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POLITICO-MILITARY ASPECTS OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAMS IN THE US CENTRAL COMMAND'S SOUTHWEST ASIA REGION

By

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BACKGROUND

On 1 January 1983, the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), the sixth and newest unified command, officially was established, with its main headquarters at MacDill AFB, Florida. It marked an evolutionary development of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and gave credibility to the President's State of the Union Address of January 1980 wherein he vowed that the United States would do whatever was necessary, to include the use of military force, to protect vital US interests in the Southwest Asia (SWA) region, with particular reference to the oil flow from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

Toward that end, more than a quarter of a million military personnel from all services, plus tactical aircraft, airlift, sealift, and naval carrier battle groups have been earmarked as available to a deployment force to project as rapidly as possible US military power into the region if US interests are threatened. USCENTCOM is and remains, first and foremost, a deterrent force. But if deterrence fails, it will become an instrument of the National Command Authority, operating through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to support national political and military policy in SWA.

DEFINITIONS

"Southwest Asia" has, over the past few years, become an umbrella term to describe geographically and encompass the many countries in the region -- extending from Pakistan/Afghanistan westward to include Egypt (but not North Africa), southward to include the Horn of Africa and Kenya, the entire Arabian Peninsula, and the waters of the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. In the Middle East proper, it includes Jordan and Iraq, but excludes Israel, Lebanon and Syria. (These three countries remain in EUCOM's area.)

For purposes of strategy development, Southwest Asia (SWA) has been referred to as our third "strategic zone," along with Europe and the Pacific regions. Each of these three zones now has a major unified command charged with the responsibility for defending US "vital interests." The geopolitical and strategic importance of SWA cannot be overemphasized, for it links the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is the center for much of the world's commercial and naval sea lines of communication, with the Persian Gulf oil flow the most important part of that traffic. The critical Suez Canal links the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean, but that waterway is viable only so long as the southern terminus of the Red Sea at Bab el-Mandeb is open (and Soviet naval and air facilities are available near this choke point). Bab

el-Mandeb is, in turn, important to both Israel and Jordan for commercial shipping to the South, since it allows water traffic to the ports of Eilat and Aqaba through the Strait of Tiran and the southern end of the Sinai Peninsula. And the Strait of Hormuz, some 20 miles wide between Oman and Iran, is absolutely vital to the Free World's flow of oil from the Persian Gulf.

Focusing on SWA even further, Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf are at the epicenter of the region. All the strategy, planning, training, and other elements of national military policy in the region revolve around access and deployment to the region.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY AND POLICY

Presence is the name of the game, regional presence. US national policy and strategy is best served when there are large, well-equipped and permanently-stationed troops and equipment in a region, such as in Europe (EUCOM) and in the Far East (PACOM). In Southwest Asia, there is no stationing of troops, no host country arrangements, no strong or credible regional presence of a permanent or semi-permanent nature. Regional politics and attitudes preclude the near-term presence of US military forces, particularly as they relate to the overriding Arab-Israeli issues, the Palestinian problem, and Arab suspicions and perceptions of the US-Israeli relationship. An alternative to US in-country regional presence, albeit a less desirable method, is to obtain enroute access rights, limited peacetime contingency use of air and naval facilities, and regular -- and impressive -- deployment and joint training exercises with friendly indigenous military forces.

Toward this end, the United States has signed access agreements allowing for the selected use of designated air and naval facilities in Oman, Kenya, Somalia, and Morocco under certain conditions. Additionally, Egypt has provided verbal assurances for the possible use of selected Egyptian air, ground, and naval facilities in the event of a Soviet incursion into the SWA region. Other agreements and understanding exist between the United States and friendly regional countries, including the long-standing agreement with Bahrain to provide administrative and logistical support for the US Navy's Middle East Force which has operated continuously in the Persian Gulf since 1949. With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980, and at the request of the Saudi government, the United States has operated several E-3A AWACS and refueling tanker aircraft in the Kingdom and is expected to do so for the next several years. In the Indian Ocean, and "over-the-horizon," the United States maintains almost continuous naval patrol with rotating Carrier Battle Groups (CVBGs) -- the so-called "Fifth Fleet." Aside from the peacekeeping forces maintained in the Sinai (the MFO - Multi-National Force and Observers) there is no major US military presence in CENTCOM's area of responsibility.

#### SECURITY ASSISTANCE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF NATIONAL POLICY

While forward deployed forces positioned in strategic locations in the SWA region would be the most visible and credible evidence of US determination to protect vital interests, there is an important element in national military policy and strategy equally valuable: Security Assistance. Our

Security Assistance programs, both worldwide and those centered in SWA, provide friendly nations with the necessary military equipment and training to provide for their own regional defense capabilities while simultaneously meeting our national security objectives. In particular, the military training provided to foreign military personnel -- especially in CONUS -- allows the United States to obtain a long-term benefit in training future senior military and political leaders. In-country Security Assistance Organizations (SAOs), traditionally known as Military Assistance Advisory Groups (MAAGs), operate under a variety of names, including: Offices of Military Cooperation (OMCs), US Military Training Mission (USMTM) in Saudi Arabia, and attache offices. These organizations provide a direct and "up-front" military-to-military relationship with the host military establishment. Sales of US military equipment, such as air defense systems and aircraft, contribute to the desired development of an integrated and interoperable system; this is particularly true for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Collateral benefits include the development of doctrine, tactics, command and control (C<sup>2</sup>), etc., that parallel US systems and thereby immeasurably add to the interoperability of deployed US military forces of CENTCOM.

A brief analysis of US assistance to countries in CENTCOM's Area of Responsibility (AOR), plus that of Israel (which is in EUCOM's AOR), reveals that approximately 75% of all programs (military and economic aid) on a worldwide basis are in the SWA and Middle East regions. Two countries alone -- Israel and Egypt -- receive more than half of all Foreign Military Sales (FMS) credit planned for FY84. Not included in these figures are Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states which are cash customers and, for obvious reasons, are not in need of FMS loans or economic assistance. Saudi Arabia has, over the past 30 years, cumulatively purchased close to \$60 billion in military equipment, construction/infrastructure, and training; this amount includes the \$8½ billion negotiated in 1981-82 for the AWACS/Tanker sale and the "enhancement package" for the F-15 program.

Three countries in the region -- Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel -- comprise the major portion of all US Security Assistance programs; together, these three major recipients presently have "on the books" close to \$17½ billion in on-going FMS, IMET, and cash sales programs. For purposes of this article, the two countries in CENTCOM's AOR, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, will be briefly reviewed for their importance in the overall politico-military strategic interests of the United States. Israel, in EUCOM's AOR, could be the subject of a separate paper.

#### SAUDI ARABIA: "CENTRAL" TO USCENTCOM

As noted earlier, Saudi Arabia's oil wealth and production capabilities, together with its primacy role in the birth and sustenance of the Islamic Faith throughout the Arab and Moslem worlds, is absolutely critical to the Free World's economic viability. Politically, it plays a most important role as financier and facilitator among the Arab states within the overall Arab-Israeli and Palestinian issues. A summary review of present Air Force oriented Saudi programs over the next five years is as follows:

	<u>Billion Dollars</u>
<u>F-5 E/F Program:</u>	
96 aircraft	\$ .3B
Logistics, construction, training & support services	1.4
Air-to-Air missiles	.1
	<u>\$1.8B</u>
<u>F-15 C/D Program:</u>	
60 aircraft + spares	2.5B
Contract maintenance & support	1.1
Facility construction	.7
Conformal Fuel Tanks & Anti-Aircraft Missiles	.2
	<u>\$4.5B</u>
<u>5 AWACS + 6 Tankers Program (Total):</u>	\$3.2B
<u>C<sup>3</sup> and Munitions Program (Total):</u>	\$ .6B
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$10.1B</b>

The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980 provided strong impetus for the later-negotiated AWACS and F-15 "enhancement package" sale to Saudi Arabia. Perhaps no other assistance program created as much controversy in the public press and government-to-government relations, particularly with Israel. This package, which will not become fully effective until the late 1980s, is primarily defensive in character and contains the necessary capabilities for the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) to develop a meaningful air defense system against possible air attacks. Because Saudi Arabia has actively supported and financed much of Iraq's requirements in its continuing war with Iran, the possibility of Iranian retaliation against Saudi Arabia remains high.

Israel, on the other hand, has viewed the sale as a threat to its security, particularly if the AWACS aircraft and the F-15s operate in northwestern quadrant of the Kingdom near the Jordanian borders. It is expected that the system will, when operational, center around the critical Ras Tanura oil fields and distribution terminals on the Persian Gulf. Additionally, it is expected that US training teams will be required for the foreseeable future to assist the Saudis in the technological absorption of the aircraft and C<sup>3</sup> systems.

One of the longer-range collateral benefits of the AWACS/F-15 package is for a desired regional integrated air defense system to include all the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC -- Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman]. Admittedly, this may be an elusive military goal.

Because of its vast wealth and preeminence in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia will continue to be of "vital interest" to the United States and the Free World. It therefore becomes imperative that the United States maintain its "special relationship" with the Saudis, principally through the operation of the US Military Training Mission in country.

## EGYPT: A NEW AND SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Two very significant political events, in 1973 and in 1974, led to a third one (in 1977) and established the United States in a new special relationship with Egypt. The October 1973 War (or Yom Kippur War to the Israelis), with initial Egyptian military victories in breaching the Suez Canal and driving into Israeli-occupied Sinai, provided the Egyptians with a great psychological impetus in their relations with Israel. This move was followed in 1974 with the expulsion of some 15,000 Soviet "advisers" from Egyptian soil. In turn, Sadat felt that he had a new mandate in developing Egypt's political and military future; and the historic journey to Jerusalem in November 1977 became the premier event in the region. That event in turn led to a special trilateral relationship among the United States, Israel, and Egypt, resulting in the March 1979 Peace Treaty, the Camp David Accords, and Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai in April 1982.

The total reliance of Egypt on Soviet-supplied arms over the previous 20 years was at an end. The single most important military requirement was for Egypt to rebuild and restructure its armed forces in all areas, and particularly its air forces and air defense assets. As a result, the reconstitution of the Egyptian Air Force (EAF) from MiGs and Sukhoi aircraft to the F-16 system is at the top of the modernization/reequipping program. From an Air Force perspective only -- and excluding army and air defense assistance -- the present program calls for about \$2.8 billion "on the books" and planned over the few years, as shown below:

20 C-130s	\$ 263M (two have crashed)
35 F-4s	423M (one has crashed)
40 F-16 As/Bs (all delivered)	921M (one has crashed)
40 F-16 Cs/Ds (delivery in 1986)	1212M
TOTAL:	<u>\$2819M</u> = \$2.8B

Egypt desires requisite forces not only to protect its own borders, but also to play a key stabilizing role in the Middle East by aiding its neighbors -- principally Sudan -- against the real and perceived threats emanating from Libya, the Soviet Union, and Iran. Among its aims is the establishment of aircraft and engine licensed production lines to provide inventory aircraft for the EAF and to standardize fighter aircraft among Arab nations in the region. It plans to establish a maintenance facility capable of handling Soviet-built, French, and US fighters from throughout the region. It should also be noted that, while the F-16 program (40 now and 40 later) is important to the EAF, an essential element of the Egyptian Ministry of Defense procurement policy is to diversify the inventory. This includes plans for possible coproduction of a first-line fighter (F-16A, F-20, or Mirage 5); purchase of at least 40 Mirage "2000" now (and an additional 40 later); and the purchase of 80 Chinese-built/assembled F-7s (based upon the MiG 21 design). The latter aircraft, at only about \$3 million per copy, is affordable compared to the expensive F-16. Over the longer-run the EAF hopes to have as many as 160 F-16s in its inventory.

Additional Egyptian Air and Air Defense Forces modernization programs, throughout the decade of the 80s, will reach over \$1 billion. These programs include purchase of Early Warning aircraft (E-2Cs, at about \$700 million), various radars/C<sup>3</sup> systems and studies (\$152 million), and I-Hawk air defense

systems, computerized logistics, and IFF (interrogation friend or foe) systems.

The US Security Assistance mission in Egypt, operating within the embassy as the Office of Military Cooperation, is second in size in CENTCOM's region (after USMTM-Saudi Arabia). It manages four Technical Assistance Field Teams (TAFTs) associated with Air Force programs: for the F-4, C-130, F-16A/B, and the F-16C/D. The OMC operation in country is the only viable presence the United States has from a military perspective and it becomes increasingly important that it remain an effective exponent of military and diplomatic policy in that critical country. Much of CENTCOM's access, deployment, and staging into the region depends on the military cooperation between the United States and Egypt.

### SUMMARY

United States Security Assistance programs in CENTCOM's region are, without a doubt, the most important elements in the overall political and military policies designed to "protect our vital interests" in a clearly strategic part of the world. While smaller Air Force programs have not been reviewed in this article, it would be useful to briefly summarize the present dollar volume of the smaller programs with the larger ones in the region:

<u>CENTCOM Country</u>	<u>Total Air Force Value of Programs (\$ millions)</u>
Saudi Arabia	\$10,126M
Egypt	2,819M
Sudan	126M
Kenya	82M
Oman	79M
Jordan	37M
Somalia	34M
N. Yemen (YAR)*	17M
UAE + Bahrain + Kuwait	20M
CENTCOM TOTAL:	<u>\$13,340M</u>
+ Israel	4,501M
TOTAL REGIONAL:	<u>\$17,841M</u>

\* As an interesting and paranthetical point, North Yemen is one of the few countries in the world with both US and Soviet security assistance programs. The US programs are designed to protect North Yemen against the regular and recurring threats emanating from the PDRY -- the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen -- the only avowedly Arab-Marxist state in the world and totally supported by the USSR. Politics make strange bedfellows.

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