
Middle East

Persian Gulf a prime target for a restructured NATO

by Judith Wyer

The May 7 NATO communiqué, in its call for out-of-area deployments by members of the alliance, designated Southwest Asia (the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean region) as NATO's number-one target. Since 1978, Britain, the mastermind of the plan, and the Carter administration began to lay the ground for this policy with the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force.

Today Secretary of State Alexander Haig is the point man inside the Reagan administration for the same policy, which he promoted in his former capacity as Supreme Allied Commander-Europe of NATO. The installation of Ayatollah Khomeini during the early months of 1979 was integral to creating the pretext for the NATO move into the region.

Now, London and its allies within the State Department and the Pentagon are providing support—including unlimited arms—to Iran, to ensure what they call a “perceived victory by Ayatollah Khomeini over Iraq” in the 20-month-old Gulf war. According to the Anglo-American calculation, an Iraqi defeat will pave the way for upheavals in the Gulf region, upheavals which will justify NATO intervention and permanent military bases under the pretext of protecting oil flows.

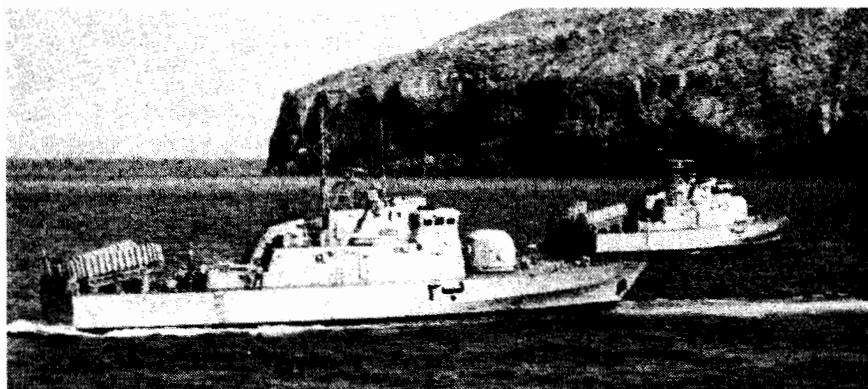
Behind the crisis slated for Southwest Asia is London's drive to recolonize the so-called East of Suez region, using the U.S. military as its colonial gendarme, just as Britain aims to do in the Falkland Islands. An

Egyptian military attaché in Europe told *EIR* bluntly that Britain “wants not only to recolonize the Falklands, but also the Mideast . . . they want to go back into the Persian Gulf and send their armies and navies there as they did in the days of the British Empire.” The source concluded that Britain's design “is based on the worst possible hypocrisy, since they cry about self-determination for the Falklanders but reject it for the Palestinians.”

The stakes in the Gulf war

Iraq, the only Arab Gulf state with a strong military, has been at war with Khomeini's dictatorship to defend not only its borders from Khomeini's drive to export the revolution, but the sovereignty of Iraq's defenseless Gulf neighbors.

According to State Department and Pentagon estimates, to achieve a “perceived” defeat of Saddam Hussein by Iran, an Iranian invasion of Iraq may not be necessary. Forcing Iraq to accept terms of a peace agreement based on the “principles of Islam” for which the fascist Khomeini regime stands would be sufficient. London sources say that the new mediator in the war, Taleb Ibrahimi, who replaced the Algerian Foreign Minister Mohammed ben Yahia who died when his plane was shot down en route to Iran to negotiate a truce at the beginning of May, is thought to be closer to Khomeini's outlook. Ibrahimi is a member of the



Patrol boats from Oman's navy police the Strait of Hormuz.



After an Iranian bombing attack on Baghdad.

NATO-created Club of Rome, which has been active through European-Islamic front groups like Islam and the West in promoting an Islamic fundamentalist bloc to replace the national sovereignty of the states of the Muslim world.

London and its allies in the United States estimate that once the fiercely nationalistic regime of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is eliminated, the war will be clear for a new level of manufactured crises, including a new eruption of a conflict involving North and South Yemen and Oman, along with Islamic uprisings in the tiny Gulf emirates of Bahrain and Kuwait. Once such crises jeopardize oil flows, the Anglo-American Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), will move into pre-designated bases as an arm of NATO and take control of vital sea lanes through the Red Sea and the Gulf, the choke points for world oil flows.

Britain, the United States, and Israel have maintained secret supply lines of sophisticated arms and spare parts to Iran since the beginning of the war.

Since Iran began a new offensive against Iraq on April 30, it has employed ultra-sophisticated equipment for the first time, including Cobra helicopter gunships which had been grounded due to lack of spare parts. Using arms which had been supplied by the United States to the Shah's regime, Khomeini is now on the verge of defeating Iraq and setting the entire Gulf on fire with NATO's blessings.

Secret Camp David clause

Secret clauses in the 1978 Camp David agreement not only provide for future NATO presence in the Gulf, but also anticipate the consolidation of a regionwide military pact, known as the Mideast Treaty Organiza-

tion (METO), as an adjunct of NATO. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is in turn to be the seed crystal for METO. According to one State Department official, Islam will provide the ideological basis for such a regionwide alliance in order to supersede the sovereignty of the member states.

The most aggressive advocate of linking the two-year-old GCC, a loose military alliance of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman to NATO, is the backward Sultanate of Oman—whose meager military is under the command of crack British Special Air Services (SAS) commandos. Oman is thought to be a key party to ongoing secret talks between NATO and the GCC.

Since the days of John Foster Dulles, the first to attempt NATO control over Southwest Asia were Henry Kissinger and his utopian cohort, James Schlesinger, who initiated the build-up of the military arsenal and Rapid Deployment Force depot on Diego Garcia, an island located 1,000 miles south of India in the Indian Ocean shortly after the 1973 war between Israel and the Arabs.

The architects of the scheme are to be found in London after Britain's defeat in the 1956 Suez crisis. The quondam British Defense Minister, Duncan Sandys, developed a doctrine later tested by the British Royal Marines in the 1960s in Kuwait and the Yemens: a mobile strike force to preserve a neo-colonial order in the developing sector. With limited forces of her own, Britain assigned the United States to become the backbone of such a force.

The British mode

Shortly after Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger

took office, he declared that the Rapid Deployment Force would be modeled on the British Special Air Service. A consultant to Weinberger's Defense Department says that the RDF would not be able to move into the Gulf effectively without the guidance of the British SAS, "who really know the lay of the land from Britain's old colonial days."

Since the RDF came into being under Carter's Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Washington and London have conducted annual strategy sessions on military posture toward Southwest Asia. Both the future RDF bases and the countries designated to play a role in METO are contiguous to vital choke points for sea lanes.

Since 1978 the U.S. government has quietly spent billions building up infrastructure to support the mobile force. One of the first moves taken jointly by the United States and Britain was to lengthen the runways of Diego Garcia (the United Kingdom holds sovereignty over the island and leased base rights to the United States there after the 1973 war).

Now the island can support loaded B-52s, the bomber best suited for carrying tactical nuclear warheads. Today Diego Garcia supports a fleet of air-conditioned cruisers loaded with tanks and other heavy equipment for the RDF.

In 1982 the U.S. allocated for nearly \$400 million

for development of infrastructure for facilities in Egypt, Oman, Somalia, and Kenya, not including Diego Garcia. None of these countries except Oman has yet agreed to permanent base rights; but the crises on the drawing boards are expected to force them into providing base facilities in the future.

The Soviet question mark

With Israeli's return to Egypt of the last third of the Sinai on April 25, a U.S.-lead multinational force deployed into the Sinai Israeli-evacuated bases as a peacekeeping force under the Camp David accords. The U.S.S.R. has responded sharply, calling that deployment the first step in the buildup in the region. Moscow is putting pressure on Turkey to stay away from the RDF, since Turkey, a NATO member, is a key link to the Middle East. And on May 6, the day of the NATO communiqué, *Pravda* issued an attack on Pakistani dictator Zia ul-Haq for his flirtations with NATO in opening up to the RDF the Gudar base near the mouth of the Gulf.

Moreover, the Soviets have reportedly blasted U.S.-Chinese cooperation in a scheme to build up Oman as a stronghold of an anti-Soviet NATO bloc on its southern flank. During the projected October Brezhnev-Reagan meeting, there is expected to be some tough bargaining on the Mideast.

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