(as well as Pacific) carrier forces, leaving one carrier with the Mediterranean Sixth Fleet, and one Seventh Fleet carrier in the western Pacific.

A case might be made against returning to the year-round deployment of two carriers in the Mediterranean. Recent harassment of U.S. tactical air forces by Libyan aircraft, continuing Soviet deployments in the Mediterranean, and ongoing U.S. commitments to regional friends and allies do appear, however, to justify maintaining the current deployment of one Sixth Fleet carrier battle group. The carrier's vulnerability to a surprise attack from submarines, surface ships, and bombers based in the Soviet Union could be minimized if it operated primarily in the western portions of the Mediterranean Sea.

The United States has 13 large-deck carriers, all of which are needed to support current deployments. These are not sufficient to maintain a carrier on full-time deployment in the Mediterranean, if it is assumed that two carriers in required to deploy in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Recent events in Asia point to a renewed requirement for maintaining a constant presence of sea-based aviation in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Instability in the Persian Gulf region appears to call for continuation of the present deployment of two carriers in the Indian Ocean. 19/ Similarly, a Soviet ground force buildup north of Japan, as well as growing Soviet use of Southeast Asian naval facilities, may require a return to the former deployment pattern of two carriers in the Pacific. 20/

Because ship construction takes several years--and carrier construction consumes the better part of a decade--there is little that the United States can do in the short term to maintain

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19/ An earlier CBO study indicated that at least two carriers would be required to support operations of U.S. projection forces, such as the Rapid Deployment Force. See Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Projection Forces: Requirements, Scenarios, and Options (April 1978), p. 24.

20/ An earlier CBO study pointed out that conditions in the northwest Pacific alone might justify the deployment of two carriers to that region. See Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Naval Forces: The Peacetime Presence Mission (December 1978), pp. 22-23.

a carrier deployment in the Mediterranean without reducing naval force levels in the Indian or Pacific Oceans. One way to maintain NATO's current naval firepower in the Mediterranean in the short term would be to homeport a carrier at a Mediterranean port. Homeporting reduces transit time and permits more carriers on station without increasing the at-sea times of ships' crews. If a carrier were homeported at an allied port in the Mediterranean, a 13-carrier fleet could sustain the full-time forward deployment of a Mediterranean carrier while maintaining current Indian Ocean deployments and permitting the nearly full-time deployment of two carriers in the Pacific. 21/

Homeporting requires allied cooperation, however. There have been no offers for homeporting forthcoming from any of the European allies. Were such an offer made, it would be necessary to provide infrastructure to support the homeporting arrangement for a carrier at a well-developed Mediterranean port. Approximately $650 million would have to be added to the baseline for required military construction costs.

Tactical Aviation Readiness: The Spare Parts Issue

The equipment and materiel shortages arising from the POMCUS program and the availability of naval forces in the Mediterranean are but two limitations that could affect the readiness of U.S. forces to conduct immediate and sustained operations in a major conflict with the Warsaw Pact. A series of related issues affect the readiness of U.S. tactical air forces to conduct their wartime missions.

One such issue concerns the availability of spare parts for Air Force aircraft: How much funding for aviation spare parts is required to support tactical air forces at a high state of readiness?

Recent aircraft availability trends (from fiscal years 1978 to 1980) actually point to an improvement in the percentage of mission-capable Air Force fighter and attack aircraft (see

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21/ The homeporting calculation includes overhaul as part of the deployment cycle. For a discussion of carrier deployment cycles and their calculation, see Ibid., pp. 75-80.

Table 10). 22/ (The "mission-capable rate" refers to the proportion of aircraft available to perform their primary mission.) This improvement, however, appears to be more a product of better management of maintenance resources than of greater availability of spare parts. In the future, additional funding for spare parts might be necessary to permit sustained peacetime tactical air operations at preferred mission-capable rates.

TABLE 10. MISSION-CAPABLE AND NON-MISSION-CAPABLE RATES FOR AIR FORCE TACTICAL AIRCRAFT, FISCAL YEARS 1978-1979 (In percents)

Rate	1978	1979	1980
Mission Capable	57.7	59.2	60.9
Not Mission Capable Because of Supply	6.5	6.6	7.5
Not Mission Capable Because of Maintenance	28.3	25.9	22.8
Not Mission Capable Because of Supply and Maintenance	7.5	8.3	8.8

NOTE: Data for F-4, F-15, F-16, F-111, and A-10 aircraft.

22/ This finding applies to all aircraft types. Mission-capable rates will vary by type, however. Furthermore, shortages in war reserve materiel are not reflected in these rates. Finally, preliminary CBO findings raise the question of the relationship between a recent record of improved maintenance capability and the reported shortfall in experienced personnel. This issue will be explored in a forthcoming CBO study.

CBO has estimated that, beginning in mid-year 1981 and throughout fiscal year 1982, $250 million would have to be added to annual expenditures for Air Force spare parts to achieve the Air Force's peacetime goal of 70 percent mission-capable aircraft by fiscal year 1983. 23/ Because of the lead times involved, it would take about 18 months for the enhanced funding to be reflected fully in mission-capable rates; thus, the mission-capable rates for fiscal years 1981 and 1982 could not be affected by budget decisions regarding spare parts made this year.

The Near-Term Options

The preceding discussion illustrates only some of the many options available to the Congress for improving NATO capabilities in the near term. Table 11 summarizes the costs of these options, which range from $209 million to $14.2 billion above the baseline. Other readiness issues--concerning Navy ships, Army equipment, and Navy and Marine tactical aircraft--as well as questions about the adequacy of current equipment stockpiles for sustained wartime operations might also be considered by the Congress.

Even this brief discussion of near-term alternatives does, however, highlight the importance of an allied approach to solving near-term problems. Only with assistance from its allies is the United States likely to be able to make near-term improvements in NATO forces while also addressing longer-term issues.

LONGER-TERM IMPROVEMENTS FOR NATO: INCREASING GROUND AND MARITIME FORCE LEVELS

The United States' commitment of both ground and maritime forces to NATO is part of an alliance-wide effort to deter an attack by the Warsaw Pact on one or more of NATO's members.

23/ This additional funding would allow the Air Force to terminate its current practice of "borrowing" from war reserve spares kits. If that practice were programmed to continue, additional funding required to achieve the 70 percent goal could drop to about $90 million. To achieve the 70 percent goal in fiscal year 1984 and thereafter would also require additional funding; specific estimates were not available for this report.

TABLE 11. INCREASED COSTS ABOVE THE BASELINE OF VARIOUS NEAR-TERM ENHANCEMENTS FOR NATO-RELATED FORCES, FISCAL YEARS 1982-1986 (In billions of fiscal year 1982 dollars)

Program	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
Full Funding for Four POMCUS divisions a/	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.4	2.9
Add Two Fully Supported U.S.-Based Armored Divisions to Force Structure and Fully Fund Four POMCUS Divisions	3.9	4.1	2.4	1.9	1.9	14.2
Acquire 16 Fast Sealift Ships	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	4.0
Prestock Marine Equipment in:						
Denmark	0.0	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.1	1.5
Norway	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Add Funding for Air Force Spare Parts	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	1.3
Homeport an Aircraft Carrier in the Mediterranean	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.7

a/ Includes prepositioned war reserve stocks and a logistics base in NORTHAG.

NATO's common economic and security interests do not reside solely in the treaty area, however. As recent naval deployments in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean have made clear, shared interests outside the region can lead to a multinational military effort outside NATO's boundaries, even if the alliance remains formally uninvolved. 24/ Nevertheless, the United States

24/ Great Britain has deployed ships in the Arabian Sea; France and Australia have deployed ships in the Indian Ocean.

possesses much of the West's power-projection capability, 25/ and must accept the possibility of having to undertake military operations outside the NATO region with only limited support from its treaty allies.

This factor raises the issue of burden-sharing within the alliance, in light of the significant contribution that the United States also makes to the direct defense of Europe. CBO analyses have found that NATO suffers from shortfalls in both ground and naval force capability beyond those discussed above in connection with the near-term alternatives. The degree to which U.S. resources are devoted to filling those shortfalls will depend to some extent on the additional resources that the NATO allies are prepared to contribute.

Ground Forces

DoD evaluates the capabilities of U.S. and allied ground forces against a threat of 90 Warsaw Pact divisions, and appears to rely on theater nuclear weapons either to deter attacks by larger forces or to neutralize them. As noted earlier, DoD has focused primarily on the need for rapid reinforcement of NATO forces and, therefore, has pressed for full implementation of POMCUS and is also considering the prestocking of Marine equipment in northern Europe. The Department's plans also include some improvements to combat forces, including theater nuclear and conventional ground-force modernization.

None of these improvements would reduce the risks associated with reliance on nuclear weapons to offset Soviet superiority in conventional forces. Furthermore, there is little likelihood that the Pact would confine an attack to a force of 90 divisions. A recent CBO analysis indicated that, if it acted as a bloc, the Warsaw Pact could commit 120 divisions to combat roughly 35 days after it mobilized. 26/

25/ In naval terms, power projection is the launching of sea-based air and ground attacks against enemy targets on-shore.

26/ Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces: Design and Cost Alternatives for NATO and Non-NATO Contingencies, p. xv.

A combination of U.S. and allied initiatives could, however, provide a more robust conventional defense of Europe that would be less reliant upon nuclear weapons to offset Warsaw Pact conventional force superiority. In the near term, NATO could implement a strategy calling for an elastic defense of Western Europe--one that would trade territory for the time needed to establish a defense. Such a defense would require the equivalent of at least six fully supported armored divisions to be added to the NATO ground forces that are likely to be committed to the defense of the Central Region. 27/

In the longer term, NATO could implement a steadfast defense, geared to holding its territory at the East/West German border. This approach would require a still higher level of commitment on the part of the United States and its allies. NATO would add eleven and one-half fully supported divisions to forces that are likely to be committed to operations in Central Europe. Based on the relative size of allied GNPs and other considerations, the U.S. share of this increase would be five divisions.

Adding five divisions would require 115,000 additional troops for U.S. ground forces, including those for necessary support units. In addition, equipment would have to be purchased for the divisions and supporting forces, and a combination of new POMCUS sets and sealift assets would have to be procured to ensure that all five divisions could deploy to Europe within about 30 days of mobilization. The cost of adding five fully supported armored divisions to the U.S. Army structure, together with related expenditures for POMCUS sets and sealift ships, would total $38.9 billion over the five-year period fiscal years 1982-1986 (see Table 12).

Such a program could, of course, prompt a Soviet reaction and a greater Warsaw Pact force buildup. Regardless of Pact reactions, however, the costs of this program underscore the importance of an alliance-wide approach to rectifying the ground force balance in Europe. It is unclear whether the United States would commit funds of this magnitude to ground force augmentation for Europe unless the NATO allies made a commensurate contribution by adding six and one-half divisions to their own combined force structures.

27/ Ibid., pp. 20-21, 79-80.

TABLE 12. INCREASED COSTS ABOVE THE BASELINE OF GROUND FORCE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE U.S. POSTURE IN NATO, FISCAL YEARS 1982-1986 (In billions of fiscal year 1982 dollars)

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
Elastic Defense						
Add two armored divisions	3.9	4.1	2.4	1.9	1.9	14.2
Steadfast Defense						
Add five armored divisions	7.5	8.3	9.1	6.6	7.4	38.9

Naval Force Burden-Sharing

NATO requirements may create a substantial demand for increases in future U.S. shipbuilding programs. 28/ CBO has found that the NATO allies could contribute only 60 to 70 ships for convoy escort duty, since most of their surface escorts would likely be required for missions in local European waters. It is, of course, possible to assume that escort requirements might be quite low. For example, it could be assumed that few escorts would be required for each convoy, or that the Soviet Union would not inflict any losses on convoy escorts. Unless such optimistic assumptions are applied to requirements for defending convoys to Europe in the early days of a war, however, the shortfall in available escorts could exceed 160 ships if the Europeans were to contribute only 70 escorts. 29/

A second set of demands arises from changes in the deployment of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea. Part of these

28/ This discussion draws upon Congressional Budget Office, Shaping the General Purpose Navy of the Eighties: Issues for Fiscal Years 1981-1985 (January 1980), pp. 55-60.

29/ The likely shortfall could range between 101 and 217 ships; the midpoint is 159 ships.

demands, for both convoy protection and Mediterranean naval defenses, could be met by the NATO allies if they expanded their naval modernization efforts. Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands are already committed to major modernization programs that emphasize improvements in ship quality. They and other allies, such as Canada and Denmark, could match their increased ship quality with some additional procurement, especially of convoy escorts. NATO allies could then bear most of the brunt of convoy defense. In addition, if supported by French carriers in the Mediterranean, as well as by additional German and Italian units, the allies could replace some of the Sixth Fleet units recently deployed to the Indian Ocean.

Increased efforts on the part of the NATO allies could have a significant impact on the shape of the U.S. shipbuilding budget. The current program includes funds for the relatively small $280 million FFG-7 guided missile frigate, which, like its counterparts in allied navies, is geared to defensive missions such as convoy escort. The U.S. program includes funds for only one class of large combatant, the $900 million CG-47 AEGIS cruiser, which likewise is geared primarily to defensive missions.

New naval commitments in the Indian Ocean, as well as continuing requirements for major force dispositions in the Pacific, call for a shipbuilding program geared to long-distance projection operations, however. Such a program would require additional major fleet escorts with greater offensive capabilities than the FFG-7, additional amphibious ships, and a variety of support ships, including repair ships and tenders.

A program geared to long-distance projection operations would also call for the construction of three aircraft carriers over the next five years. Two would be required as replacements for two older carriers that will retire by 1990. The third would ensure that, together with the Mediterranean homeporting arrangement noted earlier in this chapter, the United States could maintain five carriers on forward deployments at all times--two in the Indian Ocean, two in the Pacific, and one in the Mediterranean. 30/

30/ Additional aircraft carriers would also hedge against failure to secure a homeporting arrangement, even after an initial commitment to do so. Such a situation developed in the mid-1970s with the proposed homeporting arrangement for Souda Bay in Crete.

The United States could not maintain its current shipbuilding program and meet its additional shipbuilding requirements without a significantly higher budget than has recently been allotted to naval ship construction. If the allies increased their shipbuilding programs in order to assume full responsibility for convoy escort, however, the United States could devote a larger portion of its own shipbuilding resources to constructing other ship types for operations in regions outside NATO where the alliance has common and vital economic interests.

Table 13 sketches a shipbuilding program predicated on this assumption. It indicates that the program would add $16.0 billion to baseline costs over the five-year period fiscal years 1982-1986. It would add 33 ships to the baseline U.S. fleet by 1990, with an emphasis on types designed for power-projection operations at long distances.

The Longer-Term Options

The United States could pursue other longer-term approaches to enhance its capabilities in Europe. Most notable of these would be increases in tactical air force levels. Nevertheless, the preceding discussion again illustrates the important interaction among NATO requirements, allied commitments, and U.S. defense planning and programming. The land and naval force increments outlined above would add $55 billion to baseline costs (see Table 14). Realizing these increments may be critically dependent upon the willingness of the NATO allies to increase their own land and naval force capabilities as well.

RECAPITULATION: HOW MUCH WILL THE NATO ALLIES CONTRIBUTE?

This chapter has outlined only a few of the many issues arising from the U.S. commitment to the defense of NATO. Other issues include theater nuclear force modernization, potential increases in U.S. tactical air force levels, and more rapid modernization of U.S. ground force weapons. Nevertheless, as even the issues discussed in this chapter made clear, the nature and extent of U.S. ground and naval force modernization critically depend on what the allies contribute to NATO's defense. If the allies are to meet the demands for ground and naval forces outlined in the preceding sections of this chapter, they will have to sustain real growth in their total defense budgets. Just the

TABLE 13. CHANGES TO BASELINE SHIPBUILDING PROGRAM RESULTING FROM EMPHASIS ON ENHANCING THE NAVY'S CAPABILITY TO MEET MARITIME THREATS OUTSIDE THE NATO OPERATING AREA, FISCAL YEARS 1982-1986 (In millions of fiscal year 1982 dollars)

	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986		Total	
	Number	Cost	Number	Cost	Number	Cost	Number	Cost	Number	Cost	Number	Cost
Increments to Baseline Force												
CVN a/	1	2,450	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2,450
CV a/	-	-	-	-	1	1,460	-	-	1	1,220	2	2,680
LPH b/	-	-	1	720	1	570	-	-	-	-	2	1,290
LSD-41 b/	-	-	1	360	-	-	1	360	-	-	2	720
SSX c/	-	-	1	170	2	270	4	530	4	530	11	1,500
Attack DD (FFG-7 variant) d/	7	2,470	6	2,110	6	2,110	5	1,770	5	1,770	29	10,230
ADX c/	1	420	1	420	1	420	-	-	-	-	3	1,260
ARX c/	-	-	1	360	1	360	-	-	-	-	2	720
Total Increments	9	5,340	11	4,140	12	5,190	10	2,660	10	3,520	52	20,850
Reductions from Baseline Force												
FFG-7	-4	-1,130	-4	-1,040	-4	-1,040	-4	-1,130	-2	-560	-18	-4,900
Total Shipbuilding Program	5	4,210	7	3,100	8	4,150	5	1,530	8	2,960	33	15,950

NOTE: Costs are for procurement only. See Glossary for description of ship designations.

a/ Assumes that the first carrier will be a nuclear-powered, large-deck carrier, while later variants will be limited to 40,000-ton conventional carriers. The first two carriers are replacements for current ships; the third carrier would increase force levels. An additional $790 million would be required to procure an aircraft wing for the third carrier.

b/ Derived from Option III in Congressional Budget Office, The Marine Corps in the 1980s: Prestocking Proposals, The Rapid Deployment Force, and Other Issues (May 1980), p. 60.

c/ Derived from Option III in Congressional Budget Office, Shaping the General Purpose Navy of the Eighties: Issues for Fiscal Years 1981-1985 (January 1980), p. 115.

d/ Derived from Ibid., with 25 percent cost increment for major modifications of FFG design.

TABLE 14. INCREASED COSTS ABOVE THE BASELINE OF VARIOUS LONGER-TERM ENHANCEMENTS FOR NATO-RELATED FORCES, FISCAL YEARS 1982-1986 (In billions of fiscal year 1982 dollars)

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
Add Five Fully Supported U.S.-Based Armored Divisions to Force Structure	7.5	8.3	9.1	6.6	7.4	38.9
Increase Current Shipbuilding Plan	4.2	3.1	4.2	1.5	3.0	16.0

investment costs of such a program would, over the next five years, require two-thirds of the 3 percent real growth to which the NATO allies are now pledged. 31/ To the extent that the allies have other plans for the 3 percent increase, the investment costs would have to be financed by an even higher growth rate.

31/ Total spending for the non-U.S. NATO allies (including France) in 1980 amounted to $97.9 billion. (See International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-1981 (London, 1980), p. 96. Data for Turkey were available only for 1979 and were inflated to 1980 dollars.) The five-year investment cost of initially equipping the additional six and one-half divisions for NATO forces would be $8.8 billion (in 1980 dollars). A five-year program to construct 160 antisubmarine warfare escorts would cost $20.8 billion, assuming a $130 million cost (1980 dollars) per ship.

Some of the NATO allies are not now even increasing their defense budgets by 3 percent in real terms. Their inability to do so may require some rethinking of the best allocation of U.S. defense resources for NATO, especially in light of growing demands for U.S. military capabilities outside the NATO area. These demands are discussed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER V. GENERAL PURPOSE FORCES: OPERATIONS OUTSIDE THE NATO AREA

During the past year, the Carter Administration devoted increasing attention to requirements for military operations outside the NATO area. This emphasis reflected great concern over the security of free world access to Persian Gulf oil, heightened by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. The centerpiece of the Administration's program for non-NATO contingencies is the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (hereinafter referred to as RDF), an aggregation of Marine and Army divisions, Air Force wings, carrier battle groups, and supporting mobility forces. These forces, totaling some 200,000 active-duty troops, with as many as 100,000 reserves, could be available to the newly designated commander of the RDF.

In principle, the RDF is dedicated to missions anywhere outside the NATO area. In fact, Persian Gulf contingencies would appear to be the most demanding in terms of the speed of response and level of force that might be required, as well as operating distance from the continental United States.

Because access to Persian Gulf oil is also critical to the NATO allies, as well as to Australia and Japan, these nations might be expected to contribute to any efforts that were required in the region. 1/ In fact, Australian, British, and French warships joined U.S. vessels in expanding the Western naval presence in the Indian Ocean during the opening weeks of the Iran-Iraq war. Nonetheless, the potential military requirements of a Persian Gulf contingency imply that the main burden of conducting military operations in that region is likely to fall on the United States.

Any assessment of the role of the RDF in a Persian Gulf contingency, or in operations elsewhere, raises several key questions:

1/ See Dov S. Zakheim, "Towards a Western Approach to the Indian Ocean," Survival (January/February 1980), pp. 7-14; and Dov S. Zakheim, "Of Allies and Access," The Washington Quarterly (Winter 1981).

- What is the scope and cost of the RDF program as proposed by the Department of Defense?
- What additional programs might be required to ensure that the RDF can fulfill its mission successfully?
- How might these programs vary according to the nature of the conflict and the type of force encountered?
- How much would these programs add to baseline costs?

This chapter addresses these questions, beginning with costs of the current RDF program and then turning to alternatives for the near term and longer run.

THE CURRENT RDF PROGRAM: FEW INITIATIVES IN THE BASELINE

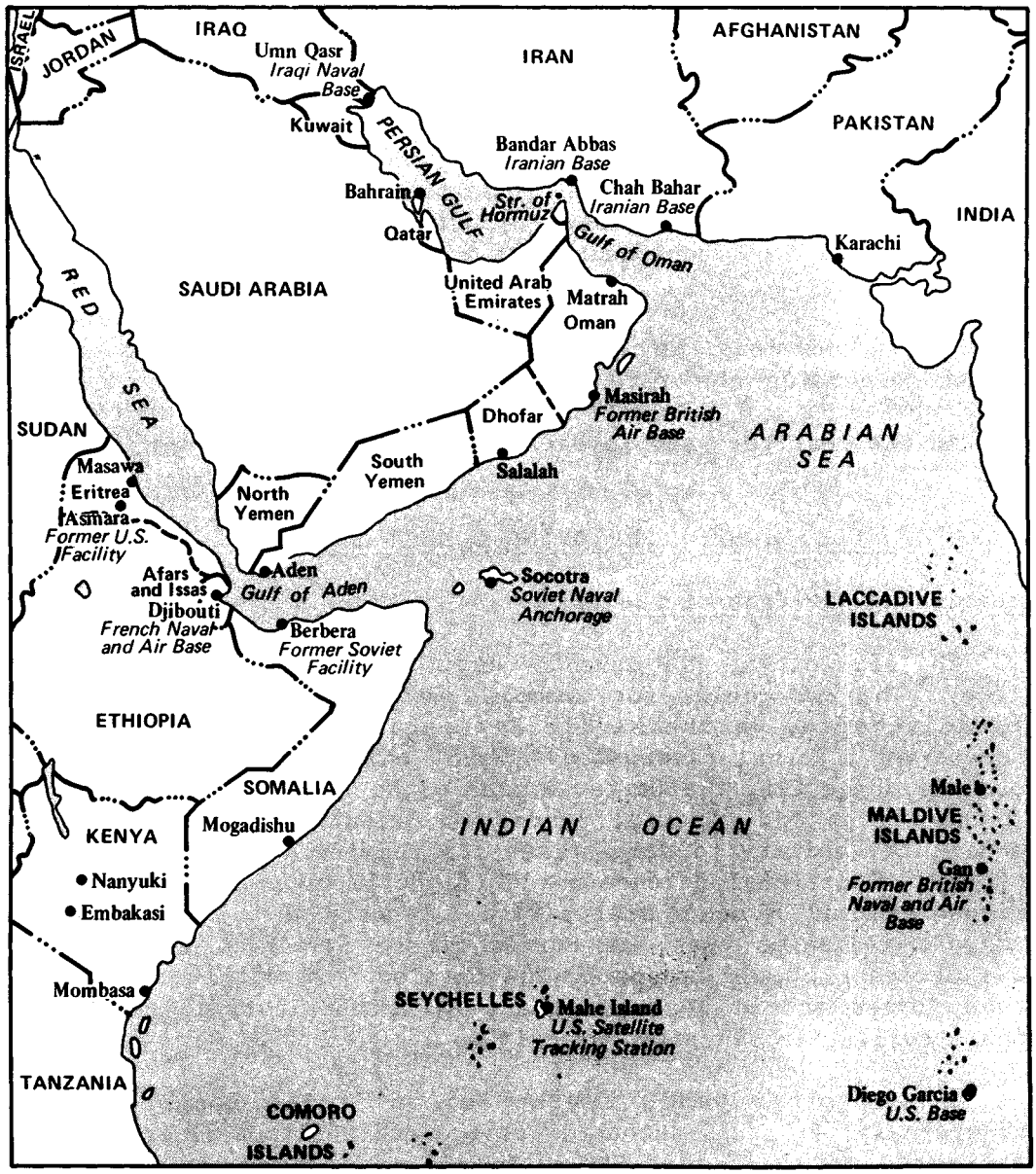
Over the next few years, the RDF—as currently programmed—will involve no force structure additions. The Department of Defense has, however, proposed some new programs to improve the capabilities of U.S. forces in light of RDF mission requirements. These programs, some of which could eventually add to U.S. forces, include:

- Procurement of additional airlift and sealift assets;
- Acquisition of new weapons for forces that are earmarked for operations in non-NATO areas;
- Funding of military operations in the Indian Ocean at a tempo higher than peacetime operations elsewhere; and
- Negotiation of access rights to bases in the Persian Gulf region and extensive military construction to improve them.

Most of the expenditures related to these initiatives represent pay and allowances for personnel and operating costs for equipment already in the U.S. forces. The only added costs would be for research and development; military construction on the Indian Ocean atoll of Diego Garcia and at facilities provided by Oman, Somalia, and Kenya (see Figure 5); and procurement of some new systems, primarily a new class of cargo ships (termed T-AKX). These added costs amount to about $2.7 billion in fiscal years 1982-1986.

Figure 5.

The Indian Ocean Region



SOURCE: Adapted from Dale H. Tahtinen, *Arms in the Indian Ocean: Interests and Challenges* (Washington,D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977).

The DoD program is quite limited in scope. It is focused almost solely on increasing the speed with which forces could be moved to the Middle East, although DoD has not clarified the nature of RDF missions that might justify the program's heavy emphasis on speed of deployment. As noted earlier, the program provides for no increases in active or support troop levels. It appears to assume that local "host" nations will make their facilities available in a crisis. The program also does not address the demands of landing operations that might have to be conducted in the face of local opposition. Nor does it provide for any specialized equipment that might be required for Persian Gulf operations.

These questions suggest that the Congress faces important issues concerning the role and nature of the RDF. Answers to these questions could significantly affect the costs of the RDF both in the near term and in the longer run.

NEAR-TERM DECISIONS: IMPROVING COMBAT SUPPORT AND FIREPOWER

Determining the Size of the RDF

The size of the RDF depends on whom the force is expected to fight. The RDF could, for example, be called upon to support a friendly regime in the Middle East against external regional threats or internal dissension. With "collective security" as a possible objective, the United States might provide only a portion of the troops and materiel needed to defend an ally, but would require the ability to demonstrate its commitment quickly to that country. Additional defense forces might be supplied by the ally in question and by other states with interests in the region. CBO analysis indicates that, at current force levels, the RDF could move at least 20,000 troops to the Persian Gulf within two weeks. These forces should be an adequate U.S. contribution to satisfy such a collective security objective. 2/

On the other hand, if the United States sought to act unilaterally, it could encounter severe difficulties if the threat were posed by the Soviet Union in an area contiguous to Soviet

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2/ See Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces: Design and Cost Alternatives for NATO and Non-NATO Contingencies (December 1980), p. 47.

borders. The United States could unilaterally counter Soviet operations against states not bordering the Soviet Union, but would require substantial combat forces with appropriate additional firepower and support units. 3/

The current DoD program does not provide the additional armored firepower and combat suppport required for an RDF operation against Soviet forces or, in some circumstances, against the armored forces of leading regional powers. Deficiencies in armored firepower are most marked with respect to the Marine Corps, which, as currently structured, remains primarily a foot-infantry force, deriving considerable fire support from its integrated air wings. Both the Marine Corps and the Army have shortfalls in combat support.

Added Combat Support

The RDF could require as many as 60,000 to 70,000 additional support troops. 4/ These forces could be acquired in the next several years if the Marine Corps and the Army were expanded to provide the necessary spaces for them. Aside from the costs of recruiting and paying these additional personnel, acquiring equipment for them would require an additional $2.7 billion.

The United States could avoid these added costs if the support units were transferred from forces now dedicated to NATO. Reducing NATO forces would not, however, appear consistent with the assumption that the RDF might have to confront Soviet forces. In that case, the United States presumably would wish to maintain its NATO forces in a high state of readiness, in the event that a Persian Gulf conflict led to a NATO/Warsaw Pact war.

Added Firepower

Providing additional firepower for the RDF in the next five years is a more difficult task than providing added combat support. The United States has no light armored vehicles currently in production. Yet the Marine Corps might need such a vehicle

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3/ Ibid., pp. xix-xx.

4/ Ibid., p. xx.

because it is relatively easy to transport and provides some protection and firepower once in place. Research and development on lightweight vehicles--both on antitank systems and armored personnel carriers--could be accelerated, however. Such vehicles would be compatible with Marine heavy-lift helicopters and new landing craft, and would enhance Marine tactical and battlefield mobility as well as firepower. They would also enable the airlift fleet to deliver firepower more quickly to the Middle East. For example, the Army's new XM-1 tank can be lifted only by the C-5, and it can carry only one XM-1 at a time. On the other hand, the C-5 could lift six lightweight armored vehicles, and even the smaller C-130 transport could lift one of them.

If research and development for these vehicles were accelerated, they could be introduced into the Marine Corps by 1984. 5/ In the interim, the Marines could acquire foreign-built light armored vehicles, to enable them to train and develop new tactics for the employment of such systems in the immediate future. 6/ A five-year program combining both acquisition of foreign-built systems and accelerated development and procurement of a U.S.-made system would add $420 million to baseline costs.

Composition of the RDF

The current DoD program appears to assume the unopposed entry of forces by air and sea into the Persian Gulf region. Such an assumption might not be warranted under all circumstances, however, particularly in a scenario involving unilateral U.S. operations against a regional adversary or the Soviet Union. Altering this assumption could affect which service provides the RDF's initial ground force component.

The Congress may reason that the most likely contingencies would involve operations in which facilities of friendly host

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5/ See Congressional Budget Office, The Marine Corps in the 1980s: Prestocking Proposals, the Rapid Deployment Force, and Other Issues (May 1980), p. 60.

6/ Foreign-built systems might be found to meet all Marine Corps requirements. In that case, procuring them might be a faster and less expensive alternative to developing a new U.S.-built vehicle.

nations might not be immediately available to U.S. forces. Under such conditions, the initial ground force element in any Persian Gulf operation would probably be the Marines. The Marines train for amphibious assault against an entrenched opposition and do not initially require land-based facilities for their operations.

A decision to emphasize amphibious operations would have long-term implications for the amphibious shipbuilding program, as discussed in the next section. It would also reinforce arguments in favor of near-term programs to provide light armored vehicles for the Marine Corps. It should be noted, however, that, even if the Marines were to provide the bulk of initial deploying RDF units, the Army would have to provide follow-on forces in a major confrontation with the Soviet Union in the Middle East. As a result, combat support requirements for the RDF must relate to the needs of both the Marine Corps and the Army.

The costs of the near-term improvements discussed above are shown in Table 16 at the end of this chapter.

LONGER-TERM ISSUES: TAILORING MOBILITY INVESTMENT PROGRAMS TO REQUIREMENTS

The near-term RDF improvement issues focus on providing additional firepower and combat support. Yet the United States must also be able to transport its forces and equipment to distant areas like the Persian Gulf, where they might have to land against opposition. Improvements in mobility can only take place over the longer term, since aircraft and ship procurement usually requires the better part of a decade.

While the United States could move small units quickly, transporting units of division size or larger could consume several weeks, even using all available aircraft. 7/ If the planes in the Civil Reserve Air Fleet were not available, even more time would be required. For this reason, DoD has proposed to augment current airlift capabilities with a new transport aircraft, designated CX (for Cargo Experimental), and to construct a new class of cargo ships to support augmented levels of equip-

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7/ Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Airlift Forces: Enhancement Alternatives for NATO and Non-NATO Contingencies (April 1979), p. 57.