

Turnabout

FREDERICK F. ROGGERO

©1994 Frederick F. Roggero

This article, adapted from the author's student paper at the Air War College, discusses policy in a fictional context and depicts fictional alliances between real-world nations in a future scenario. This is not meant to imply these fictional alliances will ever become reality. As with all Parameters articles, the views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the US government. — Editor.

The year is 1996.

CNN Special Report, 2300 EST, 30 May:

“Iraq has launched a military invasion of Kuwait. At approximately 0500 Kuwaiti time, several divisions from Iraq’s elite Republican Guards which escaped destruction in the 1991 Gulf War rushed south across the border of Iraq and Kuwait in the vicinity of Safwan. Reports from various sources inside Kuwait City indicate Iraqi infantry troops have already reached the outskirts of the capital. Some soldiers, believed to be Iraqi special forces, have been seen within Kuwait City proper. According to one eyewitness, it appears that several Iraqi armored divisions are setting up to cut off the city, while a majority of Saddam’s forces continue to head south toward the Saudi oil fields. There has been swift condemnation of this renewed aggression by a number of world leaders, including President Clinton. The United Nations (UN) Secretary General has called for an emergency meeting of the Security Council. So far, Baghdad remains silent. Stay tuned for further details.”

Joint Staff Briefing Room, 0700 EST, 31 May 1996:

“Well, here we go again,” sighed US Army Colonel John Murrell.

“I really don’t think Saddam has a very steep learning curve,” replied Colonel Peter Womphrey, USAF, as the two entered the highly secure room where select members of the Joint Staff were to be brought up to speed on the breaking situation in the Middle East.

The appropriate generals had already been briefed on the contents of the Critical Intelligence Report and the OPREP-3 PINNACLE report dispatched from General Elliott, USMC, Central Command's (CENTCOM) Commander-in-Chief (CINC). As the crisis action procedures began to spool up, the commanders directed that specific staff members be fully informed on the region and the developing situation. After receiving this intelligence briefing, these officers would return to their directorates and determine if this real world situation melded with any current "on the shelf" concept plans or operations plans. Chances are, no matter what the situation, there were going to be a lot of late nights in the Pentagon during the weeks ahead; the real world never seemed to exactly spin with the one for which the Joint Staff had planned.

Lieutenant Barradell, the Navy intelligence officer giving the briefing, was very professional, but everyone's attention was partially focused on the television in the background tuned to CNN. Real-time information from the operating area always seemed more applicable than listening to the entire history of the region, which was now being presented by the briefer. Many in the audience had participated in Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990-91 and knew the territory well. But they also remembered that a deep and up-to-date sense of the region—politically, socially, and economically—was essential to comprehending how military objectives would support US national objectives. Echoes of Clausewitz, "War . . . is a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means,"¹ bounced off the briefing room walls as the officers were shown charts depicting the recent social and economic developments in Iraq.

"Finally," Lieutenant Barradell continued, "as you know in late 1994 Iraq, Syria, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan signed an agreement forming an alliance called the Southwest Asia Consortium (SAC). While each of these nations brought something unique to the table, each had also found a common purpose in their Muslim religion. Syria, which had recently come to the aid of Azerbaijan in its struggle against Armenia, was able to bring its trade expertise and access to hard currency desperately needed by its SAC partners for further economic development. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan both retained possession and control of at least 2000 of the former Soviet Union's nuclear warheads. Delivery capabilities ranged from artillery shells in Azerbaijan to SS-18 and mobile SS-24 intercontinental ballistic missiles in Kazakhstan."² Although Kazakhstan ratified

Lieutenant Colonel Frederick F. Roggero, USAF, is Commander of the 905th Air Refueling Squadron, Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and holds an M.A. degree in international relations from the University of Southern California. He is also a distinguished graduate of the Air Command and Staff College and a 1993 graduate of the Air War College. He served as Chief, National Security Affairs Division, and Chief, National Security Policy Branch, on the Air Command and Staff College faculty from 1990 to 1992. Previously he served in the United Kingdom as an instructor pilot while on exchange with the Royal Air Force. He has over 3400 flying hours in various aircraft, including the VC-10K and KC-135A/R.

the START-1 treaty in 1992, it failed to sign the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and turn its strategic weapons over to Russia.³ It was reported that all tactical nuclear weapons were removed from these countries by July 1992 in observance of the Alma-Ata Declaration, but this was never verified.⁴

“For its part, Iraq did not bring any nuclear weapons to the alliance, thanks to the Coalition’s efforts in the war and US cruise missile attacks in early 1993. But Saddam Hussein offered the alliance his strong leadership. By continuing to stand up against America, Saddam has won the ‘grass roots’ respect of many in the region. He was able to paint the United States’ slow reaction to the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a deliberate contribution to the persecution of Muslims. Thus he has galvanized a significant degree of opposition to US policies throughout the predominately Islamic nations of SAC.

“You should also note,” Lieutenant Barradell continued, “SAC’s member nations have not yet condemned Iraq’s recent invasion of Kuwait. Their degree of military support for Iraq in this crisis is not yet specifically known. However, we have recently obtained knowledge of a secret protocol signed when these countries formed their Consortium. Articles 3, 4, and 5 of this protocol, displayed on the center screen, are of particular concern.” The Lieutenant paused and allowed her audience to read the slides:

- Article 3: In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of the Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.
- Article 4: The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of the Parties is threatened.
- Article 5: The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them . . . [in Southwest Asia] shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain international peace and security.⁵

After a hushed reaction from the audience, Barradell continued, “As most of you remember from the Gulf Crisis in 1990-91, Iraq claimed that Kuwait was the 19th Iraqi Province based on Basra’s governance of this territory during the Ottoman Empire years. Although the Kuwaiti Sabah family signed a treaty in 1899 establishing Kuwait as a separate protectorate of the British empire, and despite the fact that Kuwait subsequently achieved its independence from Britain, Iraq has twice tried to militarily claim Kuwait as a part of its territory.⁶ If

the other members of SAC formally recognize Iraq's most recent claim to Kuwait, the articles of the secret protocol, particularly Article 5, will become very significant in planning a US or possibly a coalition response. This concludes my portion of the briefing. Captain Walters will now present a detailed update of SAC's military capabilities, including a video of one of their recent combined exercises, and the order of battle for last night's Iraqi invasion. We will take your questions at the end of the presentation."

J-3 Operations Directorate, 0815 EST, 31 May 1996:

Murrell and Womphrey hurried back to their offices. There had been a lot of questions for the intelligence shop—unfortunately there weren't too many answers yet. Before the two colonels could settle in at their desks, however, CNN was already reporting one of their unanswered questions on the office television:

"Baghdad Radio has just released this recording of a speech by Saddam Hussein." A picture of the leader filled the screen while his graveled voice droned in a foreign language and the English translation scrolled across the bottom of the screen: "Thank God, we are now one people, one state that will be the pride of the Arabs⁷ and the Islamic community," the translation read. "My fellow citizens, Kuwait and Iraq have been rightfully joined. The old boundaries were drawn by the colonial powers and enforced by the imperialist military power of the United States. In the past, few nations were convinced of our rightful claim to the 19th Province. But this time, it is different. Syria, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan, our Consortium allies, are the first of what will be a great number of nations to acknowledge Iraq's rightful claim and offer their full support to the Republic of Iraq."

CNN's picture shifted to display Iraqis cheering in Baghdad's streets and firing weapons in the air. In the United States, two American colonels visibly slouched in their chairs. Follow-up interviews with SAC ambassadors at the United Nations confirmed Saddam's claim—Syria, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan were wholly supporting Iraq. Clearly, this was not going to be a repeat of 1990.

The first few days of the crisis went by in a flash. Kuwait fell in 48 hours. Nearly 1500 American citizens were trapped in Saddam's "19th Province" when Iraqi troops sealed the border. Fortunately, Saddam's armored forces stopped short of the Saudi and Kuwaiti border, but they were digging in along the 1990 lines. The other SAC nations deployed a number of token troops along with the Iraqi forces at the Saudi border, but there were indications these countries were preparing to send in more if required. Arguably, the most disturbing news was the public revelation of SAC's mutual defense protocol and the Consortium's joint declaration of readiness to respond to an attack "with all means necessary," including the use of nuclear weapons, if any of its members were attacked.

Meanwhile, the President was desperately trying to forge a new allied coalition. The government of Saudi Arabia had requested US assistance

to include military support and a “nuclear guarantee” soon after news of the invasion broke. Militarily, the United States had two available carrier battle groups in the region, the USS *John C. Stennis* in the Indian Ocean, and the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* on patrol in the Mediterranean Sea. Three additional carrier battle groups were being readied for deployment from Norfolk, Virginia. Unfortunately, the military cutbacks in 1994-95 had left only 12 carriers in the force⁸—three of those were in refit, the USS *United States* was still under construction, and the remainder were on duty in the Pacific theater. Meanwhile, a Marine Expeditionary Brigade at Diego Garcia Island was notified to cease its current exercise and prepare for operations in the Gulf. On the Air Force and Army side, two of the 13 remaining active fighter wings⁹ and portions of the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions were immediately sent into Saudi Arabia at the request of King Fahd.

Great Britain and Italy had promptly offered the use of their small air forces—greatly reduced by their own respective 1993 budget cuts. Germany and Japan were preoccupied with their severe economic recessions caused by the financing of reunifications in Germany and Korea, respectively, and could not respond to America’s financial call. Turkey and Egypt, fearing an adverse reaction by their increasingly extremist Islamic factions, refused a US request to deploy forces inside their countries. After a private conversation between the President and Hosni Mubarek, however, Egypt finally gave its approval for “limited” US overflights. Calls to other former Coalition members were still out. Collectively the United Nations had passed several resolutions denouncing Iraq’s aggression and setting up the procedures for economic sanctions of the SAC members. Both Russia and China abstained from all UN resolutions in the matter, possibly hoping to stay out of the fray until the smoke cleared and the results were apparent.

J-3 Operations Directorate, 1015 EST, 3 June 1996:

The planning activities during these early days had been incessant. Consequently, John Murrell and Peter Womphrey were taking a much-needed break at the coffee machine.

“Do you think SAC would actually use their nuclear weapons, Pete?”

“I’m not sure,” he replied, sipping his coffee, “but that’s the beauty of their strategy, isn’t it?”

“I don’t understand your logic.”

“Do you remember how NATO used flexible response to defend against the Soviet threat in Europe?”

“Basically, yes, but . . .,” trailed John.

Impatiently, Peter began a thumbnail sketch of flexible response as he remembered it from a graduate class. He started by explaining that in 1962 President Kennedy authorized Robert McNamara to present a strategy to NATO’s ministers which incorporated a flexible response. Up to that time

NATO had mainly relied on the threat of a massive US retaliation with nuclear weapons to deter a conventional Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Secretary McNamara proposed a new strategy that would deter attack by possessing forces that could counter an offensive at whatever level the aggressor chose to fight. If combat occurred and the direct defense did not succeed, then flexible response called for NATO to escalate as necessary, including to the first use of nuclear weapons.¹⁰

“In short,” Peter continued, “this strategy contained three types of purposefully vague military responses. The first rung on flexible response’s ladder of escalation involved a direct defense in order to defeat an attack or at least place the burden of further expansion on the enemy. The next step involved a deliberate escalation to an appropriate level by NATO, including the use of tactical nukes. The final stage involved a general nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union.¹¹ But the beauty was the Soviets never knew exactly what might precipitate a NATO nuclear response. We probably didn’t know either, but that’s why it was so difficult for the Soviets to plan an offensive with any degree of certainty.”

The implications finally dawned on Colonel Murrell. “Do you really think SAC is trying to use a version of flexible response against us?”

“Absolutely! Why not?” Peter quickly responded. “It worked like a charm for us, and turnabout is supposed to be fair play. The question is, what courses of action are we going to recommend to the boss? He’s going to need some independent thoughts so he can evaluate CENTCOM’s recommendations tomorrow. And don’t forget, since Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan haven’t been assigned to a CINC’s area of responsibility yet, the JCS Chairman is responsible for the decisions involving those countries. In any case, we need to find the cracks in this strategy and do it fast!”

CNN “Crisis in the Gulf” Special Report, 1700 EST, 3 June 1996:

“Saddam Hussein has begun the release of all American women and children from Iraq and Kuwait. A senior Iraqi official told reporters that the estimated 800 Americans still held would be moved to various military facilities to deter Coalition attacks. We will pass on more details of the hostage release as soon as they come in.

“Now we’re going to run a background report, recently completed by CNN’s military analyst, retired Air Force Major General Alan Bruyn, on the recent proliferation of technology within the Middle East. General . . .”

“Thank you, Ron. Compared to 1991, the Coalition forces may face a technologically improved military force in the Gulf. First, according to a highly placed Defense Department official, Kazakhstan possesses ballistic and possibly some intermediate-range tactical nuclear weapons that are in a reasonable state of readiness. This same source also indicated that Azerbaijan retains a number of nuclear artillery weapons that are remnants of the former Soviet Union’s

arsenal. The Pentagon suspects that Syria subsidized a number of engineers and technicians from the former Soviet Union to maintain SAC's nuclear forces.¹² Additionally, even though the Coalition destroyed most of Iraq's nuclear facilities, the knowledge acquired by Saddam's scientists could not be erased and these professionals have joined in helping SAC's other members make necessary improvements in their nuclear programs. Most important, it is believed that SAC forces have the capability to rapidly retarget and launch these nuclear missiles.

"Second, according to a recent UPI report, Syria has developed an operational cruise missile with some Chinese cooperation. It's reported these highly accurate missiles, guided by a satellite navigation system, employ a rudimentary form of stealth technology and are capable of delivering chemical, biological, and conventional warheads.¹³ In exchange for expertise in separating plutonium and enriching uranium, it appears that Damascus has shared this breakthrough with the other members of SAC. The consortium's use of mobile and accurate cruise missiles on US staging bases, such as the port of Dhahran, could cause significant losses of men and equipment and indefinitely delay the execution of any type of military response by the Coalition.

"Furthermore, America's lead in space, which it enjoyed during the first Gulf War, now appears questionable. According to an anonymous senior official in the White House, two classified US satellites ceased transmitting approximately one week before Iraq's invasion. These satellites could have experienced coincidental technical problems or may have been attacked with an anti-satellite weapon, thus temporarily blinding US intelligence to the impending invasion. When asked whether any of SAC's members were capable of launching an anti-satellite weapon, the senior official refused to answer directly, but he did point out the former Soviet Union's space launch facilities of Baikonur/Tyuratam and Sary-Shagan were located in Kazakhstan.¹⁴

"Although it's believed that SAC does not operate any satellites of its own, CNN has learned that several sizable contracts were let to Landsat and SPOT (American and French commercial satellite firms) from June 1993 to May of this year by a purported oil exploration company, SYSCO Ltd. After further investigation, CNN discovered SYSCO Ltd. is actually a front organization for the Syrian government that, among other activities, has been purchasing satellite products on the open market for quite some time. This implies that SAC possesses a sizable library of overhead products which Saddam most likely used in planning his recent invasion of Kuwait and that he will most certainly use to construct a defense of Iraq's new '19th Province.'¹⁵ As a result of our investigation, SPOT and Landsat have discontinued their business with SYSCO Ltd. However, it's not known how many of the thousands of commercial satellite subscribers around the globe are willing to act as third parties and buy satellite photos to sell to SAC members at an undoubtedly sizable profit.

"Finally, reports from resistance forces inside Kuwait state that a number of Iraqi soldiers are equipped with Russian Global Navigation System

(GLONASS) and American Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers and appear well trained in their use. These receivers are readily available in the open market and are widely used by commercial aircraft, shipping, and trucking industries. More important, the US military has thoroughly integrated GPS into their fighting tactics. Even though the United States encrypts its GPS signal to prevent misuse by an enemy, the former Deputy for Nonproliferation Policy, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, states that in recent unclassified tests, ‘the GLONASS signals, in fact, were found to be accurate 95 percent of the time to within 20 meters horizontally and 36 meters vertically.’¹⁶ If SAC has devised a means to use this technology to guide their cruise missiles,¹⁷ the increased accuracy will significantly boost SAC’s conventional lethality. In conclusion, it’s obvious the United States will not have a monopoly on the control of space and the Coalition forces could face a highly improved military force compared to 1991.

“This is Al Bruyn reporting from the Pentagon. Ron . . .”

J-3 Operations Directorate, 0930 EST, 5 June 1996:

Peter slammed his office door and turned to John, “Why did you have to start an argument like that in front of the boss? You know I’d never go along with your idea to conventionally preempt SAC’s nuclear forces. It’s impossible to do!”

“But, Pete, we don’t have any other choice,” John pleaded. “If the mission stays as written, we have to restore the pre-invasion borders of Kuwait. And as you well know, before the ground forces can set one foot in Kuwait, air power is going to have to take out one of SAC’s rungs on what you called ‘their flexible ladder of response.’ That ‘rung’ has got to be SAC’s nuclear weapons!” Trying to stay calm, John continued, “At least I agree with you in part, Pete. I don’t think we can get all of their tactical nukes, but I do believe we have a good chance of taking out their ICBM sites with conventionally loaded B-2s. Once we take out their long-range option, all SAC can do is threaten a nuclear incident in their own backyard—and that’s not a real flexible defense, is it?”

“You just don’t get it, do you John?” Peter fired back. “A military response is not the best solution here. The most we can do is defend Saudi Arabia and even that’s questionable thanks to our smaller force structure and the limited overflights of Egypt. You’re not going to find all of SAC’s mobile ICBMs—look at the poor Scud hunting results from Desert Storm.¹⁸ I think if we convince Syria, Kazakhstan, or Azerbaijan that risking a US nuclear response is not worth supporting Iraq, then we could ‘win.’ In other words,” Peter continued, “we have to break this alliance up politically and then solve the Kuwait problem. If we fight now we’ll make them more determined and drive the Consortium’s members closer together. On the other hand, if we can tear the fabric of their alliance and seed enough doubt through a series of

political agreements, economic incentives, or sanctions, maybe we could loosen some of the glue holding these countries together.”

“That’s not going to fly, Pete—not this year,” John replied. “The President is in the middle of an election campaign. Your solution doesn’t have any quick results he can take to the voters. Republicans will be bragging that George Bush beat Saddam, and Democrats will be pressuring the President to do the same. Politics is going to have a definite effect on which course of action gets selected and I’ll bet you it’s going to involve lots of military force.”

“But John, what if we can get a third country, like Iran, to intercede and use its influence on Azerbaijan to reconsider its pact with SAC?”

“Which congressman is going to vote that we cut a deal with Iran, Pete? Put your military hat on and let’s get back to work.”

“Maybe you’re right,” Peter mused. “But I still think their concept of presenting us with a fait accompli and then defending it with a credible strategy is going to prove stronger than any crisis response attack we can muster.”

The buzzing intercom interrupted the conversation.

“Sir, the intelligence briefing starts in two minutes.”

“Thanks, Sergeant Dicksee, we’re on our way,” Peter answered.

Joint Staff Briefing Room, 0945 EST, 5 June 1996:

The briefing started as the two colonels took their seats in the back of the room. Lieutenant Barradell began with an update of the US deployment. Egypt had demanded that it approve every single overflight and the resulting paperwork was working against the highly touted speed and responsiveness of air power. Also, Air Mobility Command was having difficulty finding enough friendly overseas locations to base its air refueling tankers so a suitable air bridge could be formed from the United States to Saudi Arabia. Portugal had approved the use of the Azores, and Italy was allowing the use of Sicily. However, for independent reasons, Spain, France, Greece, and Turkey refused to allow any overflights or basing privileges as long as the United States was persistent in its drive to retake Kuwait.

Despite these difficulties, the United States had managed to deploy a wing of F-15Cs and several E-3 AWACs to Saudi Arabia within four days to assist in that country’s air defense. Also the 4th Composite Wing from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, with its KC-10 tankers and F-15E Strike Eagles, was on its way to King Kahlid International Airport and would be ready for combat operations within two days. Additional units of the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions were also arriving in Dhahran where they would eventually be matched up with their equipment.

Lieutenant Barradell quickly switched her discussion to the maritime issues. The Navy’s Fast Sealift ships were being loaded and would soon be on their way with tanks and other heavy equipment for the ground forces. Unfortunately, these eight ships would be making a number of trips across the Atlantic

during this crisis, and although a real submarine threat existed from SAC-owned assets purchased from the former Soviet Union,¹⁹ the US Navy was highly confident of its anti-submarine capabilities. Unlike Desert Shield and Desert Storm, most of the Army's equipment would have to come from the States instead of from the European theater. As a result of lessons learned from Desert Shield, enough weapons to equip an armored brigade were prepositioned on seven ships.²⁰ However the extent of reducing permanent US military forces in Europe from 1993 to 1995 meant there would still be numerous vulnerable convoys moving across the Atlantic for an extended period.

According to the Lieutenant, the Marines were in the best shape for responding to this type of no-notice contingency. While personnel of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) were being airlifted into Saudi from Diego Garcia, two of the MEB's five Maritime Prepositioning Ships²¹ were reportedly steaming through the Straits of Hormuz and expected to be in Dhahran within 22 hours. Unfortunately, one of the ships, the *Pfc. William B. Baugh*, ran aground in the early morning haze after passing through the Straits. Since the MEB's cargo was equally distributed among the five vessels, even the complete loss of one ship would not severely limit the combat capability of the 15,000 Marines.

Still, even with these forces in country the United States would not have enough ground force to stop SAC from moving south if they chose to take over the Saudi oil fields. No one in the briefing room could really understand why, once again, Saddam had stopped his forces short of Saudi Arabia. Lieutenant Barradell suggested it may be out of respect for the holy places in Saudi Arabia. More likely, Saddam was trying to lure the Coalition into the crowded Saudi ports and airfields before he attacked with surface-to-surface missiles and destroyed a significant portion of the Coalition's combat capability before it reached the battlefield.

The Lieutenant's briefing was interrupted when her supervisor handed her a message. She then read it to the audience:

"The following is part of a situation report message just received from CENTCOM Headquarters," she began. "The MPS *Cpl. Louis J. Hauge, Jr.*, struck a mine in the Persian Gulf and sank at 1605 GMT. The explosion ripped a large hole just below the water line and ignited the ship's ammunition supplies. US Navy ships rescued 15 survivors; 26 crewmen are presumed dead. With three ships left for supply, the MEB now has supplies for only 14 days unless other measures are taken. Thirty miles from where the ship sank, the USS *Putnam* engaged and destroyed a diesel Kilo-class submarine. One survivor was found. There has been no further response from SAC."

J-3 Operations Directorate, The Conflict's Final Days:

The battle was drawn and any hope for negotiations or diplomatic interventions quickly faded. The Director of Operations (J-3) was not swayed by Peter's objections to a preemptive attack. The pressure for military action

from the White House, Congress, and the American public was too intense—a US ship had been “ruthlessly” attacked, US lives were lost, and American hostages were still in danger. Instead, the J-3 advised the Chairman that while a conventional force deployment continued it was essential to immediately begin the next phase of the campaign. This involved striking Kazakhstan’s two fixed SS-18 ICBM sites and the likely locations for mobile missile operations with B-2s operating from the United States, while air- and sea-launched cruise missiles struck key SAC command and control links. The J-3 concluded his recommendation for preemption by emphasizing this was the best option available to “defend US interests and deter a nuclear attack on the United States.”

After meeting with the Chairman, the President approved the attack. SAC responded to the ensuing preemptive raids in Kazakhstan by launching salvos of Scud and cruise missiles at Saudi air bases and ports in use by the Coalition. The Coalition’s Patriot batteries were overwhelmed by sheer numbers. Dozens of KC-135 and KC-10 air-to-air refueling tankers were destroyed on the open Saudi ramps, limiting the Coalition’s ability to refuel the B-2s to and from their strategic targets.²² Many transport aircraft were also destroyed on the unprotected ramps, further limiting the already strained logistics plan.

At the Saudi ports, supply ships unloading equipment were sunk at the docksides, temporarily blocking the way for any further resupply of the deployed ground forces.²³ Simultaneously, a US *Ticonderoga*-class cruiser primarily used for fleet air defense was attacked and sunk by a submarine inside the Persian Gulf. Although the sub was caught and destroyed, subsequent coordinated SAC volleys of Chinese-made anti-ship Silkworm missiles overwhelmed the fleet’s degraded air defenses and severely damaged the USS *John C. Stennis*, forcing the carrier’s airborne aircraft to divert to bases farther from the fight.

Initially, Coalition commanders believed the preemptive air campaign was successful. They were encouraged by intelligence reports that stated SAC’s nuclear command and control links had sustained considerable damage and were becoming increasingly ineffective. But accurate battle damage assessments of the 104 fixed SS-18 silos at Derzhavinsk and Zhangiz-Tobe²⁴ were difficult to obtain, and the destruction of any of the mobile ICBMs could not be confirmed. Also during this tenuous phase, military analysts calculated that any nuclear demonstration by SAC—even one on a remote Gulf island—would induce the Coalition to pause its military efforts and most likely cause a reversal in American public support for the war. For unknown reasons this was evidently not part of SAC’s plan, but during CNN broadcasts Saddam Hussein continued to warn that the Consortium reserved the right to introduce nuclear weapons at a place and time of their choosing, particularly if SAC’s forces appeared to be losing the momentum of the battle.

On the third day of the Coalition's air campaign, a 20-kiloton nuclear explosion swept through an area in southwest Kazakhstan, killing approximately 15,000 people. SAC declared the United States had initiated the use of nuclear weapons and that it would respond appropriately. The United States emphatically denied it had used nuclear weapons and suggested that SAC must have experienced an accident, possibly setting off one of their own weapons. Privately, some officials in the Pentagon suggested that one of the conventionally armed B-2 strikes could have triggered a Kazakh nuclear weapon. The international community demanded an immediate cease-fire and the anti-war movement in the States gained significant momentum. Seeking more favorable conditions before starting negotiations, the President ordered that conventional strikes against SAC's nuclear capability be increased until every one of SAC's ICBMs was destroyed.

J-3 Operations Directorate, 1445 CST, 7 June 1993:

All heads turned away from their computer terminals as the sound of a warning siren pierced the thick concrete and the emergency lights snapped on.

"I never thought they would actually launch against us," said John, his voice trailing off.

"But we always had to consider that possibility," Peter countered. "That's a key reason why flexible response works so well against the attack."

A security policeman appeared in the doorway and stated, "Everyone, please follow me. We have to evacuate into the tunnel on the double!"

"Why?" Colonel Murrell asked. "Isn't this building secure enough?"

"Probably," said the young cop, "but my Squadron Commander chewed me out when I didn't make everyone leave during the last tornado warning. We get these storms down here in Alabama all the time and this War Gaming Center isn't rated as a shelter yet. So, if you please, Sir . . ."

On the way to the storm tunnel John and Peter talked about the exercise they had been working on during the last few days. "Do you think we'd ever have to fight one of our old strategies, John?"

"I hope not, Pete. If Clausewitz was right when he said the defense is superior to the attack,²⁵ then the crisis response part of our new strategy won't have a chance against a deterrent strategy like flexible response."

USAF War Gaming Center, Maxwell AFB, Ala., 0800 CST, 8 June 1993:

"Good morning. My name is Colonel Hewitt, USAF. I'm the senior instructor at the Center and I'll be conducting the debrief of your recently completed exercise, Desert Thunder. This war game, complete with simulated newscasts, was designed to let you participate in a scenario in which the United States is faced by an enemy using one of our own successful strategies. As emphasized throughout the period, there is no school solution to this

exercise. We wanted to reinforce the concept that lessons from the Gulf War are important, but one should not assume the special circumstances present in the 1991 Gulf War will occur in every conflict.

“Also, your team had to contend with threats of nuclear weapons and conventional cruise missiles from a fictional alliance. Although the actual members will probably change, the chances of fighting an enemy ‘consortium’ at some time are always present. Unfortunately, it’s also a fact that other nations are continually learning how to exploit weapon technologies which can potentially alter the texture of our lessons from the Gulf War. In this light your team could have done a better job in ‘thinking outside the lines’ and more critically judging the assumptions you brought from your Gulf War experiences—such as the security of supply lines, safety of naval assets, and a US monopoly in space—but you’ll get your shot at these items when we play the game again.

“Most important, though, we wanted you to plan a response to one of our own strategies: flexible response. Proliferation—not just of weapons and technology, but also of ideas, doctrines, and strategies—may prove increasingly threatening to US national security. The United States has been trying to slow the proliferation of nuclear weapons through the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Non-proliferation Treaty. We have also tried to limit the spread of missile technology through the Missile Technology Control Regime. However, no matter what vehicle the United States uses, the proliferation of ideas and strategies may prove to be just as important as technological secrets. Although it’s impossible to prove whether or not flexible response was responsible for our victory in the Cold War, the chance of its success could tempt other nations to use that strategy in their own defense. We must use this period of relative peace to wrestle with these questions, not only to anticipate new strategies, but also to forge responses to our own past strategies. If not, the US military risks becoming a victim of its own success.

“Now, let’s look back at your exercise planning and see why you lost this war . . .”

NOTES

1. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 87.

2. William Walker, “Nuclear Weapons and the Former Soviet Republics,” *International Affairs*, 68 (April 1992), 259-260. See also Robert S. Norris, “Where the Weapons Are,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 47 (November 1991), 48-49.

3. John W. R. Lepingwell, “Kazakhstan and Nuclear Weapons,” *RFE/RL Research Report*, 19 February 1993, p. 59.

4. See Walker, p. 258. He suggests that Russian, as well as other republic authorities, do not know precisely how many tactical nuclear weapons were inside Soviet territories.

5. Final text of the North Atlantic Treaty as quoted in Sir Nicholas Henderson, *The Birth of NATO* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983), p. 120.

6. U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory* (New York: Random House, 1992), p. 96.
7. Quoted, *ibid.*, pp. 95-96.
8. Les Aspin, "Bottom-Up Review," US Department of Defense, 1 September 1993, depicts 11 active carriers plus one reserve/training carrier.
9. *Ibid.* The "Bottom-Up Review" depicts 13 active Air Force fighter wings.
10. Robert S. McNamara, "The Military role of Nuclear Weapons: Perceptions and Misperceptions," *Foreign Affairs*, 62 (Fall 1983), 64-65.
11. Schuyler Forester, "Alliance Commitments and Strategies," in *American Defense Policy*, ed. Schuyler Forester and Edward N. Wright (6th ed.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 200-01.
12. See Joseph Nye, "New Approaches to Nuclear Proliferation Policy," *Science*, 29 May 1992, p. 1296, for discussions on the estimated numbers of former Soviet nuclear scientists and engineers who have emigrated to find work in places such as Iraq and Iran.
13. See "Cruise Missiles Becoming Top Proliferation Threat," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 1 February 1993, pp. 26-27; "Cruise Missile Development by Others Worries US," United Press International, Prodigy Services, 1 February 1993; and David A. Fulghum, "U.S. Developing Plan to Down Cruise Missiles," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 22 March 1993, pp. 47-48. These reports state that Syria, Iran, and China are aggressively developing cruise missiles which include stealth technology and the capability to deliver chemical and biological warheads. The reports further estimate these countries will deploy such systems within ten years.
14. John W. R. Lepingwell, "Kazakhstan and Nuclear Weapons," *RFE/RL Research Report*, 19 February, 1993, 59.
15. See, for example, Henry Sokolski, "Nonapocalyptic Proliferation: A New Strategic Threat?" unpublished paper, Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik, 12 October 1992, p. 9. He states that in Desert Storm the US Defense Agency purchased \$5.7 million worth of SPOT imagery for applications such as updating existing maps. Furthermore, he notes that the 10- to 30-meter resolution available from commercial satellite firms is sufficient to plot major armored vehicle movements, assess bomb damage, and plan air strike missions. See also Ann M. Florini, "The Opening Skies," *International Security*, 13 (Fall 1988), 83-114, for a thorough discussion of commercial satellite capabilities and the national customers of commercial imaging firms.
16. Sokolski, p. 7. For a thorough discussion of navigation proliferation see Steve Wooley, Institute for Defense Analysis, "Proliferation of Precision Navigation Technologies and Security Implications for the US," briefing for the Proliferation Countermeasures Working Group, Washington, D.C., 9 December 1991, pp. 1-23.
17. For further discussions on cruise missile guidance using current space technology see Artur Knoth, "GPS Technology and Third World Missiles," *International Defense Review*, 25 (May 1992), 413-15, and W. Seth Carus, *Cruise Missile Proliferation in the 1990s* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992), pp. 49-69.
18. See Department of Defense, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress* (Washington: GPO, April 1992), pp. 166-68, and U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, p. 331. Iraq fired 88 modified Scuds—42 toward Israel and 46 toward Saudi Arabia—between 17 January 1991 and 26 February 1991. Even by early February the Coalition could not confirm the destruction of any mobile launchers.
19. See Sokolski, pp. 5-7, for a discussion of the proliferation of modern diesel-electric submarines and the difficulties associated with detecting these boats in shallow closed areas, such as the Persian Gulf. See also Rear Admiral James Fitzgerald, US Navy, and John Benedict, "There Is A Sub Threat," *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, 116 (August 1990), 57-63.
20. Vago Muradian, "Equipment Predeployment to Begin," *Army Times*, 27 September 1993, p. 42.
21. For more information on MPS capabilities refer to the periodical of the Navy League of the United States, *Sea Power* (January 1993), p. 170. In part, this work explains that the MPS squadron of five ships in the Indian Ocean "contains the equipment and 30 days of supplies for a Marine Expeditionary Brigade and is capable of offloading at piers or from offshore with special equipment with which the ships have been fitted. However, the ships themselves have no amphibious capability."
22. See *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, pp. 170-73, for a discussion of how vital aerial refueling was to the Coalition deployment and air campaign.
23. See Sokolski, p. 10. "On 11 February 1991, at Jubail, a key Saudi port, a SCUD missile struck just 300 or so meters from a pier at which eight ships were berthed . . . Fortunately none of the ammunition ships berthed at the pier or any of the 5,000 tons of 155 mm shells stacked on the pier that day were hit."
24. Lepingwell, p. 59. This unclassified article provides numbers and general locations of Kazakhstan's SS-18 force.
25. Clausewitz, pp. 357-78. There is little consensus on the meaning of Clausewitz's statement that "the defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive." However, if this notion is combined with Clausewitz's principle that defense allows one to transition to the attack, then the strength of flexible response becomes more apparent.