

U.S. Persian Gulf policy: a chance for a change

by Paul Goldstein

“There is a major opportunity in the Persian Gulf for the United States to begin a process of reversing the disastrous consequences of the previous Iran policy, as a result of the *USS Stark* tragedy. Defense Secretary Weinberger is trying to ignite a shift in the overall U.S. military posture, albeit in a piecemeal fashion.” This statement by a high-ranking military official reflects both hope and anxiety about the newly fashioned U.S. posture in the Persian Gulf.

The hope is based upon some sound strategic and military assumptions which Weinberger and the President have put forward concerning the Persian Gulf situation.

First: the attempt to reverse the decline of U.S. power and prestige in the region since the fall of the Shah of Iran and the removal of several U.S. bases in the region in 1974, is central to the present U.S. deployment. Prior to the shift in U.S. deployment strategy, the moderate Arab nations led by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were demanding a greater U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf.

Arab governments in the region were not only upset with the Iran policy formulated by the illegal U.S. “parallel government” that operated under the code name of “Project Democracy,” now being exposed in the Irangate scandal; they had been actively pursuing contacts with the Russian government both officially and unofficially, to the exclusion of U.S. policy interests. The long-held Russian imperial dream of controlling the Persian Gulf was becoming a reality. Moreover, the State Department, under the rubric of “Regional Matters,” had negotiated with its Russian counterparts a deal for escorting Kuwaiti ships by *both* superpowers. This gave legitimacy to the Russian naval presence in the Persian Gulf—something the Russian Empire had never achieved.

Therefore, it became incumbent upon the patriotic faction of the Reagan administration to foster a change in the U.S.

posture in the region which would assure our allies in Europe and Japan that the United States would protect the interests of the West, not just-perceived interests of the United States and the Russian Empire. This viewpoint is supported by the fact that the United States gets only 7% of its oil from the region, while Western Europe and Japan are far more dependent on Gulf oil. The commitment to prevent a Russian-controlled chokepoint in the Gulf is thus a move to prevent the decoupling of the United States and Western Europe.

Second: as a result of the *USS Stark* tragedy, the Navy Command is no longer free to determine U.S. global strategic posture based upon assumptions for war-fighting which are not only unrealistic, but fail to grasp the nature of the potential strategic conflict with the Russian Empire’s “high-intensity irregular warfare” policy, and as a sub-feature of that, its low-intensity conflict with Russian surrogate forces within the Persian Gulf. The Iraqi jet which scored a direct hit on the *USS Stark* by means of an Exocet missile, demonstrated that “Stage 3 alert status” is wholly inadequate for the present strategic situation. That alert status had been the standing orders given by the previous Navy Secretary John Lehman, whose view of U.S. naval deployment was based on the Theodore Roosevelt model of “gunboat diplomacy” vis-à-vis the Third World—not on meeting the Russian challenge. This is one of the reasons for the Stage 3 alert status in a war zone where the danger to U.S. forces is underplayed, because our mighty Navy would never be attacked, at least not successfully, by Third World nations. Lehman was a staunch ally of the “Project Democracy” swindlers in the Reagan administration.

With the shift in the military-naval configuration in the Persian Gulf, the Navy will now operate in line with the command structure of the U.S. Central Command based in

Oman. The Navy will take the point, backed up by U.S. air bases in Bahrain and a future air base being negotiated in Saudi Arabia. Although the Saudis will publicly deny this, U.S. intelligence reported that the Saudis enthusiastically back the plan. The reestablishing of U.S. bases, both naval and air, and the creation of new ones, is one of the centerpieces of the U.S. posture. This will shift the emphasis away from the 600-ship Navy policy of Lehman and move it closer to former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Watkins's idea of developing deep-water ports around the key global chokepoints.

Third: for the first time since the ascension of Saddam Hussein to power in Iraq, the U.S. military investigating team led by Admiral Rogers has been permitted access to high-level Iraqi military officials. The public apology to the United States by Saddam Hussein represents a break in his public posture of never admitting a mistake, and signals willingness to open up channels to the Iraqi military, which had been trained and dominated by Russian advisers. According to U.S. intelligence, the pilot of the jet that attacked the *Stark* will be debriefed by the U.S. delegation and a determination will be made on whether the attack was a Russian-instigated one, in which Soviet operational control over the Iraqi Air Force was greater than President Saddam Hussein's.

This new opening signals to both the Russians and the Iranians that there is a new U.S. policy being forged in the region with the intent of isolating and, if necessary, attacking the Iranian regime. This has caused great consternation within the Iranian military command, which fears that the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guard) naval forces—which are independent of the regular command—may in fact decide to test U.S. resolve.

The War Powers Act

In the last week of May, after a U.S. naval escort convoy protected a Kuwaiti ship carrying military equipment to Bahrain and Defense Secretary Weinberger announced that the United States was ready to immediately begin escorting Kuwaiti tankers under a U.S. flag, key senators and congressmen began placing obstacles in the way of the President's policy by calling upon the President to invoke the War Powers Act. As a result of this maneuver, led by Sens. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) and Alphonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), the White House announced that the escorting of Kuwaiti ships will be delayed for a couple of weeks.

According to informed sources, President Reagan will not back down on the deployment of U.S. military forces in the Persian Gulf, and the time lag is in order to rally congressional support rather than to stop the deployment. Central to the President's strategy is the sending of Sens. John Glenn (D-Ohio) and John Warner (R-Va.) to the Persian Gulf, where they will not only announce support for the President's plan, but will request an upgrading of U.S. force structure in the region. Senate Majority leader Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) sig-

naled on May 28 a willingness to support the decision to deploy U.S. forces in the region if the President invokes the War Powers Act. According to informed sources, the President may in fact invoke the Act as a way to demonstrate his willingness to seek congressional support, but not at the price of reversing his policy.

The faction of senators and congressmen seeking to impose a limit on presidential authority has strong links to the Israeli lobby which sees in the U.S. deployment a shift away from the Israel-NATO policy that many sought. These forces think that Israel should be given special NATO status to serve as the "surrogate" of U.S. policy in the region. The net result of such a policy move would virtually guarantee Russian domination over the region and control over the flow of oil.

This political group in Congress is looking for every opportunity to corral the President into a "weak-kneed" posture and seeks to lock the U.S. into an arms-control agreement which would decouple the United States from Western Europe. This reasoning is leading senators such as Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) to demand more support from the NATO allies. However, Weinberger and other U.S. officials will not let this issue stand in the way of promoting a stronger U.S.-European alliance. In fact, according to informed sources, Weinberger would never have initiated the new Persian Gulf policy unless he had received prior commitments from individual NATO countries to support the U.S. position.

The alliance's response

The Dutch and British governments have already signaled their intention to militarily support the U.S. deployment. The French will support the U.S. position politically, but will not upgrade their military posture. West Germany has not stated what its stance will be. The British position, according to U.S. intelligence sources, will be stronger militarily than most people expect. However, the British will await the anticipated Conservative Party victory in the elections to finalize their plans for joint Anglo-American deployments. During the NATO Defense Ministers' meeting in Norway, Weinberger made it absolutely clear that the United States has embarked on a new course in the Persian Gulf and linked this policy to the strengthening of the NATO alliance.

Whether this posture leads to an overall shift in U.S. posture vis-à-vis the growing Russian threat remains to be seen. The administration's track record and the President's commitment to a summit with Russian leader Gorbachov makes the anxiety among U.S. patriotic forces all the more acute, because, as one military source told *EIR*, Weinberger and the patriotic faction do not have the political clout at this point to stop what is known to be a bad deal with the Russian Empire.

In fact, the source stated that the "joint ventures" crowd around billionaire Soviet agent Armand Hammer still has the upper hand in shaping U.S. policy toward the Russian dictatorship.