

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

To reflect the new division of labor, Kissinger would name a European general to command the NATO forces, traditionally headed by an American. And he would give European governments primary responsibility for conducting the arms control negotiations with Moscow on conventional forces and intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

Our NATO allies have long been reluctant to begin a conventional build-up. But Kissinger maintains that continued reliance on the U.S. nuclear deterrent is no longer practical. If the Europeans refuse to do their part, he concludes, Washington should consider a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe and a lower profile in NATO.

Defending the Middle East

"Poised for the Persian Gulf" by Richard Halloran, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Apr. 1, 1984), 229 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Remember Jimmy Carter's Rapid Deployment Force? Critics "scoffed that it was not rapid, had little to deploy, and was not much of a force," recalls Halloran, a *New York Times* Pentagon correspondent. Today, it is called the Central Command, and while no longer in such a desperate state, it still labors under "enormous political and military handicaps."

The Central Command is one of six unified, multiservice U.S. commands responsible for military operations in particular regions of the world. Its chief mission is the defense of the Persian Gulf, which provides 10 percent of U.S. oil needs and 35 percent of Western Europe's. Its area of responsibility includes 19 nations, from Pakistan to Ethiopia to Saudi Arabia. Yet, unlike its five counterparts, the Central Command "has no forces under its operational control except those temporarily in its area, . . . no bases in its operating area, and no established communications and intelligence structures." Its headquarters are located in Tampa, Florida, some 7,000 miles from the Persian Gulf.

Egypt, Oman, Kenya, Morocco, and Somalia have agreed to let U.S. forces use certain of their military bases in an emergency. Rations and ammunition are stored on the British Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, 2,000 miles to the south of the gulf. (In 1984, the Central Command will spend \$9.1 billion on construction at these facilities and on arms aid and military training for 14 of the nations in the area.)

Within 48 hours, 800 Army paratroopers could be on the ground anywhere in the Persian Gulf region. Another 2,200 troops could follow within five days. But limited U.S. air- and sea-lift capacity would slow Marine and Army troop movements considerably after that. Cargo ships carrying tanks and equipment would need 31 days to reach Oman.

As a result, Halloran reports, the Central Command's basic tactic would be "a pre-emptive move—getting into position first in hope of deterring an adversary's strike." U.S. troops could defeat Iran's ragtag Revolutionary Guards if they attacked Saudi Arabia, but a full offensive involving Iran's regular army might be harder to handle.

The Central Command has its weaknesses, Halloran concludes, but four years ago nobody in the Pentagon even had a plan for getting U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf in case of a crisis.