

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Liberation Organization (PLO) forces held the towns and cities in the west. In narrow mountain passes and city streets where there was little room for armor to maneuver, the IDF insisted on using tanks instead of infantry to spearhead its assaults. "It paid dearly in the number of ambushes that it suffered [and] it allowed the enemy the advantage of engaging or disengaging at a point of his choice." Forty of the 1,240 Israeli tanks mobilized for the invasion were destroyed by enemy fire; another 100 were temporarily knocked out of action.

The Syrian forces did most of the damage, effectively employing infantry and antitank missiles against the outmaneuvered Israelis. The IDF, Gabriel says, should have responded by sending its foot soldiers ahead to clear the way for the tank forces. The PLO's guerrilla tactics seemed to stymie the IDF: The Israelis resorted to artillery barrages and air strikes to counter guerrilla harassment.

The outcome of the conflict was never much in doubt. The IDF outnumbered its foes by 2 to 1 and was vastly better equipped and trained. But Israel's losses of 368 dead and 2,383 wounded during the invasion and the subsequent siege of Beirut were a heavy price to pay for a nation of only four million people.

Floating Outposts

"Military Necessities and Political Uncertainties" by Michael Vlahos, in *Worldview* (Aug. 1984), P.O. Box 1935, Marion, Ohio 43305.

In 1960, the United States boasted 150 major air and naval installations around the world. Today, it has just 30. And while declining numbers have made each remaining base more precious, hostility or instability in the host countries have made the status of each more precarious.

Some 480,000 U.S. military personnel are on active duty in Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and at sea. But the Stars and Stripes flies in only three Third World locales: the Philippines, Diego Garcia (in the Indian Ocean), and the Panama Canal Zone. Total U.S. manpower in these areas is 22,000. America has no permanent bases in the volatile Middle East. And U.S. forces are scheduled to withdraw from the Canal Zone in the year 2000. The Philippines could well become inhospitable if President Ferdinand Marcos's beleaguered regime collapses.

Even in Greece and Spain, writes Vlahos, director of Security Studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, it takes "seemingly interminable wranglings and elegant diplomatic choreography" to win renewal of the leases for U.S. bases. Host governments regularly hike the rent and impose limits on what can be done on their land (e.g., barring Israel-bound U.S. war materiel).

The United States needs secure, no-strings-attached military bases, and it needs to free itself of the necessity of striking deals with unstable or simply unsavory governments. "What the U.S. needs, in fact, is a cross between a ship and an island," Vlahos says. His unusual pro-

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posal: Build huge "floating bases."

Using the technology developed for offshore oil-drilling platforms, the Pentagon could manufacture mobile, man-made islands big enough to serve as airfields or to support naval task forces. The price tag for these floating facilities would be huge, Vlahos writes, but "no more so than . . . a 20-year investment in a land base." And only three would be needed: one each in the Indian and Mediterranean oceans, and one in the western Pacific. Without such independent bases, he fears, the United States will not for long be able to defend its interests overseas.

Down with 'Star Wars'

"Preserving the ABM Treaty: A Critique of the Reagan Strategic Defense Initiative" by Sidney D. Drell, Philip J. Farley, and David Holloway, in *International Security* (Fall 1984), MIT Press (Journals), 28 Carleton St., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

In 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty sharply limiting their defenses against nuclear missiles. Both sides judged such defenses "to be futile, destabilizing, and costly," recall Stanford researchers Drell, Farley, and Holloway.

That logic still holds, they maintain, despite the claims made for President Reagan's proposed "Star Wars" defense.

The President's Strategic Defense Initiative is now only in the research phase. The Pentagon has asked for \$26 billion over the next four years to work on the technology for a three-tiered system, including space-based lasers, that would down Soviet missiles in flight. "Sooner or later," the authors believe, this research will lead to U.S. violations of the 1972 treaty. (As for charges that Moscow has already broken the ABM agreement, the authors find no convincing evidence.)

A space-age ABM might be worthwhile if it could live up to President Reagan's promise that it would render nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete." But the authors judge this to be a technological impossibility. [For a defense of the Star Wars proposal, see *WQ*, Spring 1984, p. 15.]

Massive technical difficulties must be overcome even to reach the point where a high percentage of the Soviets' 1,400 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) could be shot down, thus enhancing nuclear deterrence. A minimum of 320 orbiting "laser battle stations," supplied with fuel by 250 space-shuttle missions, would be needed. And even assuming U.S. technological success, there would be Soviet responses to contend with: a new round of ICBM deployments, "space mines" and other anti-battle station weapons, decoy rockets.

Calling the system "defensive," the authors add, will not stop Soviet leaders from fearing that "the United States might be intending now—or might decide in a crisis—to launch a first strike, relying on its ABM to deal with a diminished Soviet response." And a new set of defensive weaponry would make infinitely more complicated (and unlikely) the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) that President