

**MOVING THE FORCE:  
*Desert Storm and Beyond***

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## 4. MOVING THE FORCE IN FUTURE CONFLICTS

*Preparation for the preservation of our freedom must come in peacetime, and we must pay for it in money and inconvenience. The alternative is payment in blood and extinction.*

General Brehon Somervell  
U.S. Army Services Commander, World War II

Had Saddam Hussein been a good military tactician, he could have manipulated our weaknesses and caused a prolonged, costly battle much longer than the 3-day routing. Future enemies need only exploit the lessons of the Gulf War to disrupt America's deployment and sustainment by:

- Capturing, disrupting, or destroying rival ports to slow or eliminate U.S. ability to close and sustain equipment and forces.
- Mining harbors to prevent amphibious assaults or over-the-shore cargo discharge, taking advantage of American weakness in mine clearing. (At sea, the lack of U.S. minesweeping ships may have been a factor in our decision not to stage an amphibious landing into Kuwait.)<sup>1</sup>
- Interdicting sea and air lanes to bottle up the movement flow of U.S. forces and equipment. (Iran recently bought three Russian submarines, with an option to buy two more).
- Employing nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons on ports and main supply routes.
- Taking first strike action and follow through, before the United States can deploy forces.
- Employing terrorism or other means to destroy or disrupt

key American ports, intermediate staging bases and coalition ports.

*To avoid these pitfalls*, U.S. strategy will have to face these new realities:

- Geography separates America from most of our vital interests by long distances over water, requiring a viable means of long-range strategic lift.

- Crisis response strategy requires more strategic lift that can quickly surge, and the ability to place necessary war materials nearer to a potential battlefield. We had to rely on others during the Gulf War; their assistance may not be available the next time around.

- The United States will never have enough lift for all scenarios, but the U.S. role on the world stage demands sufficient capability to project a decisive force to at least two regional flashpoints in time to ensure success.

- To save cost and lives, we will need to go with enough force to get the job done quickly.

- The defense budget will continue to shrink.

- Pressure will increase to find economies of scale to save acquisition and transportation costs.

- Few regional scenarios have sufficient infrastructure to support U.S. force requirements.

- The value of information, communication and space systems will play a critical role in optimizing the global transportation network.

- Americans will work more closely with our allies in intervention operations.

- Increasing the distances forces must travel increases the transportation requirement. As forward presence decreases, the likelihood of strategic deployment from the continental United States increases. Surge lift—quickly available transport—will thus take on ever increasing importance.

- It is not economical for the civilian transport industry to maintain a capacity to move massive amounts of heavy military equipment—a requirement without commercial application.

America's next conflict may not call for the full mobilization of the armed forces. So, unlike the Gulf War, we cannot expect to rely so heavily upon commercial transportation to support future deployments. Only increased organic military transport can meet this challenge.<sup>2</sup>

- The capability to deploy sufficient forces quickly provides an early response to crisis. This early response will reduce the forces required later, when more lift options may be available to deploy them.<sup>3</sup>

- The duplicate supply systems among the Army, Navy Air Force and Marines complicated and slowed the movement flow. Such inefficiencies and redundancies, if not corrected, will plague us again in future operations, at the expense of timely deployment and effective sustainment.

- Our *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* success, as in past conflicts, was accompanied by inefficient logistical, particularly movement, practices. Too much was accomplished by placing a terrific strain on a tenuous movement system. Not enough can be attributed to sound organization and efficient procedures.

Compared to the Cold War model, there is a paradigm shift in the type of conflict we can expect to encounter. This commands a major change in our framework for moving and sustaining forces, and the mobility tools we will use to project that power. Transportation has been, perhaps, the most frequently limiting factor of modern war, including our recent endeavor in the Persian Gulf. There's always been the hope that on the day of reckoning everything would somehow come together. As national security strategy evolves, the United States will have less warning time to react to regional flashpoints. America will rely more acutely than ever upon viable strategic and operational mobility.

## **THE AFTERGLOW OF *DESERT STORM***

The basis of this nation's defense—a U.S.-Soviet confrontation—has disappeared. In its place is a host of potential regional flashpoints, and domestic agendas throughout Europe

and in the United States have altered previous priorities.

In the afterglow of *Desert Storm*, the United States may be lulled into a false sense of security, but the reasons that brought us together will rarely exist in the future. Our regional military alliances, no longer challenged by the Soviet threat, may fail to provide a reliable basis for strength, and the United States should prepare to act alone when vital national interests are at stake.

In any regional scenario requiring the intervention of a tailored military force, the key to eventual success is the ability to arrive in a logistically immature theater before hostile forces and to self-sustain for a reasonable period and fight—or make peace—immediately. But the Gulf war was unlike past conflicts, in which the United States had time to organize adequate support bases or had the convenience of established regional presence, the Gulf War was different. Although the region had been the focus of strategic planning since the fall of the Shah of Iran 1979, there was no American presence to speak of. The Gulf War model probably more closely resembles what the United States can expect in future conflict, as forward basing decreases. To that end, the times ahead will not be business as usual:

- American forces will need to be more mobile, flexible, lethal, and sustainable from long distances, in moving past a global strategy that focused on *containment* to one of rapid response to a regional crisis. While the threat may be harder to define, the essential elements of global reach are not. Smart planning and efficient spending can overcome the challenge of achieving these capabilities, within the bounds of decreasing budgets, reduced force levels, and shrinking forward basing.

- To break the traditional military spending mold, the focus of the national power lens should be fixed on potential economic gains, not just military threats. Uniquely among the elements of mobilization, strengthening military movement capacity directly contributes to the well-being of the nation. Renewing infrastructure—highways, ports, and railheads—increasing manufacturing—ships, aircraft, and trucks—and exploiting transportation technology, all create jobs and help grow our

nation's economy.

- Preparations should continually improve ways to save transportation, acquire additional lift platforms where absolutely necessary, and adopt techniques to lighten the cargo load. In these ways we could also reduce inventories—reaping tremendous procurement and warehousing costs savings. This will require a new approach to integrate disparate elements into a balanced and unified mobility strategy. We cannot afford to relearn the logistical lessons of the past—including *Desert Storm*—by repeating the same mistakes through omission or commission. The work of Gulf War logisticians—particularly transporters—was truly miraculous. But we must not continue to flounder in crisis, as we have historically done. We can no longer afford it.

A security strategy based on our ability to respond quickly to any regional crisis relies heavily on rapid global reach for its viability. The growing military threat posed by many developing nations would probably exceed current U.S. mobility power, especially if the United States faced two regional flashpoints simultaneously. (Such was the conclusion reached by the *Naval Logistics 2001 Wargame* conducted in January 1994.) America must bridge this requirement-capability gap to enable intervention where and when necessary—while saving cost, time, and potential casualties.

## **IMPROVING STRATEGIC SURGE LIFT AND PRE-POSITIONING CAPABILITY**

Limited strategic lift and pre-positioning constrain the number of forces that U.S. leaders can send to a crisis area quickly. Of the power that theater commanders need most, strategic lift ranks at or near the top of their critical items list. Because the United States will probably not have enough forces immediately on the scene of future conflicts or other nontraditional missions, strategic lift will determine the scope and duration of our commitment. This dictates balanced intertheater mobility—with increased forward deployed equipment and supplies, additional fast sealift capacity, aircraft that can operate from unprepared sites, and