, and table-top command-and-control exercises, and to discuss the proposals and recommendations advanced at the Environmental Security Seminar in Oman.
6	Develop specific programs for U.S. – GCC environmental security cooperation tailored to the needs of the Gulf States.

Figure 1. Muscat, Oman April 2000 Conference Recommendations.

In order to provide the background essential for meaningful workshop discussions, moderated panels reviewed the prior environmental security work in the Gulf, and looked at some potential risk scenarios against the threats identified by the conferees at the April 2000 Oman Environmental Security Conference. Building on this foundation, the conferees explored in detail, techniques and technologies available to assist in regional monitoring, warning, and information exchange, and the requirements for interagency and multilateral cooperation in successfully addressing disaster prevention, response, and other environmental security interests. These panels included experts from the GCC, Jordan, Turkey, the United Nations, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and directly addressed the challenges of preventing and responding to environmental disasters, including chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear events in the Arabian Gulf region.

Building a Regional Capability Framework

To develop a regional framework for environmental disaster prevention and response, conference participants addressed critical environmental security issues in five workshops that were formed under the following charters:

- Defining Environmental Security And Setting Regional Approach Objectives

- Environmental Security Intelligence, Detection, And Information Sharing
- Regional Center/ Command And Control
- Regional Training And Exercises
- Managing Health And Disease Consequences

The results of the workshop deliberations are summarized below:

Defining Environmental Security and Setting Regional Approach Objectives

Armed with a consensus working definition of environmental security (Figure 2), an effective program requires three major actions: first, that the Environmental Committee of the Gulf Cooperation Council be focal point for coordinating regional environmental security approaches; second, that the Gulf nations establish the foundation for a sustainable environmental security program by maintaining continuity and building capacity and expertise by developing a core group of environmental security experts both in their militaries and their civilian agencies; and, finally, that momentum is maintained by convening a GCC-US working group to set objectives and agenda for a follow on conference.

Environmental Security Intelligence, Detection, and Information Sharing

To achieve the necessary consensus and identify existing and required organizational mechanisms for sharing information GCC countries must conduct studies to refine and prioritize environmental threats, and then establish the required network between nations to share this vital information.

Regional Center/ Command and Control

The key mechanism for putting in place a long-term, sustainable process is the establishment of a regional interagency response coordination center for preventing and responding to natural and manmade disasters and to share operational information. It should be the goal to obtain approval of funding for establishment of the regional center at the 2003 GCC Summit.

Regional Training and Exercises

Environmental events that may require a military response or military support fit into the growing area of “non-traditional” operations. While many skills learned in traditional military individual and unit-level training are applicable to these “new” missions, there are also specialized skills involved that require additional training. To meet these requirements the GCC must develop regional environmental security contingency plans. With such plans in place it will be possible to identify existing capabilities and shortfalls, and then to program the additional resources, training and exercises required.

Managing Health and Disease Consequences



**GEN Tommy R. Franks,
USCINCCENT, greets Brig Gen
Ali Mohammed Al-Kaabi, Head of
the United Arab Emirates
Delegation.**

Environmental Security A Working Definition

Environmental Security is an integrated proactive approach that ensures the protection, preservation, and restoration of the environment, including air, land, water, biodiversity, natural resources, and people, from natural and man-made disasters that might contribute to instability and conflict.

Figure 2.

The nature of both manmade and naturally occurring health and disease crises is that they do not “respect” national borders. National and regional security can be significantly affected by consequences of intentional or accidental health crises. To respond to this challenge the workshop recommended including Health and Disease Consequence Management in environmental security forums, and proposed convening a Health and Disease Focus Workshop in the spring of 2003 in Jordan to promote a multi-lateral information exchange and network of experts applicable to medical aspects of environmental security.

Establishing a Sustainable Process: The Way Ahead

Taking the workshop products and turning them into a workable plan was the responsibility of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) made up of the heads of the participating delegations. The EXCOM’s role was to develop

recommendations to the GCC Armed Forces and USCENTCOM on ways to enhance environmental security planning, prevention, and disaster response in the Arabian Gulf. The EXCOM identified four necessities required to create the conditions for a long-term, sustainable process for achieving a regional capability: effectively activate the Armed Forces of the GCC Environmental Committee resulting from the Oman Conference; create a larger role for the GCC Secretariat General; increase military-civilian agency cooperation; and schedule follow-on activities that will generate tangible results.

To implement these actions the EXCOM agreed to conduct a third conference, ESC III, within 18 months. Guidance on the processes and substance of the conference will be provided by the EXCOM, which will meet at least two times prior to the event. The first meeting of the EXCOM will occur in 3-4 months and include presentations on the GCC Secretariat's and each country's interagency approach to environmental disaster response. The



Q & A Session on Cooperation between Defense & Other Agencies.

EXCOM agreed on the necessity of establishing a Regional Environmental Security Center based upon a well-defined charter. The Center will: establish procedures for a broad GCC response to any regional environmental crisis; leverage the Eagle Resolve/CDI Coordination Center; and reflect common terms of reference and the approval of national leadership.

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