



THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF — AND NATIONAL POLICY — 1977–1980



Steven L. Rearden
Kenneth R. Foulks, Jr.

History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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and National Policy
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With the collaboration of
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Foreword

Established during World War II to advise the President on the strategic direction of the armed forces of the United States, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) continued in existence after the war and, as military advisors and planners, have played a significant role in the development of national policy. Knowledge of JCS relations with the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense in the years since World War II is essential to an understanding of their current work. An account of their activities in peacetime and during times of crisis provides, moreover, an important series of chapters in the military history of the United States. For these reasons, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that an official history be written for the record. Its value for instructional purposes, for the orientation of officers newly assigned to the JCS organization, and as a source of information for staff studies will be readily recognized.

The series, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, treats the activities of the JCS since the close of World War II. Because of the nature of the activities of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as the sensitivity of the sources, the volumes of the series are prepared initially in classified form.

Volume XII describes JCS activities during the period 1977-1980 that cover President Jimmy Carter's administration. Dr. Steven L. Rearden, working under contract to the Joint History Office, wrote the classified volume. After declassification, Colonel Kenneth R. Foulks, Jr., USAF, rewrote portions of the manuscript for open publication in 2013-2014, taking advantage of the great amount of material that had become available. Ms. Penny Norman prepared the sanitized manuscript for publication. The volume is an official publication of the Joint Chiefs of Staff but, inasmuch as the text has not been considered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it must be construed as descriptive only and does not constitute the official position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on any subject.

Washington, DC
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JOHN F. SHORTAL
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Preface

Continuing the history of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and national policy, this volume covers the period of Jimmy Carter's presidency, from 1977 through 1980. Still recovering from the trauma and setbacks of Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs remained preoccupied with a wide range of Cold War-related defense and security issues. Broadly speaking, two themes emerge. The first has to do with the deepening US involvement in Southwest Asia and the Middle East, a region exceedingly distant and remote, but increasingly important to the United States and its allies because of its vast oil resources, the on-going explosive struggle between Israel and the Arab states, and its strategic locale vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Shah of Iran's regime in 1978, followed a year later by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, underscored the volatility of that part of the world and put intense pressure on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to find effective means of projecting US military power into the region in times of crisis.

The second theme concerns the repercussions brought about by this change in strategic priorities and the tensions it produced between President Carter and his military advisers. Committed to preserving and extending *détente* with the Soviet Union, President Carter remained optimistic that he could both reduce the role of military power in American foreign policy and cut back on increases in US defense expenditures. Although the Joint Chiefs never doubted the President's sincerity, they questioned whether the time was ripe for the curbs the President proposed, citing the threat posed by a continuing Soviet military buildup, the growing presence of Soviet advisors and "proxies" in Africa and Latin America, a soaring inflation rate, and competing demands on US military assets around the globe. At the same time, having lost the nuclear supremacy the United States had enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s, the Joint Chiefs were increasingly uneasy over the President's eagerness for a new strategic arms control agreement with the Soviet Union, without compensatory improvements in the US strategic arsenal. The result, more often than not, was friction between the White House and the JCS over how to deal with these problems.

A volume of this scale and scope could not have been produced without a lot of help. We are particularly indebted to our friends and professional colleagues in the Joint History Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—Dr. David Crist, Dr. Nathan S. Lowrey, Dr. Edward J. Drea, Mr. Dale Andrade, and Mr. Wayne Dzwonchyk—for their advice and assistance and for taking the time to provide comments and criticisms at various stages of the book. Ms. Penny Norman had the onerous task of preparing the manuscript for publication and came through, as always, with flying colors. The problems and flaws that remain are our own doing.

We are also deeply indebted to Brigadier General David A. Armstrong, USA (Ret.), who as the Director for Joint History initiated the writing of this volume in classified form, and his successor, Brigadier General John F. Shortal, USA (Ret.), who oversaw its declassification, editing, and publication. As bosses and friends, it is hard to imagine two finer individuals.

Steven L. Rearden
Kenneth R. Foulks, Jr.

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History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

**The Joint Chiefs of Staff
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President Jimmy Carter waves to the crowd that's on hand to greet him as he exits Air Force One.

National Security Organization

As 1977 began, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) awaited with some uncertainty the arrival of a new President, Jimmy Carter, and a new Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown. Although the JCS fully expected the Carter administration to make changes in national security policy and military strategy, they—like everyone else—could only guess at how extensive the changes might be. Defense and foreign affairs had played less than pivotal roles in the 1976 election campaign, but on those issues he had addressed, President Carter had shown a range of preferences. He supported strengthening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), thought progress on arms control imperative, and believed in the continuing containment of the Soviet Union within the context of détente. But he had reservations about new weapons systems like the B-1 bomber and MX missile, favored the withdrawal of US ground troops from Korea, and considered military spending much too high. Like many Americans, President Carter was leery of new commitments overseas and pledged to avoid international quagmires as in Vietnam. Above all, he wanted to give more time, attention, and resources to domestic problems.¹

Unlike his immediate predecessors in the Oval Office, President Carter did not necessarily regard US-Soviet relations as his uppermost foreign policy concern. He considered the country's growing dependence on foreign energy supplies, the protection of human rights, and the improvement of relations between the developed and developing worlds equally if not more important. Nor was he overly alarmed, as some in the Nixon-Ford administration had come to be, over the threat to détente posed by the Soviet Union's ominous buildup in strategic and theater nuclear weapons, accompanied by significant improvements in Warsaw Pact conventional forces on the Central Front in Europe. Instead of responding to these and other threats with increased military power, President Carter proposed to rely more on diplomacy and moral suasion to achieve American security objectives abroad. Although he did not dismiss the need for armed force in support of foreign policy, the new President thought it had been overused in the past. Henceforth, as he stated in his inaugural

address, the United States would “maintain strength so sufficient that it need not be proven in combat—a quiet strength based not merely on the size of an arsenal but on the nobility of ideas.”²

From all outward appearances, President Carter was better prepared to deal with military matters than any President since Dwight D. Eisenhower. A 1946 graduate of the US Naval Academy, President Carter had served seven years as a nuclear submarine officer before returning to Georgia to manage the family peanut business. But unlike other Presidents (Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy, for example) who had talked freely of their military experiences, President Carter downplayed his military background and declined to surround himself with “service buddies.” In fact, few on President Carter’s staff had seen military service, and there were some who had been active in the anti-war movement of the 1960s. “The change in atmosphere was striking,” recalled one veteran diplomat. “Three-piece suits had been replaced by slacks and sweaters. Haircuts were two or three inches longer than before. And it appeared that the average age of the White House staff had dropped about twenty years.”³

In these circumstances, JCS advice was apt to count for less in high-level circles than it had in years past. Throughout World War II and on into the confrontations of the early Cold War, the Joint Chiefs had been in the forefront of high-level planning and policymaking, their views routinely sought and respected at the White House and on Capitol Hill. However, the Bay of Pigs episode in the early 1960s, followed by Vietnam, had dealt harsh blows to the JCS image and credibility. Gradually and with difficulty, the Joint Chiefs had begun to recover some of their lost prestige and influence by the mid-1970s. The advent of the Carter administration seemed to dampen prospects that this trend would continue.

As trying for the Joint Chiefs as the Carter years would prove to be in some respects, they would still find themselves, more often than not, at or near the center of decision. President Carter’s downplaying of military power and emphasis on non-violent solutions notwithstanding, it was clear that the Cold War was far from over and that, even with the respite of *détente*, the United States had no choice but to maintain a credible defense posture. Indeed, in certain respects, *détente* forced the United States to think more seriously and more imaginatively about its military needs than at any time since World War II. For these reasons, JCS advice remained an accepted fixture of the policy process, heeded more on some occasions than on others during the Carter years, but rarely overlooked or wholly ignored.

JCS Composition during the Carter Years

Throughout Mr. Carter’s presidency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff remained one of the most stable institutions within the national security community. The only legislative change affecting them as a corporate body was a law signed on 20 October 1978 granting the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) coequal status with the Service

Chiefs, thereby recognizing in statute what had become commonplace in practice. As career professionals, occupying statutory positions with staggered terms, the Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves were not automatically subject to replacement when President Carter took office. Technically, to be sure, they served at the pleasure of the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate. But as a practical matter, there was little danger that the President would demand their resignations and appoint a whole new set of military advisers. Only once before, in 1949, in the case of Admiral Louis Denfeld, had the President seen fit to remove a JCS member before his term was up. The Chiefs thus provided the Pentagon and the President with a measure of high-level continuity that few other departments or agencies enjoyed. President Carter would, in years to come, be able to make his own JCS appointments, but for the time being he and Secretary of Defense Brown had perforce to work with the military advisers they inherited.

Fortunately, as President Carter later recalled in his memoirs, he and the individual members of the JCS got along well together, even when they disagreed over policy. Personalities were not a serious problem.⁴ Doubtless the most prominent and publicly well-known JCS member at the outset of Carter's presidency was the Chairman, General George S. Brown, USAF—no relation to the new Secretary of Defense. A bomber pilot in Europe during World War II, General Brown also had served as Director of Operations, Fifth Air Force, in the Far East toward the end of the Korean War. Thereafter, in the 1950s and on into the 1960s, his career became an almost steady succession of high-profile staff assignments with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. From 1968 to 1970 he commanded the Seventh Air Force in Southeast Asia, but he returned to the United States to become Air Force Chief of Staff in 1973. By the time President Nixon named him to head the JCS in 1974, General Brown probably had more joint-level experience than any Chairman up to that time. Likable, easy going, and respected by his peers, he routinely urged his JCS colleagues to keep an open mind on problems and believed in maintaining close liaison with the Director, Joint Staff, and the various heads of the Joint Staff directorates.⁵

As Chairman, General Brown encountered some of his most serious difficulties in the area of public relations. In October 1974 he made impromptu remarks that led to a public rebuke by President Gerald R. Ford. During a question-and-answer session following a speech he had delivered at the Duke University Law School, General Brown referred to the power of Jews and their money in the United States, suggesting that Israel exercised undue influence over US foreign policy. When a public uproar ensued, General Brown apologized for his remarks. Yet, in an interview published two years later, he made similar comments as well as intemperate statements about Britain and Iran.⁶

These episodes led some members of the incoming Carter administration to doubt General Brown's fitness to stay on as Chairman. But with General Brown a quarter of the way into his second and (by law) final two-year term, President Carter was content to let the matter ride.⁷ Moreover, as soon became abundantly clear, the Chairman's policy differences with the new administration over such sensitive

issues as strategic arms control and the Panama Canal Treaty would not cause any major political headaches or embarrassment for the White House.⁸ The most serious source of discord was General Brown's decision in the summer of 1977 to turn over to the House Armed Services Committee copies of top secret back-channel messages between the JCS and US commanders in Korea highly critical of the administration's decision to withdraw US ground forces from the Korean peninsula. Compared with communications through regular channels, these back-channel cables painted a worrisome, even alarming view of the administration's withdrawal policy. That the Chairman should have disclosed such information, despite approval from the Secretary of Defense, drew blistering criticism from the National Security Council (NSC) Staff's senior Far Eastern expert, Michael Armacost, who characterized it as "an outrageous procedure."⁹ But despite the furor this episode produced, it was clear that General Brown had not acted with malicious intent and that he wanted to preserve a constructive and cooperative relationship with the new administration.

By early 1978 General Brown, for health reasons, was turning more and more of his responsibilities over to his assistants and stand-ins. Stricken with cancer, he retired from active duty on 20 June 1978, ten days before the expiration of his second term as Chairman. Less than six months later, on 5 December 1978, he died.

General Brown's successor as Chairman was the serving Air Force Chief of Staff, General David C. Jones. Although not unprecedented, it was increasingly rare to see officers from the same Service succeed one another in the Chairmanship. More notable was that General Jones was the only Chairman who lacked a Service academy or university degree. Born and raised in the Dakotas, he dropped out of college in 1942 to become an aviation cadet in the Army Air Corps. By war's end he had decided to make the military his career. The opportunity to fly combat missions in World War II eluded him, but during the Korean War he logged more than 300 hours on bombing assignments against North Korea. Assigned to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) in 1954, he became an air operations planner and later an aide to General Curtis LeMay, the Strategic Air Command Commander. During the 1960s and early 1970s he occupied a variety of Air Force operational and command positions in Europe and Southeast Asia, and in 1974 President Nixon named him to be Air Force Chief of Staff.¹⁰

President Carter's decision to elevate General Jones to the Chairmanship was not without controversy. Not only did General Jones have little experience in the joint planning arena but also there were those on Capitol Hill and in the military who felt he was overly susceptible to civilian influence.¹¹ A case in point was General Jones' acquiescence, as Air Force Chief of Staff in 1977, to President Carter's cancellation of the B-1 bomber, a plane that General Jones had once strongly supported. Proponents of the B-1, feeling that General Jones had caved in too easily to the cancellation order, argued that he should have fought harder to keep the plane as a necessary part of the strategic triad and in order to avoid conceding any unilateral advantage to the Soviet Union's new Backfire bomber. Responding to his critics, General Jones quietly floated a proposal with the White House to use the B-1's engines in a modified FB-111H, a

combination that General Jones termed an excellent “equalizer” for the Backfire, not as an operational program, but as something to be held in reserve should the strategic situation merit full production.¹² However, President Carter turned the proposal down, apparently preferring to develop the Stealth bomber instead. Looking back, General Jones was satisfied that he had done as much as he could “There were those who said I should have fallen on my sword,” he recalled of his role in the B-1 cancellation. But he doubted whether doing so would have served any useful purpose. “Carter had campaigned on cancellation of the B-1,” he emphasized. “Who am I to sit in judgment?”¹³

All the same, General Jones’ appointment seemed to some critics consistent with an emerging pattern by the Carter administration of naming competent yet compliant officers to sit on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. At the same time as he nominated General Jones, President Carter also sent to the Senate the names of two other new JCS members: General Lew Allen, Jr., to become the Air Force Chief of Staff; and Admiral Thomas D. Hayward to succeed the popular and respected Admiral James L. Holloway, III, as Chief of Naval Operations. General Allen was at heart a scientist, with a Ph.D. in physics, while Admiral Hayward’s background was in naval aviation and program analysis. Both were able and dedicated officers, but they were hardly known outside their respective Services and came from career backgrounds that prepared them more as technical rather than as politico-military advisers to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. The net effect, wrote Bernard Weinraub of the *New York Times*, was “an awareness within the defense hierarchy that the influence of the Joint Chiefs is on the decline.”¹⁴ A year later, President Carter made two further appointments: General Edward C. Meyer, who succeeded General Bernard W. Rogers as Army Chief of Staff; and General Robert H. Barrow, replacing General Louis H. Wilson as Commandant of the Marine Corps.

In fairness, those who served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Carter years exercised their duties with the utmost seriousness, but all too often felt constrained by forces beyond their control and by a lack of popular support. Anti-military sentiment in Congress and among the public at large remained strong, so that even when the Chiefs took exception to the President’s policies, they knew they were doing so from a weakened position. Often, they would fume in private but then back away from a confrontation when they finally met with the President.¹⁵ Moreover, building a consensus within the JCS remained as difficult as ever. Interservice rivalry and differences continued to be facts of life, especially where budgetary allocations were concerned, and led frequently to lowest-common-denominator compromises that cast doubt on the usefulness of JCS recommendations. General David Jones commonly referred to such advice as the “pabulum” that would come up from below.¹⁶ But despite obvious flaws in the JCS system, there was as yet little support or interest in Congress for making wholesale reforms. Given the impediments under which the JCS operated at this time, these Chiefs were probably neither better nor worse than any of their predecessors at resolving critical issues.

Liaison with the White House and the NSC

During Carter's presidency, as before, the principal point of regular contact between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President was through the National Security Council and its supporting staff. Created by the National Security Act of 1947, the same law that had given the Joint Chiefs statutory standing, the NSC exercised broad responsibility for coordinating and overseeing interdepartmental deliberations and high-level decisions. However, under President Carter it was clear from the beginning that the NSC would enjoy considerably less power and prestige than it had exercised during the Nixon-Ford years. While campaigning for the presidency, Governor Carter had attacked President Ford for allowing Secretary of State (and former National Security Adviser) Henry A. Kissinger to pursue his own secret agenda through "Lone Ranger" diplomacy; he vowed that, if elected, he would exercise closer personal supervision over foreign affairs.¹⁷

Working out the details of a new NSC system fell to President Carter's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and his deputy, David L. Aaron. Together, they came up with a plan (PD-2) that dismantled the elaborate committee structure devised by Dr. Kissinger in favor of simpler arrangements that vested major advisory functions in two cabinet-level bodies: the Special Coordination Committee (SCC), chaired by Dr. Brzezinski, which had explicit responsibility for intelligence oversight (including covert operations), arms control evaluation, and crisis management; and the Policy Review Committee (PRC), normally headed by the Secretary of State, which had jurisdiction over everything else. To provide support, NSC Interdepartmental Groups (IGs) and/or NSC Ad Hoc Groups (AHGs) would be available as needed.¹⁸ The full NSC, with the President presiding, would meet as necessary (some thirty-five meetings, fewer than one a month, actually took place). New designations also took effect for NSC documents: National Security Study Memoranda (NSSMs) became Presidential Review Memoranda (PRMs), and National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDMs) became Presidential Directives (PDs).¹⁹

During the weeks immediately following the inauguration, the NSC Staff issued fifteen PRMs mandating in-depth policy reexaminations across a wide range of topics. The short suspense times of most of the studies, together with the complexity of the issues addressed, severely taxed the capacity of the Joint Staff and the Military Services to respond to PRM issues with the requisite thoroughness. A case in point was the handling of PRM-5, dealing with the Cyprus-Aegean dispute, which reached the Joint Staff in late January 1977 under conditions which allowed less than two working days for agency inputs and only seventeen hours for the Department of Defense to coordinate its response to the NSC. Action officers at the JCS encountered similarly tight deadlines in dealing with policy reviews on Panama (PRM-1), Cuba (in the context of PRM-17), Korea (PRM-13), and the Philippines base negotiations (PRM-14).²⁰ Dr. Brzezinski was reportedly "incensed" that the "usefulness and effectiveness of PRC and SCC meetings . . . [had] been seriously hampered" by the late circulation of

papers to be discussed at the meetings. But he readily acknowledged that he had no one to blame but himself and his NSC Staff and promised to do better by pledging to give participants at least two full days to prepare for a scheduled meeting.²¹

All the same, problems persisted in establishing satisfactory JCS-NSC coordination. While time constraints eased somewhat, JCS planners and action officers encountered new procedures that they felt worked against them in obtaining a fair hearing for their views. Most troublesome of all, they found, were NSC procedures that effectively stifled dissent by making little allowance for the airing or circulation of opposing analyses and recommendations prior to formal PRC/SCC discussions. Instead of presenting the committees with the range of opinions expressed at the working level, the NSC Staff tended to table position papers, making it appear that there was already a consensus. Nor were participating agencies able to obtain authoritative guidance on the results of PRC/SCC deliberations requiring follow-on action. On 3 May 1977 the Joint Chiefs aired their complaints at a meeting with the Secretary of Defense, but they were unsuccessful in persuading him to send Dr. Brzezinski a friendly, albeit firm, memorandum setting forth their position.²²

Meanwhile, on 10 June 1977 President Carter withdrew National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 55, the 1961 directive issued by President John F. Kennedy in the wake of the Bay of Pigs episode, encouraging the Joint Chiefs to present their corporate views “direct and unfiltered” to the President. Although apparently not unexpected, the withdrawal of NSAM 55 further underscored the frustrations the JCS continued to encounter in establishing satisfactory policy coordination with the Carter White House. The reasons later given by the President for abolishing the directive were that “changed circumstances” and unspecified “organizational arrangements” rendered it no longer appropriate. Subsequently, though, in September 1977, the White House issued a replacement directive employing language similar to the original, but dropping a paragraph on JCS responsibilities for Cold War operations. Also, the new directive incorporated two subtle yet significant refinements—one giving the Chairman or Acting Chairman somewhat greater latitude to represent JCS views in the absence of his colleagues; the other requiring the JCS to inform the Secretary of Defense before presenting their “direct and unfiltered” advice to the President.²³

The full extent and impact of the various changes in JCS-NSC-White House relations that accompanied the advent of the Carter administration were most explicitly indicated in JCS Policy Memorandum 158, revised and reissued in July 1978. This memorandum summarized the functions and activities of the PRC, the SCC, and their supporting subgroups; prescribed the JCS representation at each level of deliberation; articulated the policy for presenting JCS views; and described the procedures to be followed for coordination of papers, filing dissents and appeals, and distributing documents.²⁴ The overall appearance was that of a smoothly functioning machine, with few reminders of the problems that had plagued it during the Carter administration’s early days. However, such was not the case. In fact, as far as the JCS were concerned, frustrations continued to abound. Though formal complaints would become less frequent,

the feeling persisted, almost down to the day President Carter left office, that JCS representatives at the working level received less than fair treatment from the NSC Staff and that the Joint Chiefs themselves still had a hard time making their views heard.²⁵

A mitigating factor in this situation was the usually favorable rapport that existed between the Joint Chiefs and the President's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who emerged as one of the Chiefs' strongest and most dependable allies within the new administration. The son of a refugee Polish diplomat, "Zbig" (as he was known familiarly) had been a professor of government at Columbia University when he met President Carter in the early 1970s and began advising him on foreign affairs. As President, Carter initially embraced a "team approach" to foreign policymaking that relied in the first instance on a triumvirate made up of Dr. Brzezinski, Secretary of Defense Brown, and Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance. However, President Carter soon came to doubt Secretary Vance's effectiveness as a foreign policy spokesman and began assigning this and other key functions to Dr. Brzezinski.²⁶ "The President frequently said," Dr. Brzezinski later explained, "that he simply did not get enough integrated thinking and creative initiative from the Department of State. And as a consequence, quite early on he started turning to the National Security Council and to me for that role."²⁷

Though not the powerful behind-the-scenes policy manager that Dr. Kissinger had been, Dr. Brzezinski enjoyed a close rapport with the President that considerably enhanced his stature and increased his authority over foreign policy. As one of President Carter's biographers described it: "Brzezinski and Carter got along famously. The Eastern European and the southern American, workaholics both, were Washington outsiders, impatient with the ceremonial side of governing and blessed with a stunning ability to absorb and retain mounds of raw foreign policy data." Occasional differences aside, they worked easily together and established a friendship that lasted past Carter's presidency.²⁸

As time went on, Dr. Brzezinski and the State Department found themselves increasingly at odds over major issues. Dr. Brzezinski, as a rule, was more skeptical of détente, more cautious on arms control, and put more faith in raw military power than Secretary Vance and his State Department colleagues. According to Secretary Vance, their chief divergence was over Dr. Brzezinski's tendency to see US-Soviet relations in terms of an overarching "geopolitical struggle," whereas Secretary Vance sought cooperation and accommodation.²⁹ Secretary Vance was no pacifist, but having served as Deputy Secretary of Defense in the mid-1960s during the Vietnam buildup, he felt he knew the limits of military power. As Secretary of State in the Carter administration, Mr. Vance routinely resisted increases in military strength, the procurement of new weapons systems he deemed destabilizing to the strategic balance (e.g., the MX missile), or ventures abroad entailing military aid or direct military action. Eventually, it was the President's decision, partly on Dr. Brzezinski's advice, to use military power rather than diplomacy to resolve the Iran hostage situation that precipitated Secretary Vance's resignation in April 1980.³⁰

As Dr. Brzezinski's differences with State mounted, he began casting about for allies to provide bureaucratic support. Inevitably, he gravitated toward the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose views on defense and security issues more closely resembled his own and whose help he recognized he would need on certain key issues. In an effort to strengthen his credibility with the Chiefs, Dr. Brzezinski brought in Fritz Ermarth, an expert on the Soviet military, and Major General Jasper A. Welch, USAF, a nuclear weapons specialist, to join defense analyst Victor A. Utgoff and Colonel William E. Odom, USA, Dr. Brzezinski's military assistant, on the NSC's military cluster. Dr. Brzezinski assumed, for example, that the Senate was unlikely to approve a new strategic arms control agreement (SALT II) that lacked a vigorous JCS endorsement, and toward this end he made "a sustained effort" to line up JCS backing.³¹ In so doing, Dr. Brzezinski initiated various back-channel contacts—luncheons and so forth—between senior members of the NSC Staff and the JCS to help firm up their relationship. Dr. Brzezinski knew that these meetings violated Secretary of Defense Brown's guidelines on contacts and that they irritated him intensely, but he persisted anyway in the belief that Secretary Brown's policy on outside contacts was unduly restrictive.³²

Despite the encouragement the JCS must have received from these contacts, the actual dividends appear to have been mixed. As General Jones later recalled, he welcomed opportunities to build "coalitions" in support of JCS positions, hinting that Dr. Brzezinski's overtures were part of this process.³³ But the major stumbling block, as always during the Carter years, was the President's aversion to military power. President Carter, while he highly valued Dr. Brzezinski's advice and ideas, was closer philosophically to Secretary Vance's views on the limited role that military force should play in foreign policy.³⁴ Although President Carter gradually felt compelled to modify his position, adopting policies with respect to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Persian Gulf, for example, that gave additional weight to military factors, he did so with the greatest reluctance. And despite mounting evidence of an across-the-board Soviet military buildup, he resisted increases in military spending throughout his presidency and once told an NSC meeting that he found the demands for defense expenditures comprising "a bottomless pit."³⁵ In these circumstances, the Joint Chiefs invariably found it tough going to put their views across, no matter how many friends and allies they had at the White House.

Inside the Pentagon

Inside the Pentagon, the arrival of the Carter administration made little immediate difference in how the Joint Chiefs discharged their responsibilities.³⁶ Even so, the new Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, left no doubt that changes were on the way. Having served in the Defense Department in the 1960s as Secretary of the Air Force and as Director of Defense Research and Engineering, Secretary Brown was acquainted with JCS procedures, many of which he believed to be sorely in need of reform. The

resulting changes fell into two categories: (1) those dealing with the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS), including JCS involvement in the analysis of force requirements, program development, and the allocation of resources; and (2) those concerning the management and coordination of politico-military affairs within the Department of Defense.

During his four years as Secretary of Defense, Dr. Brown involved himself in practically all areas of departmental activity, but as a scientist (like General Lew Allen, he held a Ph.D. in physics) he was more comfortable and effective dealing with technical problems than with policy matters.³⁷ A frequent criticism was that he concentrated too much on individual issues and not enough on broad themes. Early in his career he acquired a reputation for being impatient and brusque with military officers who disagreed with him, but by the time he became Secretary of Defense, his attitude had mellowed.³⁸ He preferred working with the JCS as much as possible through the Chairman, and schedules permitting, he and the Chairman would meet every day at 11:00 AM to review current business. Keeping face-to-face meetings with the other Chiefs to a minimum, Secretary Brown preferred communicating with them through written memoranda or penning his responses directly to papers he received. General Jones, who had known Secretary Brown since the early 1960s, found him exceptionally well informed and thoroughly professional. While acknowledging that they had their ups and downs, General Jones felt that overall they achieved “a very close relationship.”³⁹

By far the most ambitious reforms affecting the JCS that Secretary Brown introduced were those stemming from his decision to update the PPBS process. Secretary Brown believed that he and the President should be more closely involved early on in shaping the budget and that the Joint Chiefs should provide greater analytical support in arriving at decisions on force levels and the allocation of resources among the Services. The cornerstone of Secretary Brown’s fiscal reform package was his “Consolidated Guidance,” which in turn necessitated significant changes in the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS). Unveiled early in 1978, the Secretary’s Consolidated Guidance replaced the old Defense Guidance and several other directives and provided the JCS and the Military Services with a more comprehensive picture of the administration’s policy, program, and fiscal criteria at the outset of each budget cycle.⁴⁰

As part of these reforms, the JCS launched a major overhaul of the JSPS, the most far-reaching revision of their planning practices since the 1950s. Short-range planning, contained in the biennial Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), assigning tasks and allocating forces to the unified and specified commands, remained the same. However, mid-range planning and other JCS inputs to the PPBS underwent extensive revision. At the Secretary’s request, the Joint Chiefs would provide annually a new seven-year projection of force requirements, known as the Joint Strategic Planning Document (JSPD), and a Joint Program Assessment Memorandum (JPAM) containing a risk assessment based on the composite of the Services’ budget submissions.⁴¹ Acting on the advice of outside consultants, Secretary Brown also created a Defense Resources Board (DRB) to assist in screening Service requests and named the Chairman, Joint

Chiefs of Staff, an *ex officio* member.⁴² These reforms clearly enhanced the utility of the Joint Strategic Planning System and greatly increased JCS visibility and influence in the budget process, especially for the Chairman. However, it remained to be seen, as one skeptic put it, whether the Joint Chiefs would live up to their new responsibilities and exercise “a credible institutional role” in resources allocation.⁴³

The Joint Chiefs of Staff participation in politico-military affairs, including liaison between the Pentagon and other agencies, received extensive attention as well. Although less rigid than some of his predecessors, Secretary of Defense Brown insisted that all contacts outside the Defense Department be coordinated through the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The procedures Secretary Brown initially prescribed were not much different from those laid down by previous Secretaries and reflected newly issued White House guidelines specifying that in matters of high-level national security the President preferred dealing directly with the Secretary or his deputy, making no mention of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the Chairman. However, as the Director, Joint Staff, hastened to point out, such procedures were not always practical. Indeed, there were numerous areas “basic to the support of the President,” including intelligence, communications, and custody of the nuclear launch codes, where the Joint Staff had to maintain routine contacts with the White House and would continue to do so unless otherwise directed.⁴⁴

Although Secretary Brown recognized the need for exceptions to his policy on contacts, it was increasingly clear that he found existing arrangements for interagency liaison and politico-military coordination within the Pentagon unsatisfactory. Under the system he inherited, either the Joint Chiefs would send the Secretary a formal memorandum of their corporate views or, as was increasingly the case, the Director, Joint Staff, and the appropriate Assistant Secretary of Defense would give the Secretary (or his deputy) and the JCS Chairman an agreed talking paper to be used at NSC discussions.⁴⁵ Believing that the Department of Defense should “function as a unit in support of the President,” the Secretary proposed to take this process one step further by developing “a single coordinated Defense position,” a recommendation in which General Brown, the JCS Chairman at the time, reportedly concurred.⁴⁶ Plans delineating the details were slow to emerge, but the feeling among several of the Secretary’s advisers was that responsibility should rest with the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs (ISA) and that there should be “a firm commitment to integrate Joint Staff or JCS views into a single OSD/JCS response,” with due allowance for conflicting views should the need arise.⁴⁷

While there is no clear evidence that any of the Service Chiefs strenuously objected to the changes the Secretary was contemplating, it was apparent that none considered it realistic or practicable to aim for a wholly synthesized OSD-JCS perspective in each and every instance. As described in JCS Policy Memorandum 158, development of a coordinated OSD-JCS position should be a desired and early goal but not a prerequisite for taking action on a particular problem requiring interagency deliberations. Thus, a joint talking paper reflecting a coordinated OSD-JCS position should continue to be

the preferred basis for representing the Defense position in the NSC and other high-level committees involving the Chairman and the Secretary, but that need not always be the case if time or circumstances should not permit. Nor should the absence of a coordinated position inhibit JCS participation at the various working levels, even if as a result the JCS and OSD representatives wound up presenting wholly different views that might need to be reconciled later.⁴⁸

An alternative approach, usually more favored by OSD officials than by the JCS, was to combine OSD and JCS representation into a single individual. Though obviously not suitable in all instances, it seemed to Secretary of Defense Brown an ideal solution for providing representation to international conferences and negotiations that might not warrant the diversion of resources to support two participants. A case in point was his proposal in 1978 to merge OSD and JCS representation to the Law of the Sea negotiations, using a retired officer to represent both organizations.⁴⁹ Secretary Brown's model was the work done by Lieutenant General Welborn G. "Tom" Dolvin, USA (Ret.), who had served as the OSD-JCS representative to the Panama Canal Treaty negotiations.⁵⁰ But this had been a special case; on all other ongoing negotiations the JCS had separate representation. Citing the possibility of "divergent viewpoints" and the need for "an advocate" of JCS views, the Joint Staff recommended against creating another exception. However, the Acting Director, Joint Staff, Major General John A. Wickham, Jr., USA, disagreed, on the grounds that the money-saving features of a single representative in this instance amply justified the risk.⁵¹ In reviewing new terms of reference for a single representative, Secretary Brown noted approvingly that he found this arrangement to be "a good idea," and hoped that "analogous situations" would permit additional such appointments in the future.⁵² Even so, there were no further exceptions for the duration of Carter's presidency.

Meanwhile, in October 1977 Congress approved legislation creating the post of Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.⁵³ Included under the office's charter were authority and responsibility for overseeing politico-military affairs, interagency representation and coordination, intelligence, space policy, nuclear weapons policy, civil defense, and other national security matters that likewise concerned the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵⁴ Even so, the immediate impact on OSD-JCS relations was negligible owing to the difficulties Secretary Brown experienced in finding a suitable incumbent.⁵⁵ Finally, in October 1979 he named Robert W. Komer, a former senior intelligence analyst and ambassador to Turkey, who had been serving in OSD as a special adviser on NATO affairs. Known for his vigorous style and forceful leadership, which had earned him the nickname "Blowtorch," Mr. Komer was already a familiar figure to the Joint Staff because of his work on NATO. Quickly settling into his new job, he made a point of establishing close working relations with the Chairman and senior officers in the Joint Staff directorates, often peppering them with daily memoranda, requests, and suggestions that could sometimes sorely test their patience. Mr. Komer assumed that a large part of his job was to expedite the development of military strategy and politico-military planning. Looking back, he estimated that he spent half or more of

his time with the Chiefs working on the plans and preparations for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, perhaps the most successful defense initiative to come out of Carter's presidency.⁵⁶

Growing Pressure for JCS Organizational Reform

While the Carter years witnessed no fundamental changes in JCS organization or operations, other than to make the Commandant of the Marine Corps a full participating member, they did contribute to laying the basis for what would become the reforms contained in the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. President Carter placed great personal emphasis on providing effective and efficient government, and it was with this end in mind that he set in motion numerous studies and investigations to improve public administration. The Defense Department, as the largest, most costly, and reputedly one of the least efficient of the Executive Departments at the time, became a primary target for structural and operational reform. Although President Carter applauded and encouraged the PPBS changes and other administrative reforms introduced by Secretary of Defense Brown, he regarded them as only the first step toward a basic overhaul of Defense Department operations, including those of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵⁷

President Carter's efforts were not without precedent. Since World War II almost every administration had conducted its own inquiries into improving the management of the defense establishment, building on the legislation passed in 1947 that had unified the armed services. Invariably, these inquiries had uncovered disappointment and discontent with the performance of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their various functions. Even the Chiefs themselves concurred that they operated within a less-than-perfect system. Yet, despite broad agreement that the JCS could be improved, there was no emerging consensus on what should be done to make the organization run better.⁵⁸

At the insistence of the White House, Secretary of Defense Brown in November 1977 commissioned three (later expanded to five) reviews of separate aspects of the defense organization.⁵⁹ Included was a study of the national military command structure by a group headed by Richard C. Steadman, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. Filed in July 1978, the Steadman group's final report accorded extensive treatment to JCS organization and functions. While Mr. Steadman and his associates recommended no change in the JCS role in the national command structure, they did find what they considered serious flaws in JCS staffing procedures and the JCS paper system. It was, the group believed, "difficult for the Joint Staff to produce persuasively argued joint papers which transcend Service positions and difficult for the JCS to arrive at joint decisions in many important areas."⁶⁰ To remedy the situation, the Steadman group recommended revised procedures that would make the Joint Staff alone responsible for authorship of JCS papers, present "comprehensive analysis of alternatives whenever appropriate, encouraging expression of differing views," and

supply the Joint Staff with high-level guidance at the onset of the review of a given issue. Additionally, the group urged the Military Services to make their most talented and qualified officers available for assignment to the Joint Staff.⁶¹

The Steadman group was especially critical of the JCS role in resource allocation and force planning and argued for changes that would contribute further toward improving the PPB system. Indeed, as the Steadman group saw it, the Chiefs' dual role as JCS members and as heads of their Military Services created inherent tensions that prevented them from giving wholly objective and useful advice in these important areas. Since the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the only military officer with no current or prospective service responsibilities, the group believed that he was in a unique position to provide national military advice. Accordingly, it recommended that the Chairman be charged with supplying the Secretary with advice on program, budget, and force structure issues, allowing him augmented staff support in the studies, analysis, and gaming area, as appropriate. Further, in order to enhance command management, the group recommended that the Secretary of Defense name the Chairman as his agent to supervise the commanders of the unified and specified commands.⁶²

The Steadman group believed that if the changes it proposed were fully and faithfully implemented, much of the dissatisfaction with the JCS system would disappear. However, if this proved not to be the case, then solutions of "a more fundamental nature" might be in order. Most radical of all was the group's proposal of a body of National Military Advisers (NMA) who would be totally separate from Service connections. The NMA would include a senior officer from each Service, one of whom would be chairman, and would serve the Secretary of Defense, the President, and the NSC in much the same capacity as the current Joint Chiefs of Staff. The National Military Advisers would be responsible for joint planning, operations, and advice but would have no Service assignments. In these circumstances, the Steadman group assumed, conflicting Service responsibilities would be less inhibiting.⁶³

That the appearance of the Steadman report happened to coincide with the appointment of three new JCS members, including a new Chairman, seemed to suggest the looming possibility of a wholesale reorganization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But as the report gained wider circulation over the summer of 1978, it became obvious that the Carter administration had no immediate plans for restructuring the JCS, nor was it likely to put any forward until it could approach Congress with agreed recommendations, probably in President Carter's second term.

Notably absent was any groundswell of support within the military for JCS reform. At his first press conference as Chairman, General Jones downplayed the Steadman report's probable impact, indicating that he could see as yet no emerging consensus for what should be done. "We have a long ways to go," he said, "before we can really figure out how to merge all of these conflicting views in the joint arena and come up with recommendations on some of these difficult issues."⁶⁴ Privately, General Jones told Secretary of Defense Brown that, while he saw "a number of things" that would improve JCS performance, he fully anticipated that the changes, if any, would be minor. "I firmly

believe . . . ,” he said, “that the fundamental organizational structure is sound.”⁶⁵ Commenting as a corporate body, the Joint Chiefs concurred that the Steadman report contained many “innovative, positive suggestions.” But they likewise cautioned that efforts at implementation should be “evolutionary in nature.”⁶⁶

Acting on their own initiative, the Joint Chiefs did in fact carry out various internal reforms recommended by the Steadman group to improve Joint Staff procedures and to enhance both their own and the Chairman’s role in resource allocation and planning. But, by and large, the movement for JCS reorganization in the Carter years sputtered to a halt shortly after it got started. Although the problems may have appeared obvious, solutions that would not upset the delicate balance that governed JCS deliberations were less so. The movement for JCS reform was indeed beginning to take shape, but it would be some time before it gathered sufficient momentum to produce more than superficial changes.



Honorable Harold Brown, The Secretary of Defense.
(Oscar Porter, US Army Audiovisual Activity, The Pentagon, Washington, DC 20310)

The Persian Gulf and the Rapid Deployment Force

Not since the early days of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had the Joint Chiefs of Staff faced a set of regional security problems as complex and challenging as those in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia in the late 1970s. In the wake of the Yom Kippur War and the crippling Arab oil embargo of 1973-1974, it was increasingly clear that the United States had a growing stake in preserving peace and stability throughout the Middle East and that US security interests there, including preservation of the Western allies' access to Persian Gulf oil reserves, would command close attention for some years to come. Further east, political and social unrest in Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan threatened a power vacuum along the southern periphery of the Soviet Union, which the Soviets appeared poised to fill. Although the United States was not nearly as dependent on Gulf oil as were the nations of Western Europe and Japan, the recurring fear in Washington was over the disastrous ripple effects that a renewed cutoff of oil supplies could have. One way or another, the consequences would impinge on the United States.

Oil Problems: Challenge and Response

Reflecting on the energy crisis of the early 1970s, President Jimmy Carter said in his memoirs that he fully empathized with Americans who “deeply resented that the greatest nation on earth was being jerked around by a few desert states.”¹ Bearing in mind the country's vulnerability to future disruptions of oil supplies, President Carter singled out the development of a comprehensive energy program as one of his administration's top priorities. In a nationwide address on 18 April 1977, he termed his energy policy the moral equivalent of war, except that the purpose would be a uniting

of efforts to build rather than to destroy. In furtherance of this objective, the President listed ten guiding principles, generally stressing the need for fuel conservation, the development of alternative sources of power, and improved use of existing resources. Military sanctions to protect and preserve Western and Japanese access to Middle East oil supplies were not among the President's list of measures, but neither did he exclude such actions should the need arise.²

In fact, JCS planning for oil-related contingencies in the Middle East-Persian Gulf had been ongoing since the first oil embargo of 1973-1974.³ By the Carter administration, in-place forces for such purposes included the US Sixth Fleet and US Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR). The Sixth Fleet consisted of 2 aircraft carriers, approximately 14 surface combatants, 4 attack submarines, 5 amphibious ships with a Marine amphibious unit (approximately 1,800 strength) embarked, and logistic support ships. The Middle East Force, operating in the Arabian Sea-Persian Gulf area, normally consisted of a flagship and two surface combatants. Three times a year, a Pacific Command (PACOM) task force of approximately four surface combatants with logistic support ships deployed to the Indian Ocean for a period of approximately fifty days. Occasionally, an aircraft carrier would accompany the surface task group deployments.⁴

Though plans for further strengthening of US capabilities in the Middle East and Persian Gulf took shape slowly, they reflected a steadily growing appreciation among the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the strategic importance of countries in and around the Gulf. Two countries in that region—Iran and Saudi Arabia—fell into what the JCS considered the “vital interest” category because of their strategic locations and extensive oil reserves. Basic policy guidance the Chiefs received derived from a White House-mandated review of overall national security policy (PRM-10), initiated near the outset of the Carter administration under the joint supervision of the President's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown.⁵ Such reviews had become almost a ritual since the 1950s, as each incoming administration endeavored to correct what it viewed to be the failures and shortcomings of its predecessor, and in so doing to affix its own stamp to national security policy. In this case, however, the resulting presidential guidance (PD-18), approved on 24 August 1977, was less significant for charting new horizons than for papering over differences between Dr. Brzezinski and his State Department rivals. Middle East-Persian Gulf policy was a case in point. While State wanted to downplay the role of US military power there, Dr. Brzezinski favored more concrete initiatives backed by what PD-18 described as a “force of light divisions with strategic mobility”—i.e., a rapid deployment force—that could respond quickly to sudden emergencies.⁶

Even though the idea of a rapid deployment force received formal sanction in PD-18, its creation, as one of its later architects characterized it, languished “on the back burner” the next two years for budgetary reasons and because of higher priority security needs assigned to NATO Europe.⁷ Moreover, until the 1979 Islamic revolution swept the Shah of Iran from power, US policy toward Southwest Asia rested heavily on building up Iran as the regional policeman, thereby relieving the United States of

considerable responsibility. An ardent advocate of arms control, President Carter also hoped to negotiate a formal agreement with the Soviet Union that would, in effect, demilitarize the Indian Ocean. He therefore approached military commitments toward that part of the world with a good deal of caution, and in September 1977 directed Secretary of Defense Brown to “monitor closely” the pace of new US construction on the British-owned island of Diego Garcia.⁸ The Joint Chiefs viewed such unilateral restraint as counterproductive, and in January 1978 they reiterated warnings of possible adverse consequences, citing stepped up Soviet activity in Ethiopia and South Yemen. Shortly thereafter, US-Soviet talks on demilitarizing the Indian Ocean went into indefinite recess, and from this point on White House enthusiasm for the policy began to fade.⁹

Whether a larger US military presence in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean region would better serve US interests there became the subject of recurring high-level discussions for the next several years. Throughout this period, JCS planning followed a cautious yet predictable course, which acknowledged the possibility of deeper military involvement but with due regard for the President’s known preference to rely in the first instance on political and diplomatic solutions. Seizing the initiative, the Joint Chiefs in mid-January 1978 directed the Studies, Analysis, and Gaming Agency (SAGA) to provide an assessment of US capabilities to meet contingencies in the Middle East-Persian Gulf. As this study was being organized, Secretary of Defense Brown on 17 March requested an in-depth review of US strategy to counter Soviet inroads and to safeguard the availability of oil from the Middle East and Persian Gulf, with terms of reference to be submitted by the end of May.¹⁰ The Operations Deputies, meeting on 19 May 1978, urged giving the Secretary’s request first priority and suggested further that it would provide the Joint Chiefs of Staff with an ideal opportunity, if not to influence US policy directly, then at least to air their views. The Chiefs agreed and notified the Secretary that they were treating his request as one of their top concerns.¹¹

Over the course of the ensuing review, the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary’s Office, represented by the Deputy Under Secretary for Policy, Admiral Daniel J. Murphy, USN (Ret.), collaborated closely in establishing an OSD-Joint Staff steering group to oversee the exercise and to establish terms of reference.¹² An ad hoc working group, chaired by J-5, with a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) representative and representatives from each Service, developed the final study that went to the Joint Chiefs.¹³ Initially, the Chiefs intended to address military contingencies with emphasis on Soviet strategy, steps the United States and its allies should take to attain their objectives, and ways to encourage the countries of the area to counter Soviet initiatives.¹⁴ After reviewing the Chiefs’ terms of reference, Admiral Murphy urged them to delve more deeply into Soviet perspectives—whether the Soviets had genuine interests in the Persian Gulf or were merely looking for some pretext for intervention; whether the Soviets truly appreciated the West’s stake in the Gulf; and what factors might inhibit or induce Soviet actions. Admiral Murphy also suggested that the Chiefs look closely at the future of Soviet political influence in the area; whether the Soviets had designs on Persian Gulf oil for their own use; how arms transfers might affect regional stability; and current

and projected Soviet access to base facilities.¹⁵ JCS planners agreed informally that the concerns Admiral Murphy raised did indeed merit attention. But for the purposes of the projected study, they saw no need for changing the terms of reference as previously agreed.¹⁶

Although not intended for immediate decision-making purposes, inputs to both the SAGA study and the strategic review found their way into policy channels sooner than the Joint Chiefs anticipated. This occurred in connection with a Special Coordination Committee (SCC) study, initiated at the President's request in August 1977, of US vulnerabilities to future disruptions in the world petroleum supply.¹⁷ As part of their participation in this inquiry, the Joint Chiefs assumed the task of preparing two brief support studies—one addressing the capability of current US military forces to deal with oil-related contingencies in the Persian Gulf, especially threats posed by Soviet or Cuban forces operating from South Yemen; and a separate report on operational capabilities and the military benefits of a permanent US air base and naval base in the Middle East-Persian Gulf area.¹⁸ The first study, briefed to the SCC in June 1978, outlined deployment times, composition, and other particulars of various sized force packages which might be sent to the region, while the second stressed the long distances involved in moving from one area in the Middle East to another and the difficulty of trying to support operations in one region from a base located in another. Drawing on these findings, a small interagency working group then set about developing a broader politico-military assessment of the issues.¹⁹

The full JCS strategic review received the Joint Chiefs' final approval on 6 September 1978 and went to Secretary of Defense Brown the next day. Earlier, the Chiefs had provided an advance draft copy to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA), in anticipation that it might be needed at the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations at the Camp David Summit. Only slightly revised, the final report reflected a high degree of consensus among the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Indeed, the only formally proposed changes came from the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, who thought the study would benefit from several minor adjustments in language.²⁰ Like earlier policy analyses of the Middle East and Persian Gulf, this one saw no single or quick solution to what was likely to be an ongoing contest between the West and the Soviet Union and among rival indigenous influences, the Arab-Israeli conflict most notably. Favoring a "collaborative effort" to offset Soviet influence, the report urged the maintenance of a balance of power, with more active US participation than in the past. The "essential objectives" of such a strategy should be: (1) a Middle East peace settlement, one of the points the CNO thought deserved greater emphasis; (2) revitalization of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) alliance, including a more active planning and leadership role for the United States; and (3) a firm and public commitment to the security of Iran and Saudi Arabia. In pursuit of these objectives, the Joint Chiefs of Staff endorsed an increase in the current levels of Western military sales to the region, the development of a base infrastructure, expanded relationships with the Saudi and Iranian armed forces, and eventually a

greater US military presence throughout the Persian Gulf and nearby areas. While the strategy review recognized that the use of US troops might be required on occasion to provide stability or to support local forces, it discouraged US military involvement in the absence of direct Soviet intervention. If combat did become unavoidable, however, it should be directed in such a manner as to ensure a quick, decisive victory.²¹

As the 1978 strategic review confirmed, the Joint Chiefs favored a more assertive US military role throughout the Middle East-Persian Gulf region. The growth in Soviet power there, both directly and indirectly, and the increasing dependence of the United States and its allies on Gulf oil invited East-West competition and heightened the risks of a confrontation. Yet, as potentially worrisome as the Middle East situation might be, there was no sense of dire emergency surrounding the report, no timetable for taking action, and no detailed estimate of the cost of forces that might be required. Aware that capabilities were limited, the Chiefs hesitated to endorse large-scale US intervention as a practical alternative. Nor was there any incentive for them to do so as long as President Carter preferred political and diplomatic measures, rather than the threat of military coercion, as the bedrock of US policy in the Gulf.

Enlarging the US Presence

At the same time as the Joint Chiefs were putting the finishing touches on their strategic review of the Middle East, events in and around the Persian Gulf were moving rapidly toward a climax that would leave the United States no choice but to rethink its policy in that area. Outwardly, President Carter exhibited confidence that the two pro-US bastions in the region—Iran and Saudi Arabia—would continue to shoulder responsibilities in ways that would obviate any need for a larger US presence. But in the face of steadily worsening political conditions in Iran, this policy was beginning to crumble. Sooner or later, it appeared, the United States would have to entertain other options, including some or all of those involving military responses as suggested by the Joint Chiefs in their strategic review. What no one counted on and few anticipated was that Iran's internal turmoil would take the direction it did, leading to the collapse of the Shah's government in January 1979 and leaving in its wake a power vacuum with repercussions across the entire Middle East and Southwest Asia.

For the Joint Chiefs, the gathering crisis in Iran had two direct consequences. One was to heighten awareness of the need for more up-to-date plans for Middle East-Persian Gulf contingencies in recognition that US military involvement there, either to help evacuate Westerners from Iran or to protect access to Persian Gulf oil, might prove unavoidable. A fluid situation, it needed constant monitoring. While the strategic review had outlined the broad problems that American planners were likely to face, much remained to be done in sorting out the details of how, when, and where military action might be used most effectively to protect US interests. Accordingly, in late September 1978 the Joint Staff and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense

for International Security Affairs launched a collaborative effort to examine various scenarios inviting US military responses in circumstances short of direct overt Soviet combat involvement. As the project gathered momentum it came to embrace an Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) study on limited contingencies that was part of the response to PD-18—all of which eventually fed into the planning for what became the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF).²²

The other and more immediate consequence of the Iranian revolution was to stimulate preparations for the repositioning of US forces in the event of an emergency, starting with plans for the augmentation of US naval forces in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Although such proposals had come up before, they had received scant attention outside the Pentagon until the deteriorating situation in Iran and signs of growing Soviet interest forced a reassessment of US options. Until then, US confidence in the Pahlavi regime in Tehran had been virtually unconditional and had effectively inhibited military planners from taking precautionary measures. Realizing that the Shah's time was running out, National Security Adviser Brzezinski requested the Defense Department in early December 1978 to initiate contingency plans for the deployment of US forces in southern Iran. The "arc of crisis," as Dr. Brzezinski termed it, starting in the Horn of Africa, seemed to be moving eastward, and was now about to encompass the Persian Gulf.²³

Admiral Hayward quickly emerged as the leading proponent on the JCS of a more vigorous policy in support of US interests in the Persian Gulf. Twice—in December 1978 and again in January 1979—Admiral Hayward petitioned his JCS colleagues to join with him in urging a more assertive posture in the region. As a start, he recommended that a carrier battle group be moved from the Pacific into the Indian Ocean. Though the CNO said the redeployment would initially be temporary, lasting thirty to forty-five days, he indicated also that the Navy was prepared to extend the battle group's stay indefinitely. The effect would be a major step toward the creation of a fifth fleet, a move the Navy had been urging publicly and privately ever since the British announced their withdrawal east of Suez in 1968. However, as ongoing analyses indicated, a fifth fleet could be assembled only by drawing on ships from the other existing fleets and would be exceedingly expensive to maintain and provision until the United States had access to better base facilities in the region.²⁴

Following the Pahlavi regime's collapse in early January 1979, increased naval deployments became only one of several options under consideration at the White House and in the Pentagon to bolster the US position. Meeting with Secretary Brown on 9 January, as the crisis was unfolding in Tehran, the Joint Chiefs agreed to take a fresh look at possible US military initiatives in the lower Persian Gulf, including the assignment of a defense attaché to Oman and basing alternatives there and in Saudi Arabia. The Chiefs also referred the Secretary to the strategic review they had done the previous fall and urged him to submit it to the NSC. While the current Iranian situation would obviously complicate the achievement of US objectives as set forth in that paper, the Joint Chiefs believed that its basic thrust—the need for a coordinated

US strategy and the proposed politico-military initiatives in support of that strategy—remained valid and would provide much needed guidance in addressing future problems throughout the region.²⁵

Out of this meeting came a hastily prepared update of US plans and capabilities for protecting the Gulf oil fields, assembled by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David Jones, USAF, in collaboration with Admiral Murphy's office in OSD, and forwarded to the White House on 23 January.²⁶ In an accompanying memorandum, General Jones dismissed the likelihood of an unprovoked Soviet attack as "remote" and confirmed that US planning revolved around a concept of operations to protect Saudi Arabia's oil facilities and the Persian Gulf-Strait of Hormuz against all threats short of overt Soviet intervention. General Jones added that planning had reached the point of identifying most of the US units readily available for duty in the Gulf—many of the same units, incidentally, that would later make up the core of the Rapid Deployment Force. The next step, he said, would be for the Joint Staff and the US Commander in Chief, Europe (USCINCEUR), to convert this concept into operational plans for timely execution should the need arise. It was, all things considered, a measured and straightforward assessment, not as reassuring as it might have been, but not cause for alarm that the United States might find itself unprepared.²⁷

This view would change, but not immediately and only in increments which, in retrospect, marked a steady progression toward the militarization of US policy in the Gulf. Yet, at the time, it was far from clear that this would be the outcome. The dispatch of a military attaché to Oman, the exploration of basing options in the lower Gulf, and the development of contingency plans did indeed point to a more substantive US military presence in the area. But these measures did not, in and of themselves, represent a dramatic departure from past policy. Nor, with the exception of the Navy, was there much apparent enthusiasm among the Joint Chiefs for rushing into the exercise of a larger US military role in the Gulf. The White House had as yet given no sign that it was prepared to extend additional budgetary support, and until that support materialized, the Joint Chiefs tended to hold back from new commitments.

All the same, the ripple effects of the Iran crisis were beginning to elicit predictable signs of concern throughout official Washington. At the White House, differences between the President and the State Department over the handling of the Iran situation suggested a dawning disillusionment on President Carter's part with political and diplomatic initiatives and a growing interest in exploring more assertive military measures.²⁸ Indicative of the shift in the President's thinking was his approval in early January 1979 of Operation PRIZED EAGLE, sending sixteen F-15 fighters and about three hundred support personnel on a well-publicized week-long visit to Saudi Arabia. Although the planes flew unarmed, they were similar to those the United States had recently agreed to sell to Saudi Arabia, giving rise to press speculation that the visit constituted both a show of force and a demonstration exercise to acquaint the Saudis with the planes.²⁹ In fact, the Saudis themselves had requested the visit more than a year earlier as a deterrent to a possible Israeli preemptive attack. At that time, because of the political sensitivities

involved, JCS planners had shown little enthusiasm for the Saudi invitation, even though it would have provided valuable experience. But against the backdrop of the developing Iran crisis, they found it easier and more convenient to accept.³⁰

The F-15 mission was only the first of several such initiatives. In late January President Carter decided to send Secretary of Defense Brown to the Middle East for fact-finding purposes and to reassure the Saudis and other Arab states friendly toward the West of continued US support. As he was preparing to leave, Secretary Brown asked the Joint Chiefs to expedite their study of US military options in the Gulf and to consider bolstering the capabilities of the Navy's MIDEASTFOR with a "modest" tactical air capability. He also said that he would not object to an augmentation of the US naval presence in the Indian Ocean with a small carrier and "two to three more escorts" and that the Chiefs ought to consider designating this augmented group as a fifth numbered fleet. After a hurried review, the Director, Joint Staff, Lieutenant General John A. Wickham, USA, assured the Secretary that, pending a final JCS decision, his proposals seemed both "feasible and attractive."³¹

Upon his return, Secretary Brown left no doubt that, in his view, the Iranian revolution had had an unsettling impact throughout the region, requiring bolder and more forceful responses from the United States. Protecting the flow of Gulf oil, he insisted publicly, was now more than ever "clearly part of our vital interest."³² The Joint Chiefs, relying on information of their own, arrived at much the same conclusion. "An expanded US military presence in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean," they advised, "may serve to bring a measure of stability to this volatile, strategically important area while acting to reassure friendly nations concerned over recent events in Iran." Toward this end the Chiefs recommended alternating deployments of several force elements—singly or in combination—into the Indian Ocean area to demonstrate US resolve, support US and allied interests, respond to a variety of contingencies, and be capable of forming the nucleus of a larger force. Operational initiatives might include alternating one or more carrier battle groups with surface combatant task groups; deployment of a Marine air-ground task force with Harrier "jump jets" aboard amphibious shipping in conjunction with already deployed surface combatants; formation of a fifth numbered fleet if such a fleet were to operate on a long-term basis; deployment of a Marine tactical air squadron to land bases in the Indian Ocean area on a periodic basis; and periodic deployment of an Air Force tactical fighter squadron, accompanied by E-3A Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACs), to the Arabian Peninsula and Horn of Africa.³³

On 1 March Secretary Brown met with Secretary of State Vance and Dr. Brzezinski to discuss the Joint Chiefs' proposals. The upshot was to refer the entire matter to the Policy Review Committee (PRC) for further study.³⁴ As part of this process, Secretary Brown asked the JCS for a fresh analysis with specific operational initiatives and recommendations, including a close look at upgrading US facilities on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia and plans for rotation flights of fighter aircraft into and out of various pro-US Middle East countries.³⁵ But before any further deliberations could

take place, events on the southern rim of the Arabian peninsula effectively preempted what might otherwise have been a lengthy debate.

The events in question concerned reports of escalating border clashes between forces of the Soviet-backed government of South Yemen and the nominally (though not always) pro-Western government of North Yemen. Later, as more accurate intelligence became available, critics would accuse the Carter administration of having overreacted to what was essentially a limited incursion in an ongoing struggle between rival regimes with grudges to settle.³⁶ Yet, at the time, it appeared that more might be at stake. Alarmed that the fighting could spread and rock the stability of Saudi Arabia, thereby threatening the United States with the possible loss of yet another ally in the region, Dr. Brzezinski persuaded President Carter to do without the customary procedural review of options and to take action immediately. In what most observers interpreted as a signal of American resolve directed as much against Moscow as to reassure the Saudis, President Carter summarily ordered the carrier USS *Constellation* into the Indian Ocean, deployed two Air Force AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia to help monitor the Yemen border war, and waived the normal thirty-day waiting period for congressional consideration in order to expedite an emergency airlift of military supplies to North Yemen. In addition, he offered to resume US F-15 visits to Saudi Arabia, thereby allowing the Saudis to redeploy some of their planes to assist North Yemen. However, the Saudis, not wanting to appear overly dependent on the West, declined the offer.³⁷

Also in March 1979, Turkey and Pakistan followed Iran in withdrawing from the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), thus effectively ending the alliance and, with it, any lingering hopes the Joint Chiefs might have had of revitalizing this once important pillar of US Cold War policy in the Middle East.³⁸ Although the full significance of these developments is arguable (President Carter, for example, made no mention of either the collapse of CENTO or the flare-up in the Yemens in his memoirs), it seems clear that, from this point on, US responses in the Gulf would be geared increasingly to meeting Soviet-orchestrated dangers, not just the local political, economic, and social problems that had worried the Carter administration initially. One result would be a diminution of State Department influence and a corresponding increase in the visibility of Pentagon views, especially those of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in shaping US policy.

Reassessing Strategic Needs in the Gulf

By the spring of 1979 the United States had a collection of bilateral relationships and military assets variously committed to the security of the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia, but no agreed strategy or force structure on which to pin future policy and plans. Thus far the US response had been piecemeal, involving limited deployments of sea and air power for show-of-force and deterrence purposes, but no commitment of resources to any large-scale projection of military power into the region. Although the policy review under way in the SCC and the PRC would help to clarify the US position,

much would still remain to be done to translate the emerging “strategic framework” into concrete initiatives.

By far the most significant outcome of this review was the decision to press ahead with a rapid deployment force, a matter that had been held more or less in abeyance since the adoption of PD-18 nearly two years earlier. In an apparent attempt to breathe new life into the idea, the Joint Chiefs, in their Middle East strategic review of September 1978, had recommended the development of “the capability to project a multidivisional force from CONUS [Continental United States] supported by air and naval forces.” However, the Chiefs also had advised that such a force should have the capacity to operate largely on its own and that it should be able to sustain itself without dependence on NATO for stocks or reinforcements.³⁹ Not only did this impose two very large and difficult requirements under the administration’s constrained budgetary policies but also it represented a significant departure from previous assumptions governing the sizing of US forces—an independent capability to fight in the Middle East without impairing the defense of Western Europe. The emerging concept under study by the Joint Staff was that of a surge deployment force—or a “unilateral corps,” as Army planners called it—that could rush combat troops to bolster prepositioned forces involved in non-NATO contingencies.⁴⁰ How large such a force should be, how it might be used, and how it was to fit into other aspects of US policy were some of the issues thrashed out over the summer of 1979, both in the PRC and in parallel discussions between Secretary of Defense Brown and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

According to National Security Adviser Brzezinski, the crucial meetings were those held by the PRC in June 1979, with the Secretary of Defense serving as chairman. In general, while Dr. Brzezinski and Secretary Brown advocated a stronger military posture for dealing with Gulf-related security problems, the State Department—represented by Secretary Vance and Deputy Secretary Warren M. Christopher—urged caution.⁴¹ The Defense view, incorporating JCS inputs, accepted the need for a growing US military presence in the Gulf region for as long as the United States and its allies required access to Middle Eastern oil. Still to be decided were the scale and scope of US involvement. Since the United States could not maintain a level of military power in the region sufficient to cope with all foreseeable contingencies, Defense recommended that priority be given to the development of surge deployment forces that could be inserted as the need arose.⁴²

The State Department, on the other hand, doubted whether a quick reaction force effectively addressed the problem. As State saw it, the major aim should be to promote confidence among the pro-Western states of the region that the United States would continue to take an interest in their welfare and security. For this purpose, State favored more emphasis on low-profile but presumably reassuring measures such as stepped-up naval deployments, military assistance, and the like. “A surge deployment force,” State argued,

... given its lower visibility ‘over the horizon’ does not evidence the level of commitment inherent in a permanent presence. Nervous friends in the Middle

East may continue to doubt that we would (or could) respond in strength. Similarly, the Soviets and other potential foes might be tempted to exercise less caution knowing we must bring in forces from outside the area. Both routine and crisis deployments are costly and in a genuine crisis the time factor could be troublesome.⁴³

State's objections were in due course taken into account. But for the time being it was the creation of what would become the Rapid Deployment Force that held the Pentagon's attention. On 21 June the outgoing Army Chief of Staff, General Bernard W. Rogers, revealed publicly the existence of Army studies to develop a "Unilateral Corps" for quick reaction purposes. General Rogers indicated that the Army's preparations were still in the initial planning stages, but that such a force might comprise up to 100,000 non-NATO-dedicated troops.⁴⁴ Only three days later, in a nationally televised interview, Secretary of Defense Brown confirmed that, in line with the contingency planning General Rogers had mentioned, the Defense Department would improve its airlift and sealift capabilities in order to move special units to distant places on short notice.⁴⁵ Such forces, Secretary Brown later told an audience in San Francisco, constituted "rapid deployment forces" (the term preferred by the White House) and were distinct from those dedicated to NATO.⁴⁶

On 26 June Secretary Brown notified the Joint Chiefs that the PRC had in principle endorsed the creation of a surge deployment force, subject to the recognition that there were a number of regional constraints on rapid increases of US military power in the Gulf. Those he mentioned specifically were availability of mobile assets, adequacy of basing facilities, and assurance of overflight rights. Anticipating "political consultations with countries in the region" to start ironing out these problems, the Secretary asked the Chiefs to step up their planning for a surge deployment force, looking at the location and availability of staging bases; the suitability of regional facilities, including Diego Garcia, to handle surge operations; the presence of interoperable support and logistics systems; the desirability of prepositioning various levels of supplies; measures to improve air defenses and mine countermeasures; and wherever relevant, cost estimates of the foregoing. The Secretary also asked the Chiefs to develop a country-by-country assessment of each regional state's potential contributions to US surge capabilities, and he further requested that they append a detailed description of possible "periodic demonstrations" of US surge capabilities. This last request, Secretary Brown explained, had a two-fold purpose: to promote much needed experience and, in an apparent effort to allay State Department objections, to provide "a visible display of US resolve." Secretary Brown added that he would like the entire study on his desk by the middle of August.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, during July the Secretary of Defense sent the White House two separate updates on the progress being made for coping with Middle East/Persian Gulf contingencies. In his first report, dated 11 July, Secretary Brown explained that the consensus of interagency meetings thus far "was that the US should strengthen its defense ties with the moderate Persian Gulf states, continue to assist them in improving

their self-defense capabilities, improve US military surge capabilities, and moderately increase [the] peacetime US military presence in the region.” In support of these initiatives, Secretary Brown offered “an illustrative deployment schedule” developed by the Joint Chiefs and a list of measures to upgrade US air and sealift capabilities, improve facilities on Diego Garcia, and preposition supplies and equipment. However, he cautioned that plans remained fluid and urged that public announcement of whatever the United States did in the Gulf should “be handled in a low key manner.” “In particular,” he added, “we should avoid a declaratory policy and other actions which lock us into a particular deployment pattern.”⁴⁸

In contrast to the upbeat mood of his first report, Secretary Brown’s second, dated 31 July, was guarded and defensive. Secretary Brown knew that President Carter and Dr. Brzezinski had hoped to see faster progress on creation of a rapid deployment force and that they were concerned that, beyond earmarking and programming, not much had been done.⁴⁹ Responding to White House inquiries, Secretary Brown insisted that capabilities for rapid intervention did in fact exist, should the need arise. It was only that no organized force, as such, had yet materialized. More than anything else, he cited the shortage of funds to support specific programs and competing demands for resources as the major inhibitors. But as far as President Carter was concerned, these excuses begged the issue. “I don’t see,” he wrote back to Mr. Brown, “that any progress has actually been made.”⁵⁰

Despite the President’s obvious impatience, Secretary Brown felt he was moving as fast as he could. His immediate goal was an agreed State-Defense statement of policy, which finally materialized in mid-August, summarizing the recent deliberations in the PRC to avoid any possible misunderstandings. The strategy implicit in the paper envisioned a growing naval presence in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region, augmented from time to time by tactical air deployments (building on the recent experience of sending the F-15s and AWACS to Saudi Arabia) and occasional amphibious exercises. Missing from the paper was any mention of acquiring permanent military installations, conducting large-scale ground exercises, or creating a rapid deployment force—matters that were better handled separately as needs dictated. The joint statement was, rather, a fairly matter-of-fact recitation of measures under consideration and those yet to be taken, with emphasis on the political and diplomatic hurdles. How far the United States would go militarily in implementing this policy, however, remained to be seen.⁵¹

Toward Creation of a Rapid Deployment Force

Although the policy adopted in August 1979 clearly envisioned a more robust US military presence in the Gulf region, it was still by and large a policy of limited involvement. This accorded with State Department preferences and was further confirmed by exchanges and discussions between the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs since the beginning of the year. The aim at this stage was not so much outright

protection of the Gulf region and Southwest Asia as it was to reassure US friends and allies there that the United States would stand behind them against a spillover of the tensions and turmoil in Iran. In other words, US policy was to deter rather than to defend, with military plans and preparations framed accordingly.

The most refined plans by the summer of 1979 were those developed by European Command (EUCOM) in collaboration with a small planning cell under the Joint Staff, made up of specially cleared officers from J-3 and J-5. Immediately following the Shah of Iran's ouster, discussions between the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs revealed heightened concern for the security of the Saudi Arabian oil fields, but little in the way of operations plans for intervention should the need arise. Accordingly, in late January 1979, the Joint Chiefs sent two Joint Staff action officers to Europe to meet with the USCINCEUR, General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., and his planners and to initiate the drafting of what became OPLAN 4230. After undergoing several revisions, all under the close scrutiny of the JCS Chairman, OPLAN 4230 was largely finished by June 1979. It then went to the Secretary of Defense, who added several minor changes before briefing the President in early August.⁵²

Though never formally approved by the Joint Chiefs, OPLAN 4230 was important for several reasons. First, it was the earliest operations plan devised under JCS supervision, and as such it helped to set the tone for later plans in terms of mission statement, assumptions, and conditions for execution. The "basic plan" envisioned a twenty-day preparation period to insert a force of up to 7,000 troops, consisting of an airborne brigade task force, two tactical fighter squadrons, an E-3A element, and MIDEASTFOR. In addition, at the request of the JCS Chairman, OPLAN 4230 contained a "quick reaction" plan to put about one thousand troops (mostly from airborne units) ashore in seventy-two hours or less. Under both scenarios, USCINCEUR would act only upon invitation of the Saudi government and when directed by the National Command Authorities (NCA) through the JCS. Objectives would be limited to "a show of force to protect Saudi oil facilities and other selected governmental and military facilities against threats short of overt Soviet intervention."⁵³

Second, despite the limited scale of the initial US involvement under the proposed OPLAN, it quickly became obvious to the Service planners involved in the project that this was a mission of immense politico-military importance, capable of yielding considerable rewards. Indeed, the Service that took the lead in such an enterprise would have much to gain and probably could lay claim to large additional resources. In other words, the drafting of OPLAN 4230 effectively set the stage for what would become in the weeks and months that followed an increasingly intense atmosphere of interservice rivalry, particularly between the Army and the Marine Corps officers who spearheaded the work at EUCOM. The final product reflected the competing capabilities of both Services and left no doubt that they would vie with one another for major roles in future Persian Gulf operations.

Finally, and perhaps most immediately significant, the OPLAN 4230 exercise prompted the Secretary of Defense in June 1979 to request a review of command and

control arrangements for the Persian Gulf, a process that, however inadvertently, further accentuated the growing sense of interservice competition.⁵⁴ Under the amended Unified Command Plan (UCP), responsibility for the land areas of North Africa and the Middle East fell to USCINCEUR, while the adjacent waters, including the entire Indian Ocean, were under the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC).⁵⁵ The Persian Gulf, lying between the two, was for all intents and purposes a divided responsibility, far away from EUCOM's and PACOM's normal duties and exceedingly taxing on the assets of both. As the planning for OPLAN 4230 progressed, the Chairman and others in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS) realized that the only practical solution might have to be the creation of a joint task force or even a new joint command and that, either way, because of the mission's high political profile, it would be "the force except Europe & Korea."⁵⁶

With so much thus potentially at stake, it was little wonder that the best the Joint Chiefs could come up with was a "split" recommendation when in late August 1979 they responded to the Secretary's inquiry on command and control arrangements. The month before, General Rogers had succeeded General Haig as USCINCEUR, and there was growing speculation that General Rogers would press for appointment of a senior Army officer, probably a lieutenant general, to take charge of Persian Gulf operations.⁵⁷ A majority of the JCS, made up of the Chairman and the Army and Air Force chiefs, was ready to oblige and advised the Secretary to turn over further planning responsibilities for the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa to the CONUS-based Readiness Command (REDCOM), traditionally an Army command, while leaving security assistance and operations during other than major contingencies in the hands of USCINCEUR. However, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps argued that this division of labor between EUCOM and REDCOM would prove awkward and impractical. As an alternative arrangement that would help preserve the option of a strong Navy-Marine Corps voice in Gulf planning, they proposed a CONUS-based joint task force headquartered "probably" under the direction of REDCOM, but with independent planning authority and direct access to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵⁸

Secretary Brown decided in October to accept the Navy-Marine Corps proposal of a joint task force based in the United States, but left it up to the JCS to work out whether it should be part of REDCOM or another command. In any case, it should be a joint effort. The Secretary added that, whatever the Chiefs decided, he wanted the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), as the White House wanted it called, in place and functioning by 1 March 1980, and a detailed plan of implementation, including the nomination of a commander, by 10 December 1979.⁵⁹ Secretary Brown further cautioned the Chiefs to moderate their expectations for the RDF and to concentrate on organizing it around "small, highly effective force elements" drawn largely from existing units. Toward this end, he urged the Chiefs to look closely at "whether the Marines should have a larger role in such planning." Creation of the RDF was not to be an invitation to lobby for a restructuring or augmentation of the existing force structure to justify increased

military spending. Instead, as Secretary Brown viewed it, the RDF was to be an extension of American power relying chiefly upon a reconfiguration of the assets at hand.⁶⁰

Despite the Secretary's admonitions, the size, composition, and mission of the RDF had already become major sources of friction among the Joint Chiefs. The Navy and the Marine Corps objected to the implicit requirement that all Services assign forces to the RDF, while the Army deemed it inappropriate to tailor forces to the size envisioned for likely RDF employment rather than identify the larger pool from which RDF elements were to be drawn.⁶¹ By way of compromise, the Joint Chiefs notified the Secretary on 15 November 1979 that it was not their intention to commit specific forces or units to the RDF, but to designate those forces which "will constitute a *source* from which a specific contingency force can be tailored to meet requirements for particular contingencies." Non-NATO forces currently available for rapid deployment purposes included 2 1/3 Army divisions (1 light division, 1 mechanized, and 1 heavy brigade, along with appropriate support units); 1 Marine Amphibious Force; 4 US Air Force tactical fighter wings and 2 tactical airlift wings; and 3 Navy carrier battle groups with appropriate support. However, since other commands also exercised drawing rights on these forces, shortages could occur in an actual emergency. Warning against over commitments, the Chiefs recommended to Secretary Brown that he give "urgent attention" in his next statement of Consolidated Guidance to sorting out competing requirements and bringing budgetary support up to sufficient levels for the expected non-NATO contingencies.⁶² Subsequently, at a special briefing for David Aaron, the President's deputy national security adviser, J-5 planners estimated that it would take "at least 5 years to have in-hand [sic] all the programs needed to break the RDF logistic logjam."⁶³

Of more immediate concern was the creation of a command structure to begin the planning process that Secretary of Defense Brown and President Carter were so eager to see materialize. As a first step, the Chiefs recommended co-locating the Rapid Deployment Force alongside REDCOM headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base (AFB) near Tampa, Florida. The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force would have a "moderately sized" headquarters staff and a small liaison office in Washington.⁶⁴ In furtherance of this decision, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert H. Barrow, thought that his Service should be designated as "the primary force" in rapid deployment planning, a view rejected by the JCS Chairman, General Jones, who insisted that all four Services participate, thereby making it a demonstrably joint operation.⁶⁵ Still, in view of General Barrow's protest, the Joint Chiefs dropped plans to appoint an Army O-9 to command the RDJTF and informed the Secretary on 20 December that they supported a Marine Corps officer, Major General Paul X. Kelley, for the position, which carried with it promotion to a third star. Major General Kelley's deputy was to be an Air Force officer, Major General Robert C. Taylor. Even so, Army interest in the RDJTF remained keen and would figure prominently in developing requirements for overseas bases and other facilities in ways that would promote Army participation in rapid deployment operations.

The Carter Doctrine and Activation of the RDJTF

With the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979 and the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan the month following, US policy in the Persian Gulf changed gears once again. Each event produced a sharp escalation of tensions and posed serious challenges to the United States, but of the two, it was the Soviet move against Afghanistan in late December 1979 that most alarmed US officials. Indeed, as President Carter described it in a nationwide address, “A Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan and is a steppingstone to possible control over much of the world’s oil supplies.”⁶⁶ Many of the responses that followed had, of course, been set in motion earlier. But with Afghanistan providing the catalyst, they came to fruition sooner rather than later and helped expedite the transformation of the Rapid Deployment Force from a drawing board concept into more of a full-fledged military reality.

At the heart of this transformation was the Carter Doctrine, announced by the President in his State of the Union Message of 23 January 1980. In effect, President Carter confirmed publicly what subordinates had been saying privately to one another and in off-the-record talks with reporters for some time: that the United States had major interests at stake in the Persian Gulf and that it was steadily building up its strength in the region to protect those interests. Under the policy he announced, President Carter served notice that the United States would not allow the Gulf to fall into hostile hands, that it would pursue a “cooperative security framework” in the area, and that it would back up these initiatives with requisite military force.⁶⁷ As evidence of his resolve, the President pointed to the impending creation of the Rapid Deployment Force, which he said would “range in size from a few ships or air squadrons to formations as large as 100,000 men.” Among the specific initiatives being taken to support the RDF, the President mentioned the development and production of a new fleet of large cargo aircraft with intercontinental range and the design and procurement of a force of pre-positioned ships to carry heavy equipment and supplies for three Marine Corps brigades.⁶⁸

With announcement of the Carter Doctrine, the JCS promptly accelerated their preparations for possible military intervention in Southwest Asia. But while the Joint Chiefs readily accorded this region (the Persian Gulf especially) closer attention in line with the President’s policy, individual members found themselves increasingly uneasy over the long-term implications. General Edward C. Meyer, the Army Chief of Staff, saw the United States rushing into new commitments with little or no idea of where they would lead or what they might entail. “It is now evident,” he told his JCS colleagues, “that OSD is attempting to fill this void without the benefit of militarily sound operational concepts for the development, deployment, and employment of a Rapid Deployment Force.” In an effort to shed light on this situation, General Meyer urged the JCS to initiate “a military analysis of the requirements for a RDF, to include appropriate and balanced mix of forces, adequate fast strategic deployment capability, and adequate support for

the range of missions anticipated.” The Joint Chiefs took General Meyer’s suggestion under advisement, but deferred any immediate action.⁶⁹

All the same, the Joint Chiefs remained apprehensive lest a lack of transportation and competing demands elsewhere should curtail their ability to meet the Carter Doctrine’s goals. Despite the President’s promise of additional resources, the actual budget strategy adopted at the White House was to push hard for more performance from existing assets while providing as little extra money as possible.⁷⁰ A case in point was the administration’s handling of the Near-Term Pre-Positioning Ships (NTPS) program, a lease arrangement proposed by Secretary of Defense Brown using commercial sources to create a seven-ship supply flotilla operating more or less continuously in the Indian Ocean. Although the Joint Chiefs favored the program, they were skeptical whether such measures by themselves would provide sufficient logistical support. In addition to pre-positioning supplies and equipment, as the United States had done in Europe, they favored augmenting air and sealift capabilities as well, even though the result would mean higher costs.⁷¹ Standing firm, President Carter in February approved the leasing of the necessary new NTPS cargo carriers, but in so doing expressed obvious concern that even the cost of this could get out of hand.⁷²

Rather than dwell on plans and expectations, General Jones advised the Secretary of Defense that the United States might have to contemplate emergency action to deal with what he described as “a pattern of gradually increasing combat readiness” on the part of Soviet forces. Suggesting that the situation was deteriorating more rapidly than first thought, General Jones worried that the Soviets might misjudge US resolve and take a chance on a “cheap’ victory” somewhere in Southwest Asia. Acting on his own initiative, he tasked the J-3 Directorate with investigating whether the United States could insert a battalion-sized force anywhere in the world within twenty-four hours and with determining the steps needed to achieve that capability. Meanwhile, he urged the Secretary to move quickly on activating the RDJTF and to give serious thought to holding early military exercises in Southwest Asia and the Middle East in order to test US deployment and mobilization concepts. General Jones also thought that the White House should consider legislation to increase the Reserve call-up authority from 50,000 to 100,000 and a supplemental budget request to cover Operations and Maintenance (O&M) support for the RDF. He noted further that he had discussed these recommendations informally with his JCS colleagues, who agreed that they merited “priority attention.”⁷³

A major milestone was the activation on 1 March 1980 of the Headquarters, Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (HQ, RDJTF), at MacDill AFB, Florida. Although technically a separate subordinate element of USREDCOM, the RDJTF reported directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁷⁴ Normally, joint task forces did not enjoy such access to the JCS, but because of the RDJTF’s high political profile, Secretary of Defense Brown insisted that it have a small Washington liaison office (fifteen to twenty people) for “politico-military interface” with the JCS, the Joint Staff, and OSD.⁷⁵

The RDJTF commenced business with a JCS-approved charter to plan, train, exercise, and be prepared to deploy designated forces “anywhere in the world.”⁷⁶ Its first commander, Lieutenant General P. X. Kelley, USMC, publicly described the new organization as “an exceptionally flexible force” that would eventually pull together “the capabilities of all four services into one harmonized fighting machine with a permanent command and control headquarters.”⁷⁷ However, like all new ventures, the RDJTF experienced its own share of start-up problems. Few of its 253 authorized personnel were actually in place; its headquarters building was still under construction; guidance from the Joint Chiefs, US Commander in Chief, Readiness Command (USCINCREC), and the Secretary of Defense needed sorting out; and the new force commander, Lieutenant General Kelley, remained in Washington for consultations.⁷⁸

A further complication arose from the decision by General Jones, acting on his own initiative, to narrow the RDJTF’s terms of reference from worldwide contingencies to planning for operations solely in Southwest Asia.⁷⁹ Knowing that this arrangement reflected the preferences of the Secretary of Defense, the NSC Staff, and President Carter, the other JCS members raised no objection. However, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General Barrow, wanted to go further and suggested changes in command arrangements as well. General Barrow believed that the RDJTF’s “continued subordination” to USCINCREC would only obfuscate its political and military mission and that a more practical arrangement would be to reconstitute the RDJTF as “a separate and distinct planning element” under the JCS. Although General Barrow’s proposal may have made sense, it would probably have delayed what others—Army planners, especially—saw as the increasingly inevitable outcome: the reconstitution of the RDJTF as a totally separate unified command. Secretary Brown deemed changes of this kind premature, and on 4 August 1980 he officially approved the new terms of reference narrowing the RDJTF’s planning functions to Southwest Asia, while asking the Chiefs to keep the matter of Middle East command relationships under periodic review.⁸⁰

Acquiring Bases and Support Facilities

In addition to command and control problems, the lack of suitable and available bases within practicable operating distance of the Persian Gulf posed serious complications for JCS and RDJTF planners. Such bases as could sustain large-scale military operations were controlled by nations either hostile to the United States or, at least, unwilling to allow their use by US forces. Indeed, because of the close relationship between Israel and the United States, few Arab states were willing to entertain the presence of US troops on their territory. Yet once the decision was made that US power would be projected into the area if necessary, US officials had no choice but to begin seeking bases and base rights near the Gulf.

Reacting initially to the hostage crisis, President Carter in late November 1979 directed the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs to review the availability and reliability of access to foreign transit and operating bases needed to support US military actions in “the greater Middle East.”⁸¹ Anticipating such a request, the Joint Chiefs replied quickly with a ready list of requirements to meet transit and other logistical problems in the event of a Persian Gulf emergency. Minor difficulties of this sort had come up in January 1979, when the Spanish government, ostensibly a close US friend, had denied USAF F-15s stopover privileges on their way to Saudi Arabia.⁸² To head off similar problems in the future, the Joint Chiefs recommended naming a “high-level Presidential envoy” charged with gaining permission to use bases and airspace to support military deployments to the Middle East. The countries they identified as “most crucial” in this regard were Portugal, Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, which owned the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia. Although optimistic that diplomacy would resolve the situation, the Chiefs noted that “leverage” in the form of military assistance, arms sales, and other inducements might be needed as well.⁸³

The Chiefs’ assessment proved essentially correct, as borne out by the findings of two State-Defense survey missions dispatched in late 1979–early 1980 to sound out the governments of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Somalia, and Kenya on the acquisition of base rights on their territories. Indicative of the high priority the Joint Chiefs attached to these discussions was the inclusion of the Director, J-5, Lieutenant General Richard L. Lawson, USAF, as the JCS representative. The most difficult negotiations proved to be those with the Somalis who, as the US team found, had “an exaggerated sense of what it was possible to gain from us.”⁸⁴ Eventually, except for the Saudis, who reaffirmed their standing policy against foreign bases on their territory, all indicated a readiness to cooperate in exchange for US military assistance and other considerations. Other possible sites were Egypt, which in February 1979 had offered the use of the remote expeditionary camp at Ras Banas (Berenice) on the Red Sea, and Diego Garcia, where the US Navy had had a small communications base since the 1960s. However, the State Department, feeling that the time was not yet ripe, urged that military involvement on Egyptian soil be avoided.⁸⁵

Military planners were not nearly so cautious. In examining the available options, General Meyer, the Army Chief, doubted the usefulness of bases in Oman, Somalia, and Kenya to “reduce strategic mobility requirements” for Army elements of the RDJTF or to support the swift commitment of “substantial ground forces.” He pointed out that Egyptian bases, on the other hand, could provide a greater “war-fighting capability” since they were virtually on the direct line of communications (LOC) from CONUS to Southwest Asia. General Meyer recommended that the JCS solicit support from the Secretaries of State and Defense to acquire facilities in Egypt “as a matter of urgency.” Under Secretary of Defense Komer, after examining the problem himself, concurred with General Meyer that Egypt offered the best prospects.⁸⁶

Despite earlier State Department opposition to US bases in Egypt, military considerations now took priority in the framing of US policy. During March and April

1980, exchanges between the Joint Chiefs and Secretary of Defense Brown confirmed the need for a rear staging area in Egypt, preferably at Ras Banas, and led to arrangements for an engineer inspection team to go there in June to assess the facilities.⁸⁷ The Chiefs further recommended that the United States seek permission from the British for use of the entire island of Diego Garcia, since it was the only existing support base in the Indian Ocean that could help provide a logistic surge capability for the RDJTF. Working closely with the Navy, the JCS submitted a military construction program totaling \$1.231 billion to cover the period FY 1981 to 1984.⁸⁸ Secretary Brown took the Chiefs' recommendations for Diego Garcia under advisement, though as a practical matter there was never any doubt that they would be approved. Near the end of the year, Deputy Secretary of Defense Graham Claytor gave the go-ahead for the Chiefs' improvement program and earmarked initial funding drawn from the FY 1981 military construction appropriation.⁸⁹

Training and Exercises

Another important aspect of the Rapid Deployment Force to which the Joint Chiefs devoted considerable attention was the development of a vigorous exercise and training program, organized by the RDJTF in collaboration with the recently formed Joint Deployment Agency (JDA). As directed by the Joint Chiefs, it was up to the JDA, a component of REDCOM, to recommend concepts and procedures that elements of the unified and specified commands, including the RDJTF, would then test and validate through actual exercises. Even though the RDJTF was still in incubation, the Joint Chiefs in October 1979 scheduled two command post exercises (CPX) for the spring of 1980 to test JDA deployment procedures "in the preparation of a force package that can react to crisis situations worldwide."⁹⁰

Following announcement of the Carter Doctrine in January 1980, the development and coordination of a stepped-up training and exercise schedule in the Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf region became a matter of high priority, receiving close and frequent scrutiny from the SCC and from President Carter himself, who personally reviewed many of the details.⁹¹ Exercise POSITIVE LEAP 80, conducted wholly in the United States in three phases between April and June 1980, was the first JCS-sponsored command post exercise with the RDJTF. Involving some 10,000 personnel, it simulated the movement and operations of a force of over 240,000.⁹² Afterward, hoping to build on the experience thus gained, the Joint Chiefs asked for SCC approval of a proposed exercise/deployment schedule for the rest of 1980, extending the exercises overseas. These included ground and air exercises in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kenya and Somalia and maritime exercises in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, some involving large-scale combined sea control exercises with British, Australian, and possibly New Zealander naval forces. Locations under consideration for future exercises included the Sudan, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and other states in the region.⁹³

Over the summer of 1980 the SCC reviewed and approved a total of nineteen separate exercises and practice deployments under the Defense Department's CY 1980 Exercise Proposal.⁹⁴ Included were two amphibious force deployments in the Indian Ocean and small-scale air maneuvers between the USAF and the Egyptian air force in July.⁹⁵ But larger exercises involving ground and tactical air units in Egypt, slated for November 1980, and a separate exercise to test command and communications capabilities in Oman in September hit snags. Oman wanted the exercise postponed until after its "National Day" celebrations in November, while in the meantime unexpected delays in Congress in passing the annual Defense appropriations bill threatened to scuttle plans for the maneuvers in Egypt. Only a last minute infusion of funds from the Secretary's contingency account kept the project alive.⁹⁶

The exercise, BRIGHT STAR 81, to familiarize air and ground forces with the terrain and conditions of desert warfare, took place in the desert northwest of Cairo, 18 to 28 November 1980. The exercise strategy entailed delivering a combat-ready battalion to the Persian Gulf within forty-eight hours of the execute order, followed by a brigade within a week and two divisions within thirty days. However, the terms of reference governing the maneuvers restricted the number of exercise participants to approximately 1,400. Even so, it was the most successful demonstration thus far of US capability to project a joint task force into Southwest Asia.⁹⁷

Policy and Planning Further Refined

Despite the more assertive posture adopted by the United States under the Carter Doctrine, as 1980 progressed the Joint Chiefs came to feel that US policy in Southwest Asia needed more purposeful strategic direction. A major concern was that most of the actions taken, though usually coordinated through the SCC in what Dr. Brzezinski liked to think of as a developing "strategic framework," were actually ad hoc responses without benefit of thorough collective military judgment or a carefully defined concept for force employment. Important though these initiatives may have been, they were exceedingly burdensome and would eventually wear down US capabilities to cope with problems elsewhere. The first to raise these issues, as we have seen, was the Army Chief of Staff, who found the commitments made under the Carter Doctrine filled with disturbing implications. By the summer of 1980 his colleagues concurred, and in August they advised the Secretary of Defense that, on their own initiative, they were undertaking yet another review of strategic concepts for Southwest Asia, the second such review in two years.⁹⁸

While similar to the 1978 JCS strategic review, the one conducted in 1980 had a somewhat different purpose. More of a stocktaking exercise, it had its immediate origins in complaints from the operations deputies (OPSDEPS) that Secretary Brown and Under Secretary Komer were continually peppering the Joint Staff with small requests that diverted the time and attention of JCS planners from their regular chores.

In recommending a more comprehensive approach, the OPSDEPS hoped to forestall further piecemeal OSD taskings and in the process buy time for a “quality effort” that would put US policy and strategy in better perspective.⁹⁹

In accepting the OPSDEPS recommendations, the Joint Chiefs also hoped to show the Secretary of Defense and the NSC what US forces could—and could not—do in Southwest Asia. For these purposes the JCS strategic review provided additional support for a larger SCC study, launched at Dr. Brzezinski’s instigation in June 1980, to give further definition to the US strategic framework for Southwest Asia.¹⁰⁰ Defense and JCS contributions to this enterprise were to consist of an analysis of budgetary requirements for augmenting US capabilities in Southwest Asia and an assessment of the prospects for increased collaboration between US and Saudi Arabian forces in the wake of the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War that autumn.¹⁰¹ However, after November 1980, with a new administration waiting in the wings, Dr. Brzezinski cut short the security framework study and, in January 1981, issued instead a brief compendium (PD-63) of agency responsibilities and accomplishments.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the security review initiated by the Joint Chiefs wound up following an almost equally tortured and uncertain path. Though originally scheduled for completion by mid-September 1980, it was continually sidetracked by unforeseen events and ended up being incorporated into planning guidance for the RDJTF. Previously, such guidance as Lieutenant General Kelley had received had stressed preparation for relatively limited operations involving non-Soviet enemy forces, such as repelling an Iraqi attack on Kuwait, the scenario chosen in OSD for budget-planning purposes.¹⁰³ But by early September 1980 the Joint Staff began receiving fresh intelligence pointing to the possibility that the Soviets might be planning an invasion of Iran.¹⁰⁴ As a precautionary measure, Secretary Brown told the Joint Chiefs on 18 September that he wanted them to look ahead toward allocating even larger resources to the RDJTF. This was something of a reversal of the Secretary’s previous position, which had been to caution restraint in developing the RDJTF’s capabilities, but it was fully in line with the growing belief in OSD that the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf in particular, might soon rank alongside Europe in terms of American security interests. In addition to the primary force of three and one-third divisions under non-mobilization conditions, he wanted the Joint Chiefs to develop a “core RDF” of six and one-third divisions for possibly larger operations—in effect, a force capable of meeting a Soviet invasion. Secretary Brown conceded that these additional deployments would severely strain US war reserve stocks and lift capabilities and would greatly reduce US help to NATO. But he felt that “realism dictates that we (and our allies) may have to assume these risks.”¹⁰⁵

By coincidence, the Secretary’s instructions reached the Joint Chiefs just as they were preparing to issue initial planning guidance to the Commander, RDJTF (COMRD-JTF), which went out to Lieutenant General Kelley on 26 September 1980. Although more detailed and specific than the Secretary’s instructions, the Chiefs’ planning guidance likewise assumed a growing Soviet threat against Iran. US objectives would be to dissuade the invaders from pursuing their attack or, in lieu of that, to halt the advance as far

from the Persian Gulf as possible and to deny the enemy use of Iranian ports, airfields, and other key facilities. Initial JCS estimates were that within the first thirty days the COMRDJTF could count on having 3 carrier battle groups and an air-ground mix ranging from a “manpower-intensive” force of 2 light Army divisions or Marine Corps division equivalents, 7 tactical fighter squadrons (TFS), and 4 tactical airlift squadrons (TAS), to a “fire-power-intensive” force of about 1¹/₃ divisions equivalents, 12 TFS, and 6 TAS.¹⁰⁶

Lieutenant General Kelley briefed the operations deputies on his progress thus far on 15 October 1980, at which time he also reviewed the planning guidance he had recently received and suggested several minor changes.¹⁰⁷ As required under Department of Defense (DoD) policy, the planning guidance Lieutenant General Kelley received also went for review to Under Secretary Komer. Although Mr. Komer judged it a “praiseworthy” start, he noted areas where he thought improvements were possible as well. For example, he did not feel the guidance took sufficient account of the “vital contributions of friends and allies.” Such support, he believed, was indispensable to COMRDJTF’s ability to carry out his mission with “limited forces and lift.” However, as a former ambassador to Turkey, Under Secretary Komer cautioned the JCS not to count too heavily on that country’s support or contributions. Under Secretary Komer assumed that the United States would have at least two divisions in the area before combat started, owing to the advance warning that would come from Soviet preparations for an attack, so reinforcements might not tie down as much airlift and sealift as the JCS estimated.¹⁰⁸

Further refinements in RDJTF planning guidance were yet to come. On 26 November 1980 Lieutenant General Kelley again briefed the Joint Chiefs, after which, on 12 December, they authorized additional fine tuning to take into account expected support from pro-Western governments in and around the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁰⁹ In a related development, the Joint Chiefs on 15 December approved and forwarded to the Secretary of Defense their latest current-force strategy review, undertaken the previous summer. As in their earlier strategic survey, the Joint Chiefs identified numerous US interests at stake—oil especially—that required “a continuous US military presence” in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf region. Such forces, the Chiefs advised, need not and could not now be sufficient in themselves to provide a credible defense against the most demanding threats (i.e., a full-scale Soviet invasion), but “they must be sufficient to be perceived as a guarantee of US commitment and as evidence that US power in the region is real.” Whether the United States had reached this point, the Joint Chiefs declined to say explicitly. Instead, they pointed to the continuing need for strengthening the self-help capabilities of key states in the region, acquiring additional base and support facilities, and increasing cooperation among the NATO allies, particularly in providing transit privileges for US forces en route to the Middle East. Yet even with improved access and support, the Joint Chiefs foresaw serious problems looming. Factoring in requirements both for the Persian Gulf and elsewhere, they saw US commitments steadily outdistancing capabilities. “Defense of US interests in Southwest Asia,” they warned bluntly,

requires a military structure greater than that currently available. Until adequate capabilities can be developed, the United States must pursue limited military objectives, considering defense priorities and attendant risks worldwide. Political considerations limit the support that can be expected from allies and regional countries, and add to the uncertainty in achieving objectives. There is no strategic panacea to overcome the force structure shortfalls or the diplomatic constraints related to Southwest Asia. The best current strategy will not change the fact that the United States and its allies face an extremely dangerous situation there.¹¹⁰

While perhaps more pessimistic than it need have been, the Chiefs' estimate of the strategic situation was at sharp variance with the administration's public version, which stressed the progress being made in meeting commitments and strengthening capabilities, especially in transforming the RDJTF into a credible warfighting force. The Joint Chiefs were, in effect, challenging these claims and, by so doing, were aligning themselves with a growing number of critics who saw the Carter Doctrine as a hastily improvised and poorly thought out blueprint.¹¹¹ Although the Joint Chiefs had considered dropping the current force strategy paper as having been overtaken by events, they decided instead that, with a new administration about to take office, they should carry it through to completion, so that some overall statement of their views might be a matter of record.¹¹²

Moreover, this latest strategic review provided a handy reference point for the RDJTF Capability Study completed and submitted to the Secretary of Defense in January 1981 in compliance with his instructions of the previous September. Slightly more upbeat than the strategic review, the capability study presented a cautiously optimistic picture of meeting the Secretary's milestones. The study found that, provided Congress acted favorably on all pending budgetary requests, the maximum RDJTF capability that could be achieved by the end of FY 1982 was a three and two-thirds division force. Larger forces could not be sustained in Southwest Asia due to shortages in critical logistic support items (such as water and ammunition), combat support and combat service support forces, and Command, Control, and Communications (C3) equipment. However, deployment of even this modest force would substantially raise the risk to NATO and the Far East and would sorely test logistic and other support capabilities.¹¹³

In sum, even though the US security structure in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia showed evidence of improving, much remained to be done to reach the point at which the Joint Chiefs would feel confident about projecting US military power into the region. One of the most important accomplishments of the Carter years was the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, the forerunner of the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), established in January 1983. But with no forces of its own as yet and its mission complicated by interservice bickering and uncertain lines of command and responsibility, the RDJTF remained in many respects more symbol than reality. Beyond an occasional show-of-force exercise, some limited prepositioning of equipment, and modest increases in naval deployments, the US capacity to cope with a military contingency in the Persian Gulf was only marginally greater at the end of the

Carter administration than at the beginning. Yet, at the same time, perceptions of the threat to the region had grown significantly, from the destabilizing presence of Soviet proxies into the looming menace of a full-scale Soviet invasion. The Carter Doctrine, recognizing that US interests in the Gulf were greater than ever, attempted to address this threat more or less with existing capabilities. But with the stakes escalating almost daily, the Joint Chiefs had a ready-made argument for an expanded force structure.



President Carter and the Shah of Iran inspect the troops during a welcoming ceremony for the Shah.

Iran and Pakistan

The creation of the Rapid Deployment Force—the first step toward establishing what became Central Command (CENTCOM)—was but one phase in the continuing evolution and refinement of US Gulf security policy during the Carter years. Unlike Europe or the Pacific, where the United States had a well-established presence, the Persian Gulf-Middle East region contained few jumping-off points from which to project US military power. US assets, such as they were, derived mainly from a series of relationships that had developed in this region since World War II, starting with the creation of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in the 1950s and moving on by the early 1970s to the building of what the Nixon and Ford administrations characterized as the “twin pillars” of security and stability—Iran and Saudi Arabia.¹

Of the two, it was Iran, chiefly because of its geostrategic position, which generally attracted the most attention among JCS planners. The leader of Iran, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, was America’s oldest and staunchest friend in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region, an implacable foe of communism and one of the few Muslims who would sell oil to Israel. Accordingly, he had come to command extraordinary respect and deference in Washington. US commitments in arms sales to the Shah during the Nixon and Ford years totaled over \$12 billion and included some of the most up-to-date weapons the United States had to offer.² The Shah, with ambitions of restoring his country’s ancient power and glory, saw himself becoming the “policeman” of the Persian Gulf, a role the Nixon-Ford administrations had been happy to encourage because it relieved obligations on the United States. But by the time President Jimmy Carter entered the White House, the Shah’s image had become somewhat tarnished owing to his support of the oil cartel’s high energy-pricing policies and alleged human rights abuses by his secret police, the SAVAK.

Over the years the Joint Chiefs had consistently supported measures, including security assistance, aimed at turning Iran into a modern military power to help contain Soviet expansionism. But under President Carter they saw this policy undergo substantial revision as the United States cut back on arms sales to Iran and other Third

World countries. Although President Carter befriended the Shah, he did so more out of a sense of duty than any real conviction that the Shah's continued presence was integral to protecting US interests in Central Asia or the Persian Gulf. The result was a policy of diminishing American support for the Shah at a time when his regime was under mounting domestic pressure to lessen its ties, including military collaboration, with the West. The outcome was the collapse of the Shah's government and the installation of a new regime in Tehran, run by Islamic fundamentalists who were bitterly hostile toward the United States.

Reassessing Security Assistance to Iran

The Carter administration's policy on foreign military sales (PD-13), adopted in May 1977, declared the transfer of conventional arms to be "an exceptional foreign policy implement, to be used only in instances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the transfers contribute to our national security interests." In applying this policy of restraint, the President immediately exempted all North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel. Iran, on the other hand, became a prime target for cutbacks. Henceforth, not only was the dollar volume of new commitments to be reduced but also there were to be no sales or co-production of newly developed advanced weapons until such systems were operationally deployed with US forces. Establishing guidelines for the implementation of this policy became a responsibility of the Secretary of State, who was to ascertain: (1) that supplying any new weapons would uniquely strengthen the requester's ability to perform military functions that were in the interests of the United States; (2) that less-advanced, existing systems with roughly comparable capabilities were unavailable; and (3) that providing these weapons would not require the presence in country of large numbers of American technical advisers for long periods of time.³

On paper, President Carter's exercise of restraint in his arms dealings with Iran appeared a great success. From a total of \$3.236 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 1977, agreed arms transfers to Iran dropped to \$764 million in FY 1978 and fell even further, to only \$42 million, in FY 1979.⁴ In practice, however, this policy was less restrictive than the numbers suggest. Although President Carter fully intended to take a tough line on arms sales to Iran, he also recognized that such a policy had to be applied with great care and the utmost diplomacy. An abrupt cutoff of arms sales was never, in fact, a live option, nor was it ever seriously considered by those in charge at the Defense Security Assistance Agency, the organization that managed the arms aid program.⁵ Like Presidents Nixon and Ford, President Carter appreciated the Shah's contributions to stability in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, since without the Shah's American-backed armed forces, US defense burdens in those regions would have been considerably greater. Though not without its flaws, the Shah's government—at least in Western eyes—was still the most enlightened and progressive in the region, lavishly praised by President

Carter as “an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world.”⁶ Later, with hindsight to help elucidate the causes behind the Shah’s collapse, critics would fault US policymakers for ignoring or overlooking the telltale signs of a regime in deep trouble—the Shah’s insensitivity to his subjects, the domestic antagonisms produced by his Western modernization programs, and his disregard for the revolutionary impact of Islamic fundamentalism. But until then, the Shah seemed a dependable and trustworthy ally whose contributions to preserving regional stability were beyond question and deserving of continued support.

These political judgments were reinforced by the attitude of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George S. Brown, USAF, who encouraged the Joint Staff to be responsive to and supportive of Iranian requests for help. As a result, JCS planners exhibited a steadily growing appreciation of Iran’s military and strategic significance. Indeed, if nothing else, geography alone accorded Iran a high level of attention—and continued to do so even after the Shah’s downfall. At the outset of the Carter administration, as in years past, JCS planners continued to regard Iran as a major part of the Middle East-Persian Gulf security framework. Although they still designated Iran a Category Two country (“significant” to US interests) in January 1978, they moved it up to Category One (“vital”) the year following, thereby placing Iran roughly on a par with Western Europe and Japan. What this ranking suggested was that, were the United States to cut back too far on arms sales, the result might well cripple Iran to the point either of forfeiting support of vital US interests in the region or of causing greater than expected burdens to fall on US forces.⁷

Restricting arms sales to Iran thus became a delicate balancing act, and doubtless proved harder than President Carter originally imagined. Upon entering the White House, two issues—a pending Iranian purchase of new fighter aircraft and the sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) planes—immediately greeted him to test his resolve. Under agreements reached in the Nixon-Ford years, Iran would gradually phase out its fleet of F-4 fighters and replace them with newer planes: 160 F-16 fighters during 1980-1983, plus another 140 F-16s and 250 F-18Ls (the land-based version of the Navy’s F-18A) during 1982-1986. According to General Brown, the F-18 deal “was all cooked up” between the Iranians and Northrop, the plane’s prime contractor, before either State or Defense heard about it.⁸ Had the Joint Chiefs been aware, they probably would have opposed it, purely on practical grounds, since Iran would have difficulty supporting so many advanced fighter acquisitions. Even though the Imperial Iranian Air Force (IIAF) planned significant upgrades in its personnel, logistic, facility construction, and training programs, JCS planners still believed that the IIAF would need “substantial” outside contractor support and “some” increase in US military technical assistance. In consequence, the IIAF would probably be only “marginally prepared” for sustained combat operations during the next five years, although from the mid-1980s on its capabilities would increase “substantially.” In other words, in order to achieve the strengthening of the IIAF that the Shah had in mind, the United States might have to become more involved in helping Iran, not less, as President Carter had hoped.⁹

To give further consideration to the problem of aircraft sales to Iran, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown established an ad hoc group within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA). The Director, J-5, Vice Admiral Patrick J. Hannifin, represented the JCS. Looking specifically at the pending F-18L request, the group saw several options: provide F-18Ls, beginning in 1982 and 1983; offer F-18As instead of F-18Ls; make available F-16s instead of F-18s; or disapprove any F-18 sales and offer no substitutes.¹⁰ The Assistant Secretary for ISA, David E. McGiffert, maintained that since replacements for the F-4s would not be needed until the mid-1980s, there was no urgency to reach a decision until 1979-1980.¹¹ The Joint Chiefs, on the other hand, urged that the sale proceed as scheduled, noting that any delay would adversely affect the modernization of Iran's air force. Admiral James L. Holloway, III, Chief of Naval Operations, was especially eager to see the sale go forward.¹² According to the ad hoc group's findings, the sale to Iran, among other things, would reduce F-18 flyaway costs to the Navy by \$300,000 per aircraft (in FY 1975 dollars) and yield a total procurement savings of \$450 million. In the longer term, spare parts and common support savings could increase the overall savings even more.¹³ However, President Carter decided in June 1977 not to approve the sale of the F-18Ls, using as his justification a technicality that his recent policy decision (PD-13) barred the sale of arms that were not yet operationally deployed with US forces. In fact, the Defense Department had no plans to buy any of the land-based versions of the F-18 and Northrop, the plane's manufacturer, had designed the F-18L solely for overseas sales.¹⁴

The AWACS deal posed a somewhat different set of problems, but was no less important, from the JCS standpoint, than the F-18 sale. The AWACS were, in effect, a substitute for a highly ambitious project known as SEEK SENTRY, proposed by the Shah in 1974 to provide Iran with a comprehensive early warning air defense system by placing several dozen radar installations on mountaintops scattered across the country. Later, as a money-saving measure and with US encouragement, the Shah scaled back the number of ground radars from forty-four to twenty and requested five E-3 AWACS to make up the difference. In March 1977, as part of his effort to curtail arms transfers, President Carter imposed a "hold" on the sale,¹⁵ but lifted the suspension a month later at the suggestion of Secretary of Defense Brown and the JCS Chairman, General Brown. At about the same time, the Shah canceled SEEK SENTRY and requested four more E-3s, bringing the total to nine. The Secretary of Defense and General Brown both supported the additional sale, noting in justification that the planes and their support would cost only one-fifth as much as the ground radars (\$2.6 billion versus \$10 to 15 billion) and require 2,500 rather than 62,500 personnel.¹⁶ Toward the end of May the President agreed to increase the sale to a total of seven E-3s, a compromise that the Joint Chiefs urged the President to reconsider. The Chiefs continued to favor the full sale of nine AWACS as the Shah had requested, but they noted also that questions concerning cryptographic devices would need to be resolved first.¹⁷

Meanwhile, Senator John C. Culver (D-IA), a longtime critic of arms transfers to Iran, and a group of his Senate colleagues asked the General Accounting Office (GAO)

to hurry up an investigation of the AWACS sale. When queried for the GAO report, Director of Central Intelligence Admiral Stansfield Turner characterized the proposed sale as a serious security risk. Turner believed that the Soviets might induce the defection of an Iranian AWACS crew, thereby handing the Soviets crucial electronics gear that would allow them to acquire a “look down” radar capability. Turner’s warning notwithstanding, the Defense-JCS position remained unchanged, and on 7 July the President notified Congress of the seven-plane sale (\$1.2 billion), only to withdraw the proposal shortly thereafter as congressional rejection appeared imminent.¹⁸ The Shah took the delay as an insult and dashed off an irate message to the President. The Shah’s anger quickly subsided, however, after President Carter resubmitted the proposal in September. “This time,” as the President described the outcome, “the members of my administration did their homework on Capitol Hill, and the sale was not disapproved.”¹⁹

Continuing Controversy over Arms Sales

The AWACS sale to Iran notwithstanding, President Carter remained determined to reduce the volume of foreign military sales. In mid-October 1977, reiterating his commitment, he told senior aides that if Secretary of State Vance did not “hold down” such recommendations, he would do so himself.²⁰ All the same, the Shah’s hopes remained high, encouraged to some extent, it seems, by the Joint Chiefs’ more sympathetic and supportive attitude toward arms transfers. When the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Holloway, visited him in October, the Shah asked about the possibility of purchasing weapons. The Shah said he hoped he could convince those members of the US Congress who opposed his defense policies that Iran was not “a nation of simple shepherders” and that it needed the most sophisticated weapons systems it could buy to defend itself. He then inquired about acquiring six Perry-class (FFG-7) frigates, Tomahawk cruise missiles, and F-18As in lieu of the F-18Ls that the United States had denied. Admiral Holloway replied that the sale of the frigates required an individual decision under the President’s arms sales policy. He also mentioned several other options besides the F-18A to modernize Iran’s air force and gave his opinion that the Tomahawk cruise missile, an antiship weapon which would have the Harpoon guidance system and a conventional warhead, would not encounter any difficulties, even though nuclear versions of the same missile might be subject to Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty restrictions.²¹

The Shah enumerated his arms purchase requirements again, in greater detail in mid-November 1977, this time at his first-ever meeting with President Carter at the White House. Over the course of several days of discussion, the President related how he had had to “go to the mat” with Congress over the AWACS sale and how he had lobbied personally on Iran’s behalf. The President said that in the future Iran’s requests would have to be more moderate and predictable. The Shah, emphasizing his country’s vulnerability, indicated that his primary concern was air defense against Iraq and

the Soviet Union. The Shah believed Iraq would have an atomic bomb capability in four years. Since Iran had no surface-to-surface missiles, the Shah emphasized that his country would be wholly dependent on aircraft for retaliation. In effect, the Shah wanted to double the size of his air force. He intended to keep the F-4s he already had as a strike force and wanted a total of 150 F-14s and 300 F-16s, which would mean additional purchases of 70 F-14s and 140 F-16s. The President promised to consult with Congress and his military advisers on this matter but reminded the Shah of his policy to curb arms exports. Above all, he wanted to avoid another battle with Congress like the AWACS case, which the administration had almost lost. The two leaders then parted, feeling “profoundly satisfied” with what they had accomplished and agreeing to spend New Year’s Eve together in Tehran.²²

Following up on these discussions, the Iranian government in early December 1977 submitted a comprehensive list of prospective arms purchases and co-production arrangements based on Iran’s force projections for the next ten years. Included on the Iranian list were 11 RF-4Es, 31 F-4Gs with Wild Weasel SAM radiation suppression equipment, 70 F-14s, 140 F-16s, 648 howitzers, and 6 RH-53D helicopter mine sweepers.²³ The Joint Chiefs concurred “in principle” with the plan but reminded Secretary of Defense Brown that the availability and releasability of the equipment had to be addressed on an item-by-item basis at the actual time of request. When the Department of State later queried Iran’s proposed purchase of 648 artillery pieces, the Joint Chiefs characterized the request as fully within Iran’s “technical and financial capabilities” and stated that Iran could absorb the artillery over a period of “about 10 years” or less if the personnel situation improved.²⁴

The Joint Chiefs in July 1978 also endorsed an Iranian proposal to buy twelve Dutch and West German frigates and, in the interests of interoperability, to arm them with US weapons systems. Along with strengthening Iran’s air and ground forces, the Chiefs believed that it served US strategic interests in the region to develop a strong Imperial Iranian Navy (IIN) that could help to counter an invasion of Iran’s territory and assist in assuring the flow of oil. To carry out these missions, the Chiefs envisioned Iran eventually acquiring a force of 4 guided-missile cruisers, 9 diesel submarines, and 12 frigates. They considered it “fundamental” for the command and control and related communications systems to be compatible and facilitate interoperability between Iranian and US ships. Providing the requested US weapons and electronics would give the IIN “significant” advantages in the areas of training, maintenance, logistics support, and operational efficiency and would contribute to a “savings” in manpower through the potential interchange of personnel among Dutch, West German, and US warships.²⁵

Rather than continue dealing piecemeal with Iran’s swelling array of arms requests, the Policy Review Committee (PRC) on 5 July 1978 attempted to devise a comprehensive approach. By then the Iranians had pared their artillery requirements to 214 self-propelled 155mm, and 84 towed 8-inch howitzers. Expecting State to recommend against some or all of these sales, Secretary of Defense Brown and the new JCS Chairman, General David C. Jones, USAF, took the position that the Shah’s requests were

fully in consonance with US military objectives for Iran and in support of US national interests in the Persian Gulf region.²⁶ The meeting on 5 July concurred in this assessment but added certain caveats that future US action on Iranian arms purchases should be on a steadily diminishing scale. While there was broad agreement that the United States had an obligation to provide Iran with the additional military capability it had requested (i.e., artillery pieces, additional F-4 fighters, and weapons suites for Dutch-built frigates), the meeting concluded that henceforth Iran should look elsewhere to satisfy its arms needs because of US sales ceilings and “other constraints.” The meeting further agreed on the immediate need for consultations with Congress in fashioning a policy on future arms sales, followed by sending a team to Iran in the fall to carry out a comprehensive review of the US-Iran political-military relationship. These discussions would be held at the political level and would include the development of a three- to five-year arms sales plan based on US estimates of availability of ceiling dollars for Iran, as well as other US priorities. In preparation for these meetings, the PRC directed a working group to undertake a comprehensive analysis of US-Iranian relations and arms sales priorities.²⁷

Later in July, ISA asked the Joint Chiefs for their analysis of Iranian military forces and capabilities, the threats facing them, their ability to respond to an attack, and the appropriate force structure for Iran in the mid-1980s and early 1990s. Replying on 5 September 1978, the Joint Chiefs drew their conclusions from a lengthy analysis prepared by the Joint Staff and the Services, working in conjunction with US European Command and the US Military Assistance Advisory Group in Iran. The Chiefs advised that the projected Iranian force structure for 1980-1985 would be able to cope with any contingency except a Soviet attack. They did not address subsequent years, since reliable data were not readily available and collection would have unduly delayed the JCS response. Iranian deficiencies, such as inadequate road and railroad systems and an easily overtaxed airlift capability, hindered mobility. In their opinion, the “paramount” Iranian initiative needed to develop a truly effective military force was the building of adequate repair and maintenance facilities and the establishment of an effective logistical system. For anything other than a “short, low-intensity operation,” Iran would require US or other foreign technical and training assistance. The Joint Chiefs recommended that US aid beyond 1980 be concentrated on rectifying the deficiencies in the command and control of the Iranian armed forces, air defense of the 7,000 kilometers of borders, antisubmarine warfare, and surface-to-air suppression capability.²⁸

In contrast to the support shown by the Joint Chiefs for continuing aid and assistance to Iran, the State Department remained exceedingly skeptical and pressed for curbs whenever the opportunity presented itself. In early August 1978, for example, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance challenged the sale of thirty-one F-4 fighters with advanced electronics and, over objections from Secretary of Defense Brown, persuaded the President that Iran could get along with a less sophisticated plane.²⁹ A month later State queried the sale of an additional seventy F-14s in light of the FY 1980 Arms Transfer Ceiling.³⁰ Defending the proposed transfer, the Chiefs explained that the US

security assistance program for Iran had been tailored to support US national interests in the Persian Gulf. As viewed by Iran, the most serious threats were those posed by the Soviet Union, especially in view of the growing Soviet influence in Afghanistan, and by Iraq. The Joint Chiefs concurred in this view and pointed out that, in the event of a Soviet invasion, the ability of the Imperial Iranian Air Force to deny the Soviets air superiority during the first critical days of the attack would have significant effect on the capacity of the United States to assist in the defense of Iran and ultimately on the credibility of a conventional defense of the region. According to an ongoing analysis by the JCS Studies, Analysis, and Gaming Agency (SAGA), a Soviet advance southward toward Tehran in the wake of simultaneous air and ground assaults could be stopped only if the United States could intervene on the first day with one aircraft carrier, nine USAF fighter squadrons within three days, and additional air and ground reinforcements by twenty-five days after the initial outbreak of hostilities. Iran would need to retain sufficient air power during the first critical days of the Soviet invasion to protect the air routes to its northern borders and its ocean approaches and port facilities. The key element in a successful air defense of Iran was the F-14. Its highly sophisticated weapons system and long-range Phoenix missile would be able to limit penetration of Iranian airspace better than any other aircraft, thus permitting the Iranians to survive longer and continue the fight even after the devastating opening strikes. For these reasons the Joint Chiefs considered this sale as “prudent and in the best interests of the United States,” since any reduction in this number of seventy F-14s would serve only to degrade a force development plan that was “logical, supportable and calculated to provide a visible deterrent to aggression in the Persian Gulf region.”³¹

Unraveling of the Shah’s Regime

Throughout the deliberations over Iran’s security assistance requests, senior US officials, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, assumed that Iran would continue to enjoy stable and forward-looking leadership under the Shah. While challenges to the Shah’s authority were known to be on the increase, the perception in Washington was that none was serious enough to threaten the regime’s survival. The slowness of the President and his advisers to recognize the signs portending the unraveling of the Shah’s government stemmed in large part from their preoccupation with other, more pressing foreign policy problems and from their limited knowledge of the true depth of opposition, especially in the religious community, to the Shah. From the early 1970s on, the US intelligence community rated information on Iran at priority 5, indicating the community’s belief that such information was of “moderate importance” to the United States.³² This, coupled with dependence on the Shah’s government for intelligence about opposition groups and their activities, led to the image in Washington of a regime far stronger and more secure, with broader support, than proved to be the case.³³ After the Iranian militants seized the US embassy and its personnel, the fact surfaced that the

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did not have a single agent in Iran. Belatedly made aware of this situation, President Carter sent the Director of Central Intelligence a handwritten note on 11 November 1978, expressing his dissatisfaction “with the quality of our political intelligence” on Iran and demanding prompt improvements. There was, unfortunately, almost nothing the CIA could do at this point.³⁴

Thus, from the intelligence and other reports coming out of Iran before the revolution, it seemed safe to assume that the Shah’s government, though battered and bruised somewhat, would retain power indefinitely. Accordingly, JCS planners and action officers continued working on the completion of the Iranian security assistance requests, including those involving long-term obligations, on the assumption that the gathering storm would pass. One of those who was extremely influential in shaping JCS thinking during this period was General Robert E. “Dutch” Huyser, USAF, Deputy Commander in Chief, US European Command, whose duties included overseeing the installation of the Shah’s new military command and control system. In August 1978, General Huyser briefed the Shah and his military chiefs on Phase I of the project, secured the monarch’s approval without a single alteration, and obtained JCS permission to implement Phase II. That same month, at ISA’s request, the Joint Staff arranged for the US Military Mission with the Iranian Army and the US Military Assistance Advisory Group to Iran to initiate a study of Iran’s air mobility forces and to recommend options for improvement. In September a five-member US Navy Mine Countermeasures Warfare Team visited Iran to find out how the Iranian navy could improve its capabilities in this field.³⁵

By autumn, however, the signs of a deepening crisis were unmistakable. According to a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) appraisal that reached the Joint Chiefs in late October 1978, it was entirely likely that the Pahlavi regime would weather the current unrest, but not without risk of further serious turmoil. Beset with spreading strikes and economic dislocations, the Shah had decided to cancel the planned purchase of an additional 70 F-14s and 140 F-16s. Likewise, he had cut back his scheduled construction of twenty nuclear power plants to only the four already being built. In addition, he was reported to be reassessing plans for procuring the AWACS planes from the United States, six submarines from West Germany, and an undetermined number of Chieftain tanks from Britain.³⁶ Feeling that the Shah’s position needed bolstering, the Director, Joint Staff, nudged the Chairman with a suggestion, originating in J-5, that the President or some other senior official make a forthright expression of support for the Shah. But before General Jones could act on this proposal, President Carter and a State Department spokesman publicly assured the Shah in separate statements of strong US support and urged him to carry on with his reforms.³⁷

Statements of US moral support notwithstanding, it became increasingly clear that the Shah’s government was in trouble. Taken more or less by surprise by the breadth and intensity of opposition to the Shah, US policymakers groped frantically to formulate a more concrete and certain response. Two views dominated the discussion, one represented by National Security Adviser Brzezinski, the other by Secretary of State Vance. The former favored the Shah using his military might to smash the opposition

and retain power, while the latter advocated an arrangement between the generals and religious hard-liners to achieve an orderly transition of power to a more democratic form of government. Eventually, with President Carter's approval and Secretary Vance's less-than-enthusiastic concurrence, Dr. Brzezinski conveyed a series of messages to the Shah reassuring him of US support. On 6 November, assuming that he was operating with a free hand, the Shah declared a military government, a move President Carter endorsed, albeit reluctantly, in the interest of restoring order.³⁸

Despite military rule, the unrest, strikes, and anti-government demonstrations escalated. Anticipating the danger to Americans living or traveling in Iran, the Joint Chiefs had already instituted a review of evacuation plans and were making a list of US nationals, variously estimated as numbering between 44,000 and 60,000.³⁹ By 8 December the situation had deteriorated to the point that, on advice of the State Department, the Joint Chiefs directed the Military Airlift Command (MAC) to begin removing American dependents, using C-5 and C-141 military cargo planes. Eventually, by 17 February 1979, when the operation ended, MAC and known commercial operators had flown 9,087 evacuees to safety, with an additional 153 evacuated by Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) ships operating in the Persian Gulf.⁴⁰

Whether, as Dr. Brzezinski later claimed, the evacuation hastened the Shah's downfall by signaling a lack of confidence in his leadership seems unlikely.⁴¹ By the latter part of 1978, probably nothing short of direct US military intervention could have saved the Shah, and this, of course, was never a serious option.⁴² At the same time, the United States continued to send the Shah vague and rather mixed signals urging him to resist while exercising restraint in cracking down on dissidents and not to rule out the possibility of concessions.⁴³ For the JCS, the top priorities were the successful evacuation of American personnel and their dependents and the preservation of contacts and influence, especially within Iranian military circles, so that any new government would continue its security cooperation with the West, with or without the Shah in power. But as events moved quickly, it proved exceedingly difficult for the JCS, as for the President and the National Security Council (NSC), to conceptualize and implement a hard and fast policy.⁴⁴

The dénouement began on 27 December, described in one press report as "a day of wild lawlessness and shooting in the capital and a strike that effectively shut down the oil industry."⁴⁵ That same day, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, Chief of Naval Operations, informed his JCS colleagues that the Soviet Union's Indian Ocean task group was about to be relieved by a slightly larger force that included a KRESTA-class guided missile cruiser. "More than ever," he advised,

it is crucial that any government of Iran continue its security co-operation with the U.S. The U.S. therefore needs to provide clear signals that it appreciates the new situation in Iran, retains a firm interest in the region, and intends to support its friends.

Accordingly, he recommended sending a carrier battle group to the Indian Ocean “in the immediate future,” so that it could reach the Arabian Sea sometime after mid-January. On 28 December, with Secretary of Defense Brown’s approval, the Joint Chiefs ordered the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), to position a carrier force near Singapore and to prepare for a possible mission in the Arabian Sea.⁴⁶ However, the State Department, fearing that the Iranian opposition would interpret the increased US naval presence as the prelude to American intervention, cautioned against the mission and, eventually, the task force returned to base at Subic Bay in the Philippines.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, in late December 1978 the Shah finally decided to appoint a new prime minister, Shahpur Bakhtiar, a Western-educated opposition leader, who promptly set about replacing the military regime with a civilian government. By now, not only the religious radicals but also Iranian moderates were calling for the Shah to step down and leave the country. Some Iranian generals continued to urge the Shah to dismiss Bakhtiar and crush the opposition with massive force, while others hinted at a coup. On 3 January 1979, with the Shah still agonizing over what to do, Ambassador William Sullivan advised Washington that the “moment of truth” had arrived. In his opinion, the Shah’s departure was now a foregone conclusion, and he urged President Carter to make a personal appeal to expedite a smooth transfer of power. Otherwise, Ambassador Sullivan warned, a coup seemed certain in a matter of days.⁴⁸

The reaction in Washington produced two major policy decisions. One was to defer for the time being any action on the question of the Shah’s departure, a regrettable course in retrospect perhaps, but one that at the time President Carter felt compelled to take lest it appear that the United States was trying to manipulate Iranian politics. The other was to name a presidential representative to consult directly with Iran’s military leaders. Lacking confidence in Ambassador Sullivan’s advice and reportage, President Carter wanted his own representative in Tehran, someone “strong and competent” who knew the Iranian military leaders and who could encourage them to remain in place and preserve order if or when the Shah decided to leave. For this purpose President Carter, after consulting with Secretary of Defense Brown, turned to General Robert E. Huyser, who was personally well known to the senior Iranian generals and admirals.⁴⁹

General Huyser arrived in Tehran on 4 January 1979 and spent the next month trying, as he later put it, to “preserve some form of the established Iranian government” in the face of rising revolutionary fervor and growing mob violence.⁵⁰ His instructions, though intentionally vague and ambiguous, essentially encompassed two objectives: to expedite the Shah’s departure as soon as possible (he left on 16 January); and to persuade the Iranian military, deemed by President Carter to be “the key to a favorable outcome to the current situation,” to stay in place through the transition to promote order and stability.⁵¹ While in Tehran General Huyser remained in daily contact with both Secretary of Defense Brown and Chairman Jones, providing them with the most detailed and up-to-date information they had yet received on the rapidly deteriorating situation. General Huyser soon discovered that the Iranian military chiefs had for years looked to the Shah to make their decisions and to coordinate planning. As a result,

they lacked initiative and were not accustomed to working together. Nor did they show much support for Bakhtiar's fledgling regime.⁵²

Returning to Washington, General Huyser briefed the Joint Chiefs, the President, and other senior officials on 5 February. While at the White House, he apparently made a passing comment to Dr. Brzezinski that it might still be possible for the Iranian military to stage a coup and thereby keep the radicals from seizing power. Heartened by General Huyser's remark, Dr. Brzezinski began pressing both for a US show-of-force and for a military takeover (known summarily as "Option C") to avert a government dominated by either Islamic fundamentalists or communists.⁵³ Upon reflection, however, General Huyser warned that the Iranian military probably would not attempt a coup without US support. "Not just moral but total materiel support," he said.⁵⁴ Unwilling to embark on open-ended commitments, the Special Coordination Committee (SCC), meeting on 11 February 1979, tabled a proposal to put the 82nd Airborne Division on alert and decided not to undertake any "openly assertive acts" that the Iranians might interpret as military interference.⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter reports reached Washington indicating that most of the senior Iranian officers who would have led a coup were now either in jail or had been executed. The opportunity to intervene, brief though it may have been, had passed, leaving the fate of Iran now in the hands of the Islamic radicals.

Clearly, the disintegration of the Shah's regime came as a severe blow to JCS hopes and expectations for Iran, viewed for years by American military planners as the pillar of stability in that part of the world. But despite their warnings and expressions of concern, the Joint Chiefs had at most a marginal impact on high-level deliberations. At no time did they collectively go on record proposing an emergency course of action to shore up the Shah's regime with additional aid or US military intervention, possibly because events were moving so swiftly and possibly also because they knew that President Carter would pay such suggestions little heed. Among the President's immediate circle of advisers, only Dr. Brzezinski advocated adopting measures that roughly approximated those that the JCS would have taken. The Shah's collapse was, all things considered, probably unavoidable by the time senior officials in Washington recognized the signs; but it might have had less painful consequences had the responses from Washington been stronger, more timely, and more closely focused, as the Joint Chiefs favored, in support of those remaining interests who were determined to preserve Iran's alignment with the West.

Background and Onset of the Hostage Crisis

The collapse of the Shah's government was a grievous blow to US security interests throughout the Middle East-Persian Gulf region. Not only did it deprive the United States of a long-time, trusted ally but it also brought to power in Iran a group of Islamic fundamentalists under the spiritual leadership of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who considered the United States his arch-enemy. Although the process of disengagement

had begun earlier, it accelerated quickly once Khomeini and his followers replaced the last vestiges of the Shah's regime. The result was a steady deterioration in relations between Washington and Tehran and, ultimately, the generation of tensions bordering on a state of war.

In assessing the political and strategic consequences of the Iranian revolution, the Joint Chiefs saw much to worry about, starting with the safety and security of two extremely important posts located in northern Iran for surveillance of the Soviet missile program. Shortly after the Shah's ouster, Iranian military and civilian personnel, angered over the stoppage of their paychecks, seized the two listening posts and held the US personnel hostage. Ambassador Sullivan intervened and, by rushing a plane with the payroll to the captured installations, achieved a swift release of the US hostages. But it was an unsettling experience, in retrospect a harbinger of what was to come.⁵⁶

More serious than the loss of the listening posts were the opportunities the unrest in Iran afforded for the Soviet Union. Since the early 1970s JCS planners had assumed a major Iranian contribution to the defense of the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia. Now, in the aftermath of the upheavals that had overthrown the Shah, the new regime took steps to cut its ties with the West as quickly as possible. In short order it canceled some \$12 billion in contracts the Shah had negotiated and, in late February 1979, announced that it was withdrawing from CENTO.⁵⁷ Looking over the wreckage of US policy, JCS planners had no choice but to accept that, for the time being, Iran's participation in the strategy of containment was over, and that in the future the responsibility for defending the Gulf and providing stability there would fall more heavily on the United States itself.⁵⁸

The change of approach toward US security interests in and around Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf was further reflected in the closer relationship that developed between President Carter and the Joint Chiefs. Heretofore, in dealing with problems concerning Iran, President Carter and the Chiefs had not always seen eye to eye. Not only had the JCS been more sympathetic to the Shah's ambitions of turning Iran into a major military power but they had continued to recommend bolstering the Shah's regime down to the very end. Recognizing their fundamental differences in approach and in priorities, President Carter had kept the Chiefs more or less at arms length, seeking their advice no more than he deemed absolutely necessary. But in the wake of the Iranian revolution and his difficulties with the State Department, President Carter became more open to military courses of action and thus had occasion to consult more regularly with the JCS.

The growing influence that the Joint Chiefs exercised was apparent throughout the full range of contingency planning for Southwest Asia from early 1979 on. Yet nowhere was it more evident or far-reaching than in the planning and execution of the abortive mission in April 1980 to rescue the American personnel being held hostage in the American embassy in Tehran. The details of events leading up to the seizure of the embassy on 4 November 1979 have been related elsewhere. Suffice it to say that steadily

deteriorating relations between Washington and Tehran had followed the Shah's ouster, and that it was the Shah's arrival in the United States in late October 1979 for medical treatment that precipitated the storming of the embassy by Iranian militants. Those inside taken hostage numbered between fifty and sixty Foreign Service personnel and Marine Corps guards. While there had been similar violations of the embassy compound before, they had always been brief. This one, however, was different from the start. Not only did Iranian authorities appear helpless to intervene but also those who had taken control of the embassy quickly received the active encouragement and adulation of the Ayatollah. The crisis had begun, and it would be more than a year before a resolution.

Throughout the ensuing months leading up to the ill-fated rescue mission in April 1980, policy and decisionmaking took place either at formal meetings of the NSC or through less formal mechanisms arranged by the Special Coordination Committee. Usually reduced to as few members as possible in order to maintain confidentiality, the SCC would meet two or three times a week to share information, plot strategy, and review recommendations to the President. The core members of this group were National Security Adviser Brzezinski; Secretary of State Vance or his deputy, Warren Christopher; Secretary of Defense Brown; JCS Chairman Jones and his assistant, Lieutenant General John S. Pustay, USAF; Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner; and Dr. Brzezinski's military assistant, Colonel (later Brigadier General) William E. Odom, USA. At Dr. Brzezinski's insistence, all involved observed the tightest operations security (OPSEC), so much so that it became practically an obsession and perhaps, as later investigation found, a hindrance to sound planning.⁵⁹

Within days following the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jones, set in motion the process that would lead to the rescue mission. At an NSC meeting on 6 November, he outlined the possibility of a rescue effort using helicopters launched from aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf and sought permission to proceed with preliminary planning. Secretary of Defense Brown thought the chances of success very small, but at the White House the idea of a rescue operation was beginning to win over supporters. Colonel William Odom, Dr. Brzezinski's military assistant, had recently attended an impressive demonstration by an Army special operations unit at Fort Bragg and was full of praise and enthusiasm. Returning to Washington, Colonel Odom had presented Dr. Brzezinski with a glowing report of the unit's capabilities, thereby planting the idea that it might hold the key to solving the problem by leading a rescue.⁶⁰ But for now, President Carter was loath to endorse any course of action that might involve "considerable loss of life on both sides." The meeting ended inconclusively, but later that same day, Dr. Brzezinski telephoned Secretary Brown to say that the President wanted the Joint Chiefs to move ahead on a contingency plan for a rescue mission.⁶¹

Two days later General Jones and his assistant, Lieutenant General Pustay, attended an SCC meeting to review the situation again. As summarized by Dr. Brzezinski, the President was weighing several options, including reconnaissance flights using U-2

or SR-71 planes to monitor Iranian air bases, deployment of the carrier USS *Midway* in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf, and issuance of a strong statement on the safety of American citizens, asserting the right to act unilaterally under international law should the hostages be harmed. There followed a briefing on military contingencies given by a junior officer from the Joint Staff. The JCS, he said, were still studying the rescue option, but did not believe it to be viable owing to the high risk of failure, even with very good intelligence on the location of the hostages and other operational details. Looking at ways to put pressure on Iran, the JCS offered a list of punitive military actions that included bombardment of the Abadan refinery by aerial gunships, the mining of Iranian harbors, and attacks on Iranian airfields. But fearing retaliation against the hostages, the meeting refrained from any immediate endorsement of military action.⁶²

Meanwhile, with the President having expressed interest in a possible rescue mission, General Jones moved swiftly to activate a small ad hoc planning cell that included two (later three) US Army officers from Fort Bragg who specialized in unconventional warfare. This then became the nucleus of a joint task force (COMJTF) established on 12 November, under the command of Major General James E. Vaught, USA, with advisory support from Major General Philip C. Gast, USAF, the former chief of the US Military Assistance Advisory Group in Iran. From this point on, Joint Staff planners ceased to be directly involved in the rescue. To preserve utmost secrecy, the task force did not adopt the organization and planning framework of an existing JCS Contingency Plan. Although housed within the J-3 Special Operations Division (SOD), it operated entirely outside of the Joint Staff and reported directly to the Chairman. Members of the Joint Chiefs also received individual progress reports and on three occasions were briefed as a group in order to review what the Joint Task Force had accomplished.⁶³ Critics, including members of the official inquiry into the abortive rescue mission, later felt that by employing ad hoc channels and procedures, the operation denied itself the benefits that might have resulted from having used existing JCS mechanisms—access to a wider range of operational advice, greater intelligence resources, a more stable working environment, and more consistent organizational support. Instead, by deciding to bypass existing joint task force procedures and organizational mechanisms, the Joint Chiefs had to assume the very exacting and time-consuming burden of establishing new ones.⁶⁴

Even though a rescue mission became the chosen course of action, a general recognition of the risks involved and of the time it would take to organize such an effort caused senior officials to weigh other military options first, should diplomacy fail to break the impasse. Responding to reports of renewed threats against the hostages, President Carter met with his top security advisers, including Secretary of Defense Brown and General Jones, on 20 November in Washington and again at Camp David on 23 November, to review his options. At the 20 November meeting, President Carter took steps to begin putting military pressure on Iran, ordering another aircraft carrier into the Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf area to accompany the USS *Midway*, deploying tankers to sustain US aircraft in case of long-range attacks against Iran, and sending

helicopters to Diego Garcia. The next day Dr. Brzezinski sent his military assistant, Brigadier General Odom, to Camp David with a sealed envelope containing a chart outlining additional military options and summarizing for the President their scale and likely impact.⁶⁵

While the precise contents of the package Brigadier General Odom delivered are unknown, a memorandum from Dr. Brzezinski to President Carter a few days later suggests the probable drift. Dr. Brzezinski worried that the United States was locking itself into “a litigational approach” to solving the hostage crisis which, if it dragged on much longer, could produce “a prolonged malaise.” Not only was there the fate of the hostages to consider, Dr. Brzezinski argued, but also the administration had its image to think of in the face of the coming year’s presidential election. “If, in the end,” he said, “we do get our hostages back through accommodation, we still run the risk of jeopardizing our electoral chances if the public perceives us as having been intimidated in some fashion.” While still hopeful that the “peaceful route” would yield the desired results “without too much humiliation,” he urged President Carter also to consider an increase in military pressure on Iran as a demonstration of American resolve, starting with a blockade of Iranian ports, followed by “massive and instant retaliation” should harm come to any of the hostages. Dr. Brzezinski readily acknowledged that this represented a “high-risk strategy,” but he thought it would help free the hostages, undermine Khomeini’s regime, and most important of all, “be politically more appealing.”⁶⁶

Dr. Brzezinski’s influence was readily apparent at the Camp David meeting on 23 November. Adopting an unusually tough line, President Carter told his advisers that he was leaning in favor of mining Iranian ports should Khomeini carry out his threat to try the hostages. He said he judged this the best and surest way of putting pressure on the Iranians without exposing US forces to undue danger. Although he said he had also considered a naval blockade, he had dismissed this option as too risky because it would involve possible confrontations with other countries. But he added that should the Iranians begin harming or executing US hostages, he would respond immediately by ordering direct military attacks, starting with assaults on oil refineries and “other targets of strategic importance.”⁶⁷

Turning again to the question of possible trials, President Carter approved sending a message through an intermediary threatening retaliation if trials took place. Secretary of State Vance and Vice President Walter Mondale urged restraint, fearing that the issuance of any threats might jeopardize the prospects for settling the hostage crisis through negotiations. But President Carter overruled them, and the message went out that evening. According to Secretary Vance, President Carter was unsure whether the message ever reached Tehran. But according to NSC adviser Gary Sick’s account, President Carter knew within forty-eight hours that the message had arrived and, shortly thereafter, that it had had the desired effect. Within days, the Iranians ceased talking of trials and treatment of the hostages improved.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, with the hostage standoff showing no sign of an early resolution, planning for the rescue mission gathered momentum. According to General Jones’

retrospective account, the Joint Chiefs “went through many, many different options.” “In the initial stages,” he recalled, “we did not see any option that had a reasonable chance of success.”⁶⁹ But by late November 1979 Major General Vaught and General Jones agreed that the use of helicopters offered the most practical and effective means of conducting the rescue.⁷⁰ From this decision evolved plans for what became the “Eagle Claw” mission, a complicated joint operation. Although General Jones later denied any explicit deal-cutting to give each Service a share of the action, his assistant, Lieutenant General Pustay, remembered things a little differently. According to Lieutenant General Pustay, there was a feeling “that it would be nice if everyone had a piece of the pie.” However, Lieutenant General Pustay hastened to add that, in his view, this in no way interfered with the execution of the mission.⁷¹

The plan was that during the first night the helicopters would lift off from an aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea and fly some 600 miles nonstop to a secret landing strip in the Iranian desert to rendezvous with C-130s carrying assault troops, fuel, and equipment. After refueling and taking aboard the rescue force, the helicopters would continue on for close to 300 miles to another secret rendezvous spot near Tehran, offload the assault team, and proceed fifteen miles north to a remote mountain hide-away where they would spend the day hidden. The C-130s, meantime, would depart the country under cover of darkness. During the second night, the main rescue force would move clandestinely to Tehran in trucks, assault the embassy compound, immobilize the guards, and free the hostages. Concurrently, a smaller rescue force would travel in a Volkswagen van, storm the Iranian Foreign Ministry building, and free the three hostages held there. Once all the hostages had been gathered into a nearby soccer stadium, the helicopters would make a pickup. Two C-130 gunships would be circling overhead to provide covering fire, if needed. Meanwhile, about thirty-five miles to the south, in Manzariyeh, a detachment of Rangers aboard a C-130 would land, seize the airfield there, and hold it until the helicopters arrived from Tehran. Once everyone assembled, C-141s would airlift them out of Iran and the Rangers would depart aboard C-130s.⁷²

Although planning was continuous and intense from early November 1979 on, it was not until early March 1980, as General Jones recalled, that he and his JCS colleagues began to feel “a growing confidence” that the rescue mission was coming together in terms of a feasible plan, trained personnel, and suitable equipment.⁷³ What remained to be seen was whether President Carter would approve the operation. Toward the end of an all-day meeting at Camp David on 22 March, General Jones presented what Dr. Brzezinski described as the “first comprehensive and full briefing on the rescue mission” that the President had yet received. Disappointed over the latest failure of diplomacy to free the hostages, President Carter was more ready than ever to contemplate military action. But he thought the plan that General Jones presented “still needed more work.” As an interim measure, he authorized a reconnoitering mission into the Iranian desert, the first step toward establishing the Desert One base camp for the planned operation.⁷⁴ Two days later, at the President’s request, Lieutenant General Pustay briefed Hamilton Jordan, President Carter’s White House chief of staff.

As Lieutenant General Pustay was wrapping up his presentation, Mr. Jordan asked him whether the Joint Chiefs were recommending that the mission go ahead. “That’s not our job,” Lieutenant General Pustay replied. “The President asked us to come up with a plan for a rescue—and we have. It obviously will be his decision if he decides to attempt it.”⁷⁵

The Decision, the Mission, and the Consequences

By early April 1980 President Carter could see that his options for resolving the hostage crisis through negotiations were fading quickly in the face of renewed threats from the militants to begin executing the hostages. As the President later recalled in his memoirs, he “could no longer afford to depend on diplomacy” for a solution or to guarantee the hostages’ safety.⁷⁶ Once again, with the crisis deepening, Dr. Brzezinski weighed in with recommendations for what he now described as “*limited military measures*” in order to “build credibility” for “a new program of pressure against Iran.” As a first step, he suggested mining Iranian harbors, followed if necessary by a rescue operation to liberate the hostages. Citing the failure of diplomatic efforts to break the impasse, Dr. Brzezinski believed that a rescue mission “may be the only realistic means of freeing the hostages in the next six months.” By then, of course, the presidential election campaign would be almost over.⁷⁷

Increasingly, President Carter and Dr. Brzezinski were of the same mind as far as the rescue operation was concerned. Having recently learned of the militants’ threats against the hostages, President Carter called an emergency meeting of the NSC on 7 April to announce that he had decided to break diplomatic relations with Iran and to impose economic and political sanctions. All in all, he saw “a profound change in the situation” requiring “forceful action.” Echoing Dr. Brzezinski’s sentiments, President Carter reminded his advisers that he had been leaning for some months toward the mining option, should diplomacy fail, but he felt the time had come for more direct action. He added, though, that he had “a bad feeling” about a rescue operation, and said it sent “shivers down his spine” because of the possibility that the assault force might be detected before it could complete its job. Later in the meeting President Carter said he was against the rescue, primarily because he failed to see how it could be accomplished without bloodshed. Just the same, he saw nothing else to be done.

Despite the President’s misgivings, JCS Chairman Jones offered an upbeat assessment of planning for the mission. General Jones said that his confidence in a successful outcome had gone up considerably since he last briefed the President at Camp David. The reason was the availability of new information brought back by the “Otter mission,” which had reconnoitered the landing site in the Iranian desert. General Jones then brought the council up to date on the status of operational planning for the rescue. He said the JCS believed the possibility of a “disastrous outcome” to be small, primarily because of built-in failsafe points along the way. However, there was a much higher

probability that the expedition might have to abort without completing the rescue. General Jones also mentioned that time was running out for the United States to act. Nights were growing shorter, and by mid-May rising temperatures would make it difficult for the helicopters to fly over Iran's mountainous terrain fully loaded with the rescue team. He thus recommended a target date of 24 April for the mission to commence and said that within the next few days he would need the President's permission to begin flying in the planes that would refuel the helicopters.

Further discussion was inconclusive, but revealed a grudging sense of acceptance that the rescue operation might offer the only way of solving the hostage problem. In response to a question from Vice President Mondale, General Jones rated the chances of detection at fifty-fifty and the likelihood of a successful withdrawal, should the rescue team be discovered, at 80 percent. Dr. Brzezinski believed that the rescue entailed a high degree of risk, but that it was "politically more desirable than mining." Secretary of State Vance seemed to agree. When asked directly by the President what options he saw, Secretary Vance "replied that he preferred a rescue over mining, although he said there would be substantial loss of life." While Secretary Vance did not say specifically that he endorsed the rescue, neither did he go on record as opposing it. Later, he would claim to having been misled and in opposition to the mission all along. But according to NSC records, it was really President Carter who expressed the most serious doubts.⁷⁸

Events now moved quickly, as the Joint Chiefs stood poised to put the rescue plan into operation. On 11 April the NSC met again for a last look at the preparations. General Jones, using a map and pointer to illustrate the logistics involved, confirmed that the operation would commence on 24 April. Armed with a list of prepared questions, the President found General Jones' answers to be "much more satisfactory" than at their previous meeting. The only dissenting view came from Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, sitting in for Secretary Vance, who was on an ill-timed vacation. Secretary Christopher had sat in on earlier NSC discussions of the rescue mission, but he had taken no active part in the planning. His only comment now was that he thought there were still important political and economic sanctions to be explored. President Carter, however, said he had already discussed the matter privately with First Lady Rosalynn, Mr. Hamilton Jordan, Vice President Mondale, and White House press secretary Jody Powell and had made up his mind. Shutting off further discussion, he announced: "We ought to go ahead without delay."⁷⁹

Having finally obtained the green light for the mission, General Jones promptly advised Major General Vaught to make ready for the deployment of his forces as planned. Major General Vaught, in turn, convened a two-day meeting in the Pentagon to review the plan with the mission commanders, affirm lines of command and control, evaluate force readiness, review contingencies, and make an overall assessment of the prospects for mission success. The next day, 16 April, the Joint Chiefs again reviewed the plan the joint task force had devised. Agreeing that it stood a reasonably good chance of succeeding, they approved it for the last time. That evening, along with Major General Vaught, Major General Gast, and Colonel Charles Beckwith, USA, commander

of the assault forces, they met with the President, who likewise gave his final blessing. President Carter assured them that they had his “complete confidence and support” and promised “that there would be no interference from the White House while the mission was under way.” According to Colonel Beckwith’s recollections of the meeting, the President added that assault troops had *carte blanche* to use whatever force they needed in order to protect American lives.⁸⁰

The tragic story of the mission itself falls outside the scope of this study. Despite five and one-half months of intensive training and preparation, it was from the beginning a perilous operation in which much could—and did—go wrong. The disaster in the Iranian desert, resulting in the accidental deaths of eight US servicemen, and the ignominious withdrawal of the rest of the rescue party hundreds of miles away from its objective were both a setback for President Carter’s hopes of ending the hostage standoff and a humiliating blow to the power and prestige of the United States. In the weeks that followed the disaster, the Joint Chiefs endeavored to piece together what had happened and why, and in so doing to learn more of how similar fiascos might be avoided in the future.

By far the most detailed and thorough examination of the rescue mission was that undertaken at the Chiefs’ request by the Special Operations Review Group (SORG), comprised of five senior officers (three retired, two still on active duty) under the chairmanship of Admiral James L. Holloway, III, former Chief of Naval Operations. Their task, as spelled out in their terms of reference, was to produce “a professional critique of the Iranian hostage rescue operation.” Instead of dwelling on a chronology or reconstruction of events, the review group focused on selected issues which it analyzed solely on the basis of whether or not “they might very well have an application for some future special operation conducted under different circumstances.” Their final report, which went to the Chiefs in July 1980, was intentionally “highly critical” in order not to “allow any potential area of possible future improvement to go unquestioned.”⁸¹

From a host of specific findings the review group drew two general conclusions. The first was that there had been undue emphasis throughout the operation, from the moment planning commenced in November 1979 down to the launching of the mission in April 1980, on ad hoc arrangements. “By not utilizing an existing JTF organization,” the panel observed, “the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to start, literally, from the beginning to establish a JTF, find a commander, create an organization, provide a staff, develop a plan, select the units, and train the forces before attaining even the most rudimentary mission readiness.” Alternatively, the review group speculated that an existing joint task force organization, even with a small staff and only cadre units assigned, would have provided an organizational framework of professional expertise around which a larger tailored force organization could have been built. The important point, the review group emphasized, was that the infrastructure would have existed and that those in charge of the operation could have devoted more time to plans, operations, and tactics, instead of having to wrestle with administration and logistics.⁸²

The review group's second major observation followed from the first: that many things that could have been done in the interests of improving the mission's chances for success were not done because of excessive concern for operations security (OPSEC). Although mindful of the reasons why OPSEC had been such a high priority, Admiral Holloway and his colleagues found it hard to believe that most of the alternatives it suggested could not have been incorporated without any adverse impact on secrecy and security. Indeed, a "carefully structured" joint task force, operating within the JCS organization, would have inherently provided its own OPSEC environment while allowing for a wider initial disclosure policy that would have greatly benefited the entire operation. As one example, the review group cited the exclusion from planning of the director of the National Security Agency. "There is," as the review group dryly noted, "no organization any more OPSEC conscious than NSA."⁸³

To these overall conclusions, the review group added its own assessment of the operation's chances. Citing the heavy demands on personnel and equipment and the complexity of the mission, the review group deemed it a "high risk" gamble all along. In these circumstances, the review group concluded: "There was little margin to compensate for mistakes or *plain bad luck*."⁸⁴ Although most of his colleagues on the review group initially objected to the use of the term "bad luck" in an official report, Admiral Holloway felt so strongly about its inclusion that he finally persuaded them to leave it in.⁸⁵

Turning to specific recommendations, the review group offered only two: that the Joint Chiefs establish a permanent Joint Task Force (JTF), with assigned staff and certain assigned forces; and that they also create a Special Operations Advisory Panel, comprised of high-ranking officers with backgrounds in special operations and joint planning, to provide advice and guidance for future such operations.⁸⁶ In fact, on 7 June 1980, well before the Admiral Holloway panel had completed its findings, the Joint Chiefs had recommended to Secretary of Defense Brown the early creation of "a permanently established force" to cope with "future terrorist incidents."⁸⁷ Two months later the Secretary of Defense approved JCS-recommended terms of reference for the new JTF. To avoid attracting undue attention and to preserve secrecy, the Joint Chiefs approved and distributed a cover plan for the assignment of personnel to the new unit. Activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in October 1980, JTF comprised dedicated US Army, Navy, and Air Force units that had been especially trained, equipped, and organized to deal with a broad range of terrorist activities.⁸⁸ The Joint Chiefs also recommended, and Secretary Brown approved, the formation on 1 October 1980 of a Special Operations Advisory Panel to review and provide an independent assessment of special operations planning.⁸⁹

These changes in JCS organization and procedures came too late to be of use in helping to resolve the hostage crisis or in laying plans for a renewed rescue attempt. Having tried once and failed through military action, President Carter was not about to risk a second rescue mission. Like President John F. Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, President Carter could not help but be somewhat skeptical of relying on JCS advice

again. Yet at no time after the incident did he specifically fault the Chiefs for rendering unsound recommendations. The hostage crisis was a desperate, almost unprecedented situation, and as such it seemed to cry out for desperate, unprecedented remedies.

The failure of the rescue mission was, in a very real sense, indicative of a much larger problem facing US military planners—the difficulty of projecting adequate and effective military power in support of US interests throughout the Persian Gulf-Middle East region. Having relied for years on others—first Britain, then Iran—to provide essential security for this area, the United States found itself by the end of the 1970s bearing these burdens almost alone. For the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this meant the diversion of scarce resources intended for other purposes and the hasty development of contingency plans for a wide variety of new and unfamiliar situations. The Iran rescue mission was a case in point: small in scale by comparison with the undertakings yet to come, but typical of the extraordinary demands that deepening involvement in the Gulf could entail. That the operation ended without achieving its objective was a sign both of the high risks involved in this particular venture and of the complex and challenging nature of mounting practically any kind of military action in this part of the world.

Pakistan: Reviving the Relationship

The loss of Iran, obviously a sharp setback for US policy in and around the strategically important Persian Gulf, appeared all the more stark and serious by the absence of any fall-back country that could readily take Iran's place as a bulwark against Soviet expansion. The most likely candidate to fill that role was Pakistan, but because of its dubious record on human rights and its apparent determination with French help to acquire an atomic capability—the so-called “Islamic bomb”—Pakistan remained something of a pariah in the eyes of the Carter administration. The Joint Chiefs likewise harbored misgivings about Pakistan, but they also thought that more ought to be done to upgrade Pakistan's antiquated military establishment, a position that had little support outside the Pentagon until events in Iran and Afghanistan compelled a reassessment. The ensuing turnabout in US policy toward Pakistan, modeled generally on the approach recommended by the Joint Chiefs, looked to military assistance to improve relations and to strengthen defense ties. But it was a change of policy that yielded few immediate or concrete dividends.

Relations between the United States and Pakistan had been deteriorating since the early 1970s, and with the advent of the Carter administration, they showed no sign of improving soon. Although the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP) for FY 1978-1985 projected a gradual restructuring of Pakistan's armed forces through US help,⁹⁰ the Carter administration entered office reaffirming the constraints on security assistance imposed by the previous administration and, going a step further, added new ones of its own. The guidelines governing US arms sales to Pakistan, as set forth in 1975 and revalidated in mid-1977, authorized sales on a cash-only basis, prohibited grant

assistance or foreign military aid credits, and required all sales to be consistent with the US policy of encouraging normalization and reconciliation between Pakistan and India. Taking a personal interest, President Carter himself in March 1977 approved a commercial contract worth \$55 million to overhaul some of Pakistan's tanks, but at the same time he put a "hold" on the sale of new communications equipment and deferred action on sixty-four howitzers that the government of Pakistan also wanted to buy.⁹¹

With military assistance to Pakistan effectively suspended as of April 1977, relations between Washington and Islamabad seemed to bottom out. The policy of the regime in power at the time, headed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was to play off the United States against the Soviet Union. But with Bhutto's overthrow by a coup in July 1977 and the installation of a military junta headed by Mohammad Zia al-Haq, Pakistan's foreign policy began a slow tilt back toward the West, while still maintaining close ties to Communist China, no friend of India's. The following year brought a series of further developments: the decision of the French government (under US pressure) to withdraw its support of Pakistan's uranium enrichment project; a leftist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978, resulting in the installation of a hostile Marxist regime along Pakistan's northern frontier; growing internal strife in Iran; and continuing modernization by India of its armed forces, including consummation of a deal to acquire 150 to 170 highly advanced Anglo-French Jaguar fighter-bombers. In attempting to assess the impact of these developments, the NSC's Policy Review Committee (PRC) decided in late July 1978 that the time had come to take a fresh look at Pakistan's military needs "since Pakistan's sense of insecurity is a key problem in South Asia today."⁹²

In their strategy review of the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia, forwarded to the Secretary of Defense in September 1978, the Joint Chiefs urged that first priority be given to improving Pakistan's air defenses. The Joint Chiefs at this time still hoped to see a revitalized Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and they looked to Pakistan to contribute to that process.⁹³ But owing to Pakistan's apparent determination to move ahead with its nuclear program, despite the cut-off of French cooperation, the White House and the State Department opposed assistance extending to high-performance weapons systems like the F-16, F-18, or A-7 aircraft in which the Pakistanis had shown an interest. In drawing up a list of offers, State and Defense also had to consider Pakistan's limited financial resources and the likelihood that Pakistan, under current legislation, would not qualify for foreign military sales credits.⁹⁴ Taking these various matters into account, the PRC recommended, and in December 1978 President Carter approved, an offer to resume assistance, limited initially to the sale of up to seventy-six F-5E fighters to replace Pakistan's aging fleet of F-86s, and a helicopter-borne tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) anti-tank missile system to bolster Pakistan's tank defenses.⁹⁵

Despite this apparent thaw in relations between Washington and Islamabad, a chill set in once again when in April 1979 the United States suspended all economic and military aid to Pakistan.⁹⁶ The immediate issue was Zia's indifference to pleas from the West to halt the execution of his predecessor, Ali Bhutto. But the larger stumbling block

continued to be Pakistan's unbending determination to acquire an atomic capability and the overriding priority set by the White House, citing congressional mandates, on curbing Islamabad's nuclear ambitions.⁹⁷ Indeed, part of the rationale for resuming arms assistance in the first place was that it would help end Pakistan's sense of isolation and insecurity, and thereby persuade Islamabad to give up its atomic weapons program. However, the results prior to the cutoff in April were far from encouraging, causing a member of General Jones' staff to speculate that the United States might be pursuing a futile objective by linking arms aid to a cessation of nuclear research. "I am not very sanguine," he said in a note to the Chairman, "that we'll be able to come up with any combination of carrots and sticks that will induce Pakistan to give up its efforts to have a nuclear capability." "Personally speaking," he added, "I hope we don't waste many carrots."⁹⁸

The longer the nuclear impasse dragged on, the more frustrating it became to officials in Washington. Whereas the Joint Chiefs saw unconditional arms assistance as the surest and quickest route to influence Pakistan's behavior, others, including Under Secretary of Defense Robert Komer, thought the United States had been generous enough already. Taking exception with what he described as the "US military's romantic attachment to the stalwart Pakistani," Under Secretary Komer advised Secretary of Defense Brown that probably the only way left of dissuading Pakistan from building a bomb was through stepped up pressure, including a cessation of further arms aid. Rather than court Pakistan, Mr. Komer believed the United States should strive for closer relations with India. "A cool calculation of our strategic interest in the subcontinent," he argued, "shows that a billion Indians are far more important to our overall interest than 150 million Paks."⁹⁹ But to strategic analysts in J-5, Under Secretary Komer's use of population figures entirely missed the point. Citing ongoing studies, the Director J-5, Lieutenant General Richard L. Lawson, USAF, was more convinced than ever that active cooperation with Pakistan was essential in almost any significant military operation in Southwest Asia. "Now that US-Iranian defense cooperation has ended," he observed, "Pakistan is the most viable candidate for US staging operations."¹⁰⁰

Before either view could be further vetted and tested came the news of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas Day 1979 and, shortly thereafter, the realignment of US policy throughout the region under the Carter Doctrine. Worried that Pakistan might be the Soviet Union's next target, President Carter now began to loosen some of the restrictions he had insisted upon in the past. In early January 1980 he offered Pakistan an aid package consisting of security assurances and assistance valued at \$400 million. Not included, however, was the high-performance F-16 fighter in which the Pakistanis had previously shown keen interest.¹⁰¹ Barely pausing to study the offer, Zia dismissed it as "peanuts," because it did not contain enough high-technology weaponry.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, both the State Department and the Joint Staff undertook separate reevaluations of Pakistan's military needs. Responding first, State's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs came up with recommendations in late January that immediately drew

a strong rebuke from the Chairman's assistant, Lieutenant General John S. Pustay. Not only did Lieutenant General Pustay resent what he considered State's poaching on JCS "turf" but also he thought that State's hurried response represented an "unduly skeptical" assessment of the dangers confronting Pakistan, offset by clearly "inadequate" aid proposals—if indeed, as State suggested, Pakistan faced the imminent threat of a Soviet or combined Soviet-Indian attack. Agreeing that Pakistan needed help, he recommended that the Joint Staff look more closely at what Pakistan could reasonably absorb and at the effect that any immediate transfer of arms and equipment would have on US defense obligations elsewhere, to NATO and the Pacific especially.¹⁰³

With the question of military aid to Pakistan still dangling, President Carter in early February sent Dr. Brzezinski and Deputy Secretary of State Christopher on a fact-finding mission to Pakistan. At the same time, the Joint Chiefs, noting the absence of any contingency plan for the defense of Pakistan, directed CINCPAC to develop one without delay.¹⁰⁴ Though the threat of a Soviet invasion seemed now to have receded, Pakistan was fast becoming the haven for a growing number of Afghan refugees that included members of the anticommunist mujahedin, thus making it a logical target at any time for a Soviet strike. According to published reports, Zia made it known to Dr. Brzezinski and Deputy Secretary Christopher that, as the price for providing sanctuary to the Afghan insurgents, he expected the United States to be more forthcoming in providing advanced weapons that would dramatically raise the capabilities of his armed forces.¹⁰⁵ However, Brigadier General David R. Palmer, USA, the J-5 representative who accompanied Dr. Brzezinski and Mr. Christopher, returned to Washington skeptical of Zia's promises. Brigadier General Palmer found the Pakistanis not only undecided "whether or not to work with the United States" but also averse to committing themselves to confronting the Soviet threat in Afghanistan if doing so meant lessening the attention they could give to problems posed by India.¹⁰⁶

Brigadier General Palmer's assessment was, as it turned out, essentially correct. While President Carter and his senior advisers continued to examine a variety of military aid options to strengthen Pakistan, there was very little meaningful progress in bringing Washington and Islamabad closer together on security arrangements until the advent of the Reagan administration. The same generally could be said of JCS contingency planning with respect to Pakistan, responsibility for which passed from CINCPAC to the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) under the revised Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan for FY 1981. But with planning and resources concentrated on protecting the Persian Gulf oil-producing areas, the RDJTF had few assets to spare for assisting Pakistan.¹⁰⁷ Not having been solved by the end of Carter's presidency, the problem of assuring the security of Pakistan would continue on into the next administration.

While it seems clear that the Carter administration's preoccupation with curbing Pakistan's nuclear bomb program exacerbated tensions between Washington and Islamabad, it is less clear whether the JCS approach of being more forthcoming with assistance would have made the Pakistanis any more tractable. The Joint Chiefs wanted a militarily stronger Pakistan, but the proffered assistance was never enough

either to develop Pakistan into a formidable military power, as the JCS envisioned, or to tempt the Pakistanis into giving up their larger ambition of acquiring a nuclear capability to offset India's. Indeed, from Pakistan's standpoint, the danger posed by India outweighed that posed by any other source, including the Soviet Union, and it was on this basis that Pakistan tended to evaluate its security needs, including its ties to Communist China. Neither the Iranian revolution nor the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had quite the same impact in Islamabad as they did in Washington. Later, during the Reagan administration, as Pakistan became more involved as the funnel for an ever-growing level of assistance to the Afghan insurgents, it became pointless for Islamabad to cling to the pretence of a nonaligned status. Politically and militarily, it also made sense for the United States then to bolster Pakistan's armed forces and to include such weapons as the F-16, which the Carter administration had refused to provide. But until then, Pakistan's preference for nonalignment and its preoccupation with India made it a less than inviting partner for the United States.



US Army helicopters in front of two pyramids during exercise Bright Star '80.

Israel and the Arab States

Although overshadowed toward the end of Carter's presidency by the Iranian hostage crisis and threats to Persian Gulf security, the issue of uppermost importance in the Middle East at the outset was unquestionably the Arab-Israeli conflict. A major contributing factor to instability throughout the region, it was a decades-old source of friction in East-West relations as well. The previous administration, largely through the efforts of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, had done much to relax tensions in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and thereby had set the stage for a partial reconciliation between Israel and its most potent Arab neighbor, Egypt. But by 1977, despite a general disengagement of the warring parties, peace in the Middle East seemed as elusive as ever.

While President Carter's goals in the Middle East differed little from those of Presidents Nixon or Ford, his born-again Christian outlook and fascination with the Holy Lands produced a notably greater degree of personal interest and involvement. In seeking to lessen Arab-Israeli tensions, he hoped to project the reassuring image of an honest broker, a friend to both sides, pursuing even-handed policies. Abandoning the step-by-step approach that Dr. Kissinger had pursued, he sought a broadly negotiated comprehensive settlement. At the same time, he was the first American President since World War II who did not worry more about the Soviet threat to the Middle East than about problems associated with human rights, the oil-supply situation, and the growing magnitude of arms sales to Israel and its Arab neighbors. As a candidate for the White House, he had condemned what he saw as the Ford administration's practice of profligate arms transfers. Once in office, he decreed a new policy (PD-13) to curb US arms sales worldwide, with special attention to the Middle East, though in deference to political realities he partially exempted Israel from what was to become a dollar-volume ceiling on US arms transfers.¹ Even so, throughout his presidency, Mr. Carter subjected Israeli requests to unusually tough scrutiny much more than they were used to receiving, with results that created rarely seen strains in Israeli-American relations.

For the Joint Chiefs, peacemaking in the Middle East was likewise a matter of high priority, though for somewhat different reasons. Since the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, US military aid to Israel had been especially massive and continuous. Totalling \$4.5 billion between September 1973 and January 1976, it had reached more than double the amount provided by the United States over the two previous decades. These subsidies, according to Israeli Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman, amounted to “some 20 percent” of the Israeli defense budget, an estimate which, when factored in with other US assistance, was probably on the low side.² The major danger the Joint Chiefs saw was that by remaining too close to Israel, the United States would jeopardize its economic and strategic interests in the neighboring Persian Gulf region.³ As it turned out, under President Carter the Chiefs would have less influence on Middle East policy than ever before and would see less done than they believed warranted to restrain Israel’s military buildup, despite the President’s shared concern for the possible consequences. But out of the give and take of the peace process would emerge a more balanced US policy on arms aid that took more account of promoting closer relations with the Arab side, as the JCS had long urged, while at the same time providing continuing support for Israel’s security.

Rethinking Arms Aid to Israel

Like his predecessors, President Carter recognized that negotiating an end to Arab-Israeli hostilities would not be easy. The day after his inauguration he directed the Policy Review Committee (PRC) to provide policy alternatives on the immediate short-term issues in the Middle East and the broader question of an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. Among the issues he singled out for attention were US security assistance to Israel, the continuing Arab boycott, the prospects for convening a Geneva conference on Middle East peace, options for handling the Palestinian refugee question, and the timing of new diplomatic initiatives.⁴

Although not directly involved in the Arab-Israeli negotiations, the Joint Chiefs did make substantial contributions to the PRC’s examination of Israel’s security assistance needs. The initial focus was an Israeli request, pending since the fall of 1976, for \$800 million in weapons and equipment that Israel proposed to purchase in FY 1978. Heading the list was an Israeli acquisition plan for 250 F-16 fighters—50 purchased directly from the United States, the rest to be co-produced under license in Israel. Other items the Israelis hoped to acquire in FY 1978 included 1,000 armored personnel carriers, 48 M-109 self-propelled guns, 75 Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) devices, 800 MAVERICK air-to-ground missiles, 1,350 SIDEWINDER air-to-air missiles, 250 CBU 72/b “cluster” bombs, and various other munitions. In January 1976 President Ford had imposed a ceiling of \$2 billion on military aid and sales to Israel, and the following October he had approved various specific items of equipment, including 126 M-60 tanks and 94

self-propelled howitzers. But with the Carter administration about to take office, the Ford White House declined to take a position on further sales.⁵

Under its mandate to review US Middle East policy, the PRC took up Israel's FY 1978 procurement plan in early February 1977, at which time the State Department outlined four possible options. These ranged from \$1.5 billion (\$1 billion in foreign military sales (FMS) and \$500 million in supporting assistance) to \$2.285 billion (\$1.5 billion in FMS and the rest in supporting assistance). The first option represented a level approximating that in the Ford budget, while the last one accorded fully with the Israeli request of the previous fall. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA), David E. McGiffert, and the Director, Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Ray B. Sitton, USAF, recommended that the Defense Department support the first option.⁶ However, the other members of the committee, feeling that this was too low, endorsed a somewhat higher figure of \$1.785 billion (\$1.0 billion in FMS credits, with half to be forgiven, and \$785 million in supporting assistance). In an effort to accommodate the President's desire for a more balanced policy on arms transfers, the PRC also recommended \$1.063 billion in security assistance for the Arab states.⁷

While recommending an overall figure for Israel slightly higher than the Joint Chiefs deemed advisable, the committee skirted the question of what specific items the assistance ought to cover. This was an especially critical point in view of upcoming bilateral discussions that President Carter intended to hold with Israeli and Arab leaders, and left open the possibility that future decisions to grant or withhold sales would be paced to the rate of progress in these negotiations—in other words, a carrot-and-stick approach. However, the signals coming from the administration at this stage offered no clear-cut picture of what to expect. President Carter's bias against foreign arms sales remained as strong as ever, and there were some items on Israel's current procurement list he simply could not abide, and summarily vetoed, on moral grounds—CBU 72/b cluster bombs, for example, because of the indiscriminate death and destruction they could inflict on innocent civilians.⁸ Even so, President Carter also indicated that he stood ready to honor the commitments made by his predecessor, and in March 1977 he gave the final go-ahead for the sale of the tanks and howitzers that President Ford had approved.⁹

By far the most controversial items contained in Israel's FY 1978 request were the 250 F-16 aircraft, which the Joint Chiefs and the new administration singled out for special handling. A new high performance fighter, the F-16 would give Israel a substantial strategic edge over its Arab neighbors for the next decade or more, and it was fast becoming in Israeli eyes and those of its American supporters the litmus test of the US commitment to Israel's security.¹⁰

In advising the new administration on how to proceed, the Joint Chiefs clearly considered the Israeli request premature and excessive. Although they acknowledged that Israel would need "a new generation of aircraft" to offset plane retirements and peacetime attrition, they saw no requirement for the F-16 for replacement purposes prior to the early 1980s and doubted whether Israel could absorb 250 of the planes

without doing serious harm to its economy and the balance of forces in the Middle East. Based on force requirement projections in the current Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP), the Joint Chiefs recommended that the sale be cut in half, to 125 planes through 1986, and that co-production plans be dropped, both for economic reasons and to lessen the possible loss of military secrets through “significant transfers of technology and manufacturing techniques.”¹¹ Upon further review by the Middle East Task Group (METG), an Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) committee created in 1973 to assist in dealing with arms requests, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown notified the State Department that he concurred with the JCS on dropping co-production plans, but he disagreed with them on the size of the sale. Accepting the task group’s finding that 125 planes was still far too many for Israel’s needs, he recommended instead that the sale be limited to 50 copies through 1982, with a decision on the sale of any more held in abeyance.¹²

By June 1977 the METG, working in collaboration with the Joint Staff, had completed its review of the remaining items on Israel’s FY 1978 procurement list, but they had yet to receive any high-level guidance for further planning and programming purposes. In assessing Israel’s military needs, the Joint Staff could find little military justification for any Israeli force augmentation in the near future beyond that already in the pipeline and, therefore, urged that Israel’s future requests be handled on a case-by-case basis.¹³ Generally speaking, this had been President Carter’s approach all along and would continue to be the administration’s strategy in the months ahead, despite growing pressure from Israel and its American friends for the United States to be more forthcoming with assistance.¹⁴

An unexpected complication was the change in government in Israel following elections in May 1977 that brought to power the conservative Likud bloc led by Menachem Begin. Since 1948 the United States had dealt with a succession of Israeli Labor party governments headed by such leaders as David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir, who had had close ties to the American Jewish community. Begin, on the other hand, was relatively unknown in Washington and represented a bloc given to adopting hard-line positions on key issues, including opposition to the return of occupied Arab territory. With Begin in office, it seemed more than likely that the United States could expect even stronger Israeli pressure for more weapons and equipment.¹⁵

Hoping to gain a better appreciation of Prime Minister Begin’s views, President Carter invited the new Israeli prime minister to Washington soon after the election. Assuming that arms aid would come up in their discussions, the PRC recommended that Israeli requests be divided into three categories: those items the United States could approve immediately; those it might give Begin during his visit; and those which should be related to progress in negotiations. Items in the latter category (subsequently dubbed “most controversial”) included the F-16 fighters that Israel wanted, as well as assistance in building 178 Israeli-designed Chariot tanks. The committee also agreed that it should go ahead with plans for assistance to the Arab side, starting with consultations among

key members of Congress on the political feasibility of selling F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia and various items to Egypt.¹⁶

Prime Minister Begin arrived in Washington on 19 July 1977 for two days of talks with President Carter. While security requirements arose from time to time, political issues relating to resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute dominated the discussions. This was for all practical purposes a get-acquainted meeting between the two heads of state and, therefore, did not heavily engage the military advisers of either side. Afterwards, however, as a gesture of continuing US support for Israel, President Carter approved a military sales package valued at \$250 million, bringing the total for the year to \$400 million, a sum well below Israeli expectations. The approved items included two hydro-foil patrol boats, eighteen AH-18 Cobra attack helicopters, support for the Chariot tank program, and miscellaneous ammunition. Still pending was the most controversial and important part of Israel's procurement program—the 250 F-16 fighters. But in the absence of concessions from Israel on a peace settlement, US policy remained firmly fixed on withholding these weapons indefinitely.¹⁷

MATMON C

Following Prime Minister Begin's visit to Washington, the United States and Israel experienced a period of strained relations. Instead of moving toward a peace conference, as President Carter expected, Israel accelerated Jewish settlement on the occupied West Bank, thereby further antagonizing the Arab states and dimming the prospects for negotiations. At the same time, Israel remained adamant on bolstering its military posture, and in early October 1977 the Joint Chiefs found themselves looking at yet another Israeli request for weapons and equipment. This new request, known as MATMON C, established long-range requirements for the period 1978 to 1986 and followed the pattern of an earlier (1974) Israeli submission designated MATMON B.¹⁸ The numbers in the new list were somewhat smaller than those in the old, a concession perhaps to manpower constraints as well as to political realities in Washington. But apart from this, MATMON C was still an exceptionally formidable procurement package. Projecting an Israeli ground force of 12 armored divisions, 15 infantry brigades, and 10 territorial brigades, MATMON C would require security assistance and foreign military sales credits for an additional 400 tanks, 3,000 armored personnel carriers, large quantities of artillery and ammunition, and \$200 million worth of communications equipment. For its air force, Israel wanted 25 additional F-15s, 150 F-16s (100 less than the number requested in the fall of 1976), 60 helicopters, and large amounts of air ordnance and munitions. Naval requirements included 10 additional hydrofoils and 100 Harpoon missiles. Despite the scaled back figures, MATMON C's heavy emphasis on high technology equipment would boost Israel's need for FMS credits by 50 percent, to around \$1.5 billion annually in FY 1977 dollars.¹⁹

The Joint Chiefs carried out their assessment of Israel's latest request against a background of events that would dramatically recast the Arab-Israeli conflict. On 9 November 1977 President Anwar Sadat of Egypt told a visiting US congressional delegation that he wanted to go to Israel to talk about peace, thus setting the stage for his historic visit to Jerusalem later that same month. Although no one could fully predict the consequences that would flow from Sadat's initiative, the consensus within the administration in Washington was that it marked a major breakthrough, one that could well affect Israel's future military needs besides altering the nature of the peace process.²⁰ Bearing this in mind, the Joint Chiefs advised Secretary of Defense Brown in late December 1977 that they had serious misgivings about the requirements in MATMON C, which they judged to be an uneven, if not distorted, picture of Israel's force requirements, listing over 280 separate items, none in any order of priority and with no coherent view of Israeli force planning objectives. Whether Israel actually needed all these weapons was another matter. Although MATMON C made no attempt to inflate Arab military strength, it reached different conclusions from those arrived at by US intelligence analysts when considering such factors as Arab countries' shortage of qualified manpower, their lack of suitable bases for operational support, and the difficulties they faced in joint command and coordination. As a result, MATMON C estimates of Arab capabilities tended to be higher than US estimates. Based on their own reading of the threats facing Israel, the Chiefs calculated that the weapons and technology already approved or in the pipeline would be sufficient to assure Israel's security through 1983. "Decisions to approve or disapprove items requested in MATMON C," the JCS concluded, ". . . can be based primarily on *political factors*. Decisions to disapprove any or all of the items can be made without adversely affecting Israel's security through 1983."²¹

Barely had the Joint Chiefs finished their review of MATMON C when they began to receive other new requests from Israel. These duplicated to some extent the list in MATMON C but were limited to selected high technology systems that the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering was considering for possible cooperative production purposes with Israel. Included were such items as thermal imaging equipment, advanced missiles, precision-guided munitions, and airborne electronic counter measures (ECM) equipment.²² Reiterating the advice they had offered earlier with respect to the F-16, the Joint Chiefs warned that making any of these items available under cooperative production arrangements inevitably ran the risk of compromising the technology. Applying the same criteria they had used in examining MATMON C, they again could find no military justification for the release of these systems and advised that a decision to do so would have to be based "primarily on political factors."²³

The JCS assessment of MATMON C became part of a discussion paper circulated for examination in the PRC in late February 1978, in preparation for a visit to Washington early the following month by Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman. Talking points developed in advance for Secretary of Defense Brown and JCS Chairman General David

C. Jones, USAF, essentially recapitulated the JCS position—that Israel had sufficient forces and equipment to meet defense needs through at least 1983 and that decisions on whether or not to provide items on the list should be based on political factors. The Defense paper presented five “conceptual options” for response to MATMON C, each built successively on the previous one. The first consisted of follow-on support (spares, consumable items, ammunition, and training), routine infrastructure equipment, and selected command and control systems; the second added selected force modernization items (tanks, artillery, armored personnel carriers, and aircraft); the third included selected technology provided over time; the fourth approved force expansion by release of additional, less sophisticated items, such as additional tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery; and the fifth provided for agreements on research and development assistance and production cooperation to enhance Israeli forces.²⁴

On 27 February 1978, with Secretary of Defense Harold Brown in the chair, the PRC took up the question of MATMON C. Representing the JCS were General Jones and his assistant, Lieutenant General William Y. Smith, USAF. The consensus of the meeting was that, in the upcoming talks with Israeli Defense Minister Weizman, weapons requests should be considered against the background of political developments in the Middle East and US-Israeli relations. On military grounds alone, the committee saw no urgent need for action and noted the consensus of the intelligence community that Israel would retain a significant margin of military superiority over its neighbors through the early 1980s regardless of how the United States responded to MATMON C. The committee agreed that it could not accept the entire MATMON C list and that it needed a clearer idea of the planned force structure and related strategy envisioned in the MATMON C program, as well as a sense of the priorities among requested weapons and materiel. Once such information was in hand, the United States would decide on a case-by-case basis, within a limit of \$1 billion in FMS for FY 1979; but under no condition would it commit itself to MATMON C in its entirety or make any multiyear pledges.²⁵

Though preoccupied at the time with the Panama Canal vote in Congress, Secretary of Defense Brown met with Israeli Defense Minister Weizman on 8 and 10 March 1978 at the Pentagon for what proved to be an enlightening, if not wholly productive, exchange of views. The two had first met in the mid-1960s, when Secretary Brown had been US Secretary of the Air Force and Weizman had been Chief of the Israeli Air Force (IAF). But they had not seen one another since and, as Weizman described it, the growing chill in US-Israeli relations was little offset by what he found to be Secretary Brown’s exceptionally reserved demeanor.²⁶ Weizman, in defense of the requirements set forth in MATMON C, argued that Sadat’s recent initiative and willingness to negotiate were a direct result of Israel’s superior military power and that further progress in the negotiations would undoubtedly hinge on preservation of a strong Israeli defense posture. Secretary Brown offered no objection to this analysis, but he urged the Israelis to be flexible and to bear in mind that, in all likelihood, progress in the negotiations would obviate the need to some extent for more weapons. He dismissed MATMON C as “a wish list” with “a lot of margin in it,” a clear indication that it went well beyond

what the United States was prepared to accept as Israel's legitimate needs. Undeterred, Weizman adopted a different approach, making a strong bid for a FMS level of \$1.5 billion annually into the mid-1980s and expressing keen interest also in increasing US-Israeli research and development (R&D) cooperation. Secretary Brown responded that R&D cooperation was a matter for future discussion and that it was the US intention to stick with the \$1 billion assistance level (plus \$785 million in supplemental security assistance) through FY 1979, with each year thereafter decided separately. Despite further give and take, Weizman was unsuccessful in eliciting any US commitments and left town on the understanding that only the heads of state could resolve the impasse.²⁷

The next step was another visit to Washington later that same month by Prime Minister Begin, to discuss with President Carter how to reinvigorate the peace process in the face of continuing Israeli settlement in occupied Arab lands and Israel's recent incursion into Lebanon in retaliation for Arab terrorist attacks.²⁸ The issue of Israeli security needs did not come up in the formal sessions, but at a private meeting with President Carter on the evening of 22 March, Prime Minister Begin presented a list of Israel's top priority defense requests for FY 1979, drawn from the contents of MATMON C.²⁹ Anticipating Prime Minister Begin's request, Secretary of Defense Brown revived an assistance package that he and Secretary of State Vance had assembled during the Weizman visit, but which President Carter had decided to withhold for political reasons. The idea was that Prime Minister Begin should not leave Washington empty-handed, despite the tensions and irritations in US-Israeli relations. The items Secretary Brown now suggested, and which the President grudgingly approved for release, conformed to the JCS-recommended criteria endorsed in February by the PRC and included such things as infrared sensing equipment, ammunition, and thirty MD-500 attack helicopters. Although significantly less than what the Israelis wanted, it was for the time being, pending progress in the peace talks, the most they could expect to get.³⁰

Jet Sales to Israel and the Arabs

By the time Begin left Washington in late March 1978, consideration of arms assistance to Israel was increasingly overshadowed by the proposed sale of high-performance jet fighters to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. While the Israelis had reduced their F-16 request from 250 to 150 planes, they had yet to receive a response on how many the United States would eventually provide. The decision to hold F-16 sales in abeyance reflected the prevailing view in Washington that this was the surest means of putting pressure on the Israelis to negotiate seriously with the Arab side, although thus far it had had little visible effect, nor had withholding aircraft from the Israelis done much to lessen the desires of the Arab states for off-setting military buildups of their own. On the contrary, during 1977 Egypt and Saudi Arabia both had sought advanced jet fighters from the United States. In April of that year, while visiting Washington, President Sadat had expressed interest in acquiring as many as 120 F-5s from the

United States. Shortly afterwards, the Saudis confirmed that they, too, wanted to buy American fighters: fifty (later increased to sixty) F-15s to replace their fleet of British Lightning fighters, which dated from the 1950s. But like the Israelis, the Egyptians and the Saudis received no clear or immediate response.³¹

Few in Washington greeted these requests with any enthusiasm, although the Joint Chiefs were probably more amenable than most. While the Carter administration stood ready to increase arms sales to moderate Arab countries such as Egypt and Jordan and to such pro-Western conservatives as Saudi Arabia, it also knew that it was likely to encounter strong opposition from Israel and its supporters in Congress to any arms transfers involving such high technology weapons systems as jet fighters. Accordingly, the initial strategy recommended by the State Department, and generally followed by the White House, was to defer any specific commitments on fighters, missiles, and other advanced weaponry until the administration could generate the appropriate political support on Capitol Hill.³² The Joint Chiefs, though not unmindful of these political realities, operated from a somewhat different frame of reference. In analyzing the possibility of the Saudi F-15 sale (for unexplained reasons the JCS received no specific request for comment on the Egyptian F-5 sale), the Chiefs found it consistent with the current JSOP and fully justified on the grounds that it would do much to enhance Saudi Arabia's air-to-air capability and leadership role among Arab states, without materially changing the overall military balance in the Middle East. Although the JCS saw no urgent need for a decision, they noted also that sooner or later the Saudis would have to replace their obsolescent Lightnings. Obviously, in the Chiefs' opinion, if the United States wanted to retain influence with the Saudis, it would have a better chance of doing so if it, rather than someone else, provided the planes.³³

Sadat's unexpected peace initiative in November 1977 completely recast the arms-supply picture in the Middle East, making it impossible to put off the Egyptian request for fighters any longer. If the United States were to act as the honest broker, it would need to appear as ready to support legitimate Arab defense needs as those of Israel. Seeking to gain the confidence of the Arab moderates, President Carter stopped off in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 3 January 1978, while on his way from India to Europe, and promised Saudi King Khalid that he would personally involve himself in persuading Congress to approve the sale of the F-15s to Saudi Arabia.³⁴ Once he returned to Washington, President Carter decided to include Egypt in the deal as well. The strategy that suggested itself was to combine the sale of advanced jets for Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia into a single package, both in the interests of promoting Middle East negotiations and to secure a more favorable response from Congress to the Arab part of the sale.³⁵

Following up on the package-deal decision, the Department of State developed a range of sales options, valued at between \$3.3 billion and \$6.5 billion. The low end represented an arbitrary minimum in numbers of aircraft (ostensibly to accord with the US policy of restraint on arms transfers), while the maximum numbers corresponded to the totals requested by all three countries.³⁶ At the time the PRC considered these

options on 26 January 1978, the only part of the package specifically endorsed by the JCS was an immediate commitment in FY 1978 of twenty to thirty aircraft to Saudi Arabia. But at the urging of Secretary of State Vance, the PRC deferred recommending a selection.³⁷ Subsequently, President Carter determined that the distribution of aircraft should be 15 F-15s (in addition to 25 already sold) and 75 F-16s for Israel; 50 F-5s for Egypt; and 60 F-15s for Saudi Arabia.³⁸

The task of initially defending this decision fell to Secretary of State Vance, who announced it at a press conference on 14 February. Sticking to generalities, Secretary Vance insisted that the US commitment to Israel remained firm, but that Egypt also needed reasonable assurance of its ability to defend itself in order to continue the negotiations with confidence. The inclusion of Saudi Arabia in the deal, Secretary Vance explained, was of “immense importance” in promoting a course of moderation in the Middle East; hence, the United States considered the Saudi request to acquire an F-15 capability reasonable. The administration believed that the proposed package would meet the security requirements of the countries involved, would not alter the military balance of the region, and would be “consistent with the overriding objective of a just and lasting peace.”³⁹

Under the law governing such sales, Congress had thirty days to veto the administration’s proposal, but it needed a vote in both houses to do so. As expected, sharp opposition, both from Prime Minister Begin’s government and from the pro-Israeli bloc in Congress, materialized quickly, with the Senate becoming the battleground. Because of the Panama Canal treaties and other business, it was not until late April that the administration presented the contracts to Congress. In defense of the sale, the Acting JCS Chairman, General David C. Jones, USAF, accompanied Secretaries Vance and Brown when they testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 3 May 1978. The Joint Chiefs were on record in support of the sale of advanced aircraft to Israel and Saudi Arabia, but they had not formally addressed the issue of selling F-5s to Egypt. Prior to his appearance before the committee, General Jones polled each Service chief by telephone on the morning of 3 May, receiving unanimous support for the sale to Egypt. Later that day General Jones told the committee that the JCS supported the package as in “the best national security interest of the United States.”⁴⁰

Despite JCS endorsement of the aircraft package, skepticism continued to run strong among Israel’s congressional supporters. Seeking to placate the political opposition, Secretary of State Vance on 9 May offered to increase the sale of F-15s to Israel by twenty planes, bringing the total order to sixty (the same number as the administration proposed to sell to Saudi Arabia) and to impose restrictions on the Saudi F-15s to make them less effective for air-to-ground combat.⁴¹ The JCS hastily reviewed the proposed additional sale to Israel and concluded that it would probably have negligible impact on the military balance. They recalled that in February 1977 they had supported replacement and modernization aircraft requirements for Israel in the 1982 to 1986 period, consisting of a mix of F-16s and F-15s for a total of 150 aircraft. Based on these overall numbers, the Chiefs supported the sale of the 75 F-16s and 35

additional F-15s (15 in the package and 20 additional), for a total of 110, as within the scope of their previously stated position. With this plain and matter-of-fact analysis, the Chiefs neatly sidestepped becoming further embroiled in what had developed into a highly contentious political issue.⁴²

As it turned out, JCS views played little part in the final debate, though they might have had opponents been aware of them. Not only was the overall number substantially less than Israel had requested but also it was still well below what the Joint Chiefs had endorsed earlier as a reasonable target commensurate with Israel's defense needs. Consequently, the administration never released or revealed the JCS analysis and quietly dropped the offer of additional F-15s. Meanwhile, the Foreign Relations Committee, unable to break a deadlock, took the unusual action of forwarding the package deal to the Senate floor without a recommendation. There, on 15 May, the Senate voted by a comfortable margin (fifty-four to forty-four) to let the transfers proceed.⁴³ The United States had clearly reached a politico-military watershed. Having previously been concerned almost exclusively with Israel's security, it was now acquiring obligations for providing major military support for more of Israel's Arab neighbors as well.

Camp David and the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty

Following congressional approval in May 1978 of the aircraft package deal, discussion of Middle East arms transfers receded into the background as high-level attention again turned to furthering the peace process. President Carter had had to expend more effort than he expected getting the sale of the jets through Congress and in the end, even though he had won, the victory had strained US-Israeli relations. At the same time, Egyptian President Sadat was growing uneasy over the continuing lack of progress in substantive discussions with Israel and was threatening to terminate United Nations (UN) peacekeeping arrangements in the Sinai. The upshot was a growing sense of concern in Washington lest the negotiations collapse, and a recognition on President Carter's part that it would probably take some dramatic step to keep the peace process alive.

The Camp David summit was Jimmy Carter's finest moment as President. Faced with a stalemate in the negotiations, President Carter believed that his personal diplomacy could achieve a breakthrough. In late July 1978 he decided to invite both Sadat and Begin to the presidential retreat at Camp David.⁴⁴ Although not directly involved in the summit itself, the Joint Chiefs helped prepare for it by outlining ideas and suggestions used by Secretary of Defense Brown and JCS Chairman Jones at an NSC meeting on 1 September. The Defense position, including JCS inputs, examined the security situation should Israel agree to withdraw from the occupied West Bank, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights and gave special attention to Israel's continuing concern over terrorism and threat of attack from Egypt and/or Syria. The conclusion was that close monitoring of demilitarized zones, stepped-up assistance, and other measures

could reduce the risk of both dangers. Whether this should include a formal US-Israeli security treaty as part of an overall settlement remained to be seen, though as a general rule the Defense position was to avoid such obligations. "U.S. involvement," the paper recommended, "should be as limited as possible, and as indirect as feasible, consistent with our aim of reaching an agreement and our commitment to help assure Israel's security." Rather than direct commitments, the Defense position urged increased aid and other assistance, both to minimize the risk to the United States of involvement and as an inducement to an agreement. For Israel, Defense suggested the accelerated delivery of F-16s, assured delivery of equipment from the MATMON C list in a five-year modernization program, a program of advanced air defense equipment and missiles, access to additional US high technology, support for the Israeli arms industry, and additional FMS credits up to \$1.5 billion. For Egypt, the possibilities included dispatch of a survey team to review Egyptian military requirements, provision of armored personnel carriers (subject to congressional approval), commercial assistance to maintain the aging Soviet equipment in the Egyptian inventory, and agreement in principle to sell limited quantities of improved HAWK air defense missiles.⁴⁵

At the 1 September National Security Council (NSC) meeting, Secretary of Defense Brown stuck closely to the position outlined in the Defense briefing paper. Although he stopped short of categorically rejecting a security treaty with Israel, he left no doubt that at the Pentagon it held little military appeal. President Carter was of a similar view. His chief concern was to obtain a "written agreement for peace between Egypt and Israel" by, in effect, bartering lands occupied by Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war for assurances of Egyptian non-belligerency. The use of US security guarantees, promises of assistance, and other inducements, though not ruled out, played a negligible part in President Carter's diplomatic strategy. Nor, as became clear once the conference got down to business, did obtaining these kinds of concessions bulk large in the apparent immediate interests of the Egyptians or the Israelis.⁴⁶

As expected, the Camp David summit (5 to 17 September 1978) produced few changes in security arrangements requiring immediate JCS attention. Its major accomplishments were an agreement in principle to a "framework" for an overall Middle East peace settlement and the outline of a treaty between Egypt and Israel, with numerous details yet to be ironed out.⁴⁷ Although President Carter did briefly discuss assistance issues with Begin and Sadat, he made no commitments to either party and indicated that further US assistance would have to await the signing of a treaty. An exception was President Carter's pledge to assist in the relocation of Israel's two Sinai air bases: Eitam, in the northern part of the Sinai, which provided in-depth air defense against Egypt; and Etzion, in the south, from which Israeli aircraft patrolled the southern Sinai and the Straits of Tiran leading to the port of Eilat. Recognizing Israel's dependence on air power, President Carter told Prime Minister Begin that the United States would contribute to the construction of new bases in the Negev. After the summit, Secretary of Defense Brown reassured Israeli Defense Minister Weizman that President Carter was indeed serious about seeking the necessary congressional budgetary approval

and stated that the next step should be to assess the “scope and costs” of replacement facilities, as well as “related forms of assistance.”⁴⁸

To help determine what Israel would need, Secretary of Defense Brown authorized an ISA-led survey team to begin consultations in the fall of 1978. While in Israel, members of the team picked up indications that the Israelis were reviewing force structure and equipment requirements on the basis of withdrawal from the Sinai and planned to submit a list of special assistance requirements in “the range” of \$2 billion.⁴⁹ On 8 December 1978 the Israeli ambassador in Washington did in fact present the Department of State with a list of “Special Aid Requirements” that covered the cost of a Sinai withdrawal totaling over \$3 billion, nearly three times the amount recommended by the US survey team. As Secretary Brown explained to President Carter, part of the discrepancy arose from Israel’s desire to build new facilities for five squadrons of planes instead of the current strength of four, thus requiring the construction of a third base. Secretary Brown recommended confining any US assistance to no more than the basing of the four squadrons and leaving to Israel the full expense of any expansion. In other words, although Secretary Brown recognized the importance of preserving Israeli cooperation, he was not about to write a blank check to do so.⁵⁰

Secretary of Defense Brown’s caution in offering support had the full endorsement of JCS planners, who found themselves by early 1979 having to cope with an alarming array of Middle East contingencies requiring closer collaboration with Arab states.⁵¹ Not surprisingly in such circumstances, these officers gave priority to establishing closer working contacts with Egypt, which loomed large as a potential base of operations. Assistance to Israel, on the other hand, they viewed more than ever as a liability, not only because it tended to identify the United States with support for Israeli interests but because it also threatened to divert resources from other objectives. In discussion papers prepared in collaboration with ISA for presentation to the PRC in early February 1979, J-5 planners concurred that the United States had a continuing obligation to provide Israel with arms and other assistance, but they urged that US help be limited to the modernization, rather than expansion, of Israel’s armed forces and that financial assistance for base relocation, military sales, and other aid not exceed \$2 billion. Looking ahead, they anticipated closer defense consultations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan and endorsed the need for a “new strategic perspective” in recognition that the recent instability in Iran and Afghanistan had created a new security situation in which the moderate Arab states now stood at the center, against a background of more active US participation in Middle Eastern affairs.⁵²

While it was far from clear as yet what precise impact events in Iran and Afghanistan would have on US policy, there were increasing signs of a realignment of interests, focusing more on the Persian Gulf. Nonetheless, in the final round of talks culminating in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of March 1979, Israel exerted its still considerable political influence in Washington to protect and extend its special status. Although the Israelis gave up the idea of a third air base in the Negev, they lobbied successfully for military assistance and financial support well above that recommended by JCS

planners.⁵³ The main provisions of the US-Israeli aid agreement accompanying the treaty were an American commitment to provide \$3 billion to cover Sinai relocation expenses; accelerated delivery of F-16 aircraft; intelligence and early warning equipment to compensate for loss of the Sinai; the sale of additional tanks, missiles, howitzers, and other military hardware for the “modernization” of Israel’s defense forces; and cooperative research and development and military procurement, something the Joint Chiefs had long resisted.⁵⁴

Separately, Secretary Brown offered Egypt an “expanded security relationship” resting on \$1.5 billion in FMS assistance spread over three years. Appended was a White House-approved inventory of planes, air defense equipment, armored personnel carriers, frigates, and other hardware the United States was prepared to provide.⁵⁵ Though not nearly as extensive as the assistance being offered to Israel, it was probably as generous as the administration dared go without alarming the Israelis or risking adverse reactions in Congress, which needed to approve the package. Most of the offer was allocated to just three programs: \$600 million for the procurement of 35 F-4 fighters (a late 1950s vintage plane, as opposed to the more technologically advanced F-16s that Israel was about to receive); \$550 million to fund the deployment of a HAWK air defense system; and \$125 million for 750 armored personnel carriers. For any further modernization of its armed forces, Egypt would have to seek additional credits from the United States or persuade the Arab oil states to resume their subsidies. In other words, while Israel was poised to reap a bonanza in aid and military hardware from the peace settlement, Egypt stood to gain considerably less.⁵⁶

Although the Joint Chiefs never formally reviewed these agreements, planners in the Middle East/Africa (MEAF) Division of J-5 went over them closely, concluding that they were “overall, consistent with JCS positions.” Their only stated concern was that some of the items in the Egyptian-Israeli package were the same as in production for other customers, and that any diversion could cause “severe and unwarranted political repercussions” with other allies. As a precaution, the J-5 officers recommended advising Egypt, Israel, and Congress that equipment approved as a result of the treaty would come from normal production queues and not from current stockpiles or other customers’ requirements. All the same, J-5 deemed it imperative that deliveries proceed promptly in order to ride the “crest of current success” and to demonstrate that the US commitment to Egypt was as important as the one to Israel.⁵⁷

Thus, from reports like this and other sources, the Joint Chiefs had good reason to view the Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement with guarded optimism. On the whole, the positive aspects seemed to outweigh the negative ones. Although it left several exceedingly sensitive issues (chiefly, the status of the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Palestinians) unresolved, it greatly eased tensions in a part of the world of steadily growing US strategic interest. Especially important from the JCS standpoint, it opened the way for closer military collaboration with Egypt, and in so doing would help to facilitate planning for a more proactive posture in the Persian Gulf. But it was also an agreement that continued to bind the United States closely to Israel’s security,

if not by formal treaty, then surely by Israel's strong claim on American assistance. The Egyptians, in contrast, fared less well in terms of US military aid, but with the stakes growing in assuring Egypt's status as a pro-Western bulwark, that too would soon change.

Further Assistance to Egypt and Saudi Arabia

Now that the Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement was signed, attention turned to shoring up its weak spots, starting with what the Joint Chiefs considered one of the most obvious—the relative imbalance in military help the United States had offered the two sides as part of the final agreement. Since cutting its remaining ties with the Soviet Union in 1976, Egypt needed the West more than ever for arms and supplies. Starting two years earlier with US assistance in reopening the Suez Canal, Egypt had become the recipient of a growing volume of US military aid. Of the assistance extended thus far, however, most had taken the form of technical advice or one-time package deals, such as the sale in 1976-1977 of twenty C-130 transports, paid for by Saudi Arabia.⁵⁸ The F-5 deal, followed shortly by Secretary of Defense Brown's approval of a JCS recommendation creating a US Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) in Cairo, seemed to suggest that the United States and Egypt were nearing a permanent arrangement on security assistance.⁵⁹ But it was not until the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty that the United States officially acknowledged the possibility of a long-term relationship. Hoping to nail down a commitment, Egyptian Vice President Hosni Mubarak came to Washington in June 1979. Though Mubarak went home with little more than tentative assurances, the signs were favorable, and in July President Carter approved planning for a five-year security assistance program, adding that before the summer was over he wanted a full assessment of Egypt's needs, patterned after the annual reviews conducted for Israel.⁶⁰

Normally, the Israelis would have put up a strenuous fight to delay or deny US military aid to an Arab neighbor, but with Israel and Egypt no longer at war, it was difficult for Israel to raise objections with the same degree of passion as in the past. Although the danger of renewed conflict with Israel had been reduced dramatically, Egypt still faced legitimate security threats from neighboring Libya and Ethiopia, two countries with close ties to the Soviet Union. At the same time, in assessing the opportunities created by the Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement, JCS planners seized on the possibility of a new "regional strategic framework" to counter the instability in Iran and the growing Soviet influence in Afghanistan.⁶¹ Though Israel's place in this system was unclear, JCS planners envisioned Egypt playing a major role and addressed Egyptian defense needs accordingly.

Though coordinated under the State Department, the ensuing review was largely the product of direct collaboration between the Joint Staff (J-5), ISA, and the NSC Staff. Using preliminary calculations generated by State and ISA, planners in J-5 assumed a

level of effort of approximately \$500 million annually, over and above the \$1.5 billion already committed, starting in FY 1981 or 1982. This was only half the amount annually allocated to Israel, but about as much as the administration deemed politically viable without risking a confrontation with Congress.⁶² The principal aim of the program, as J-5 envisioned it, should be to shore up Egypt's armed forces to meet "any likely military threat" (i.e., Libya and/or Ethiopia) other than a confrontation with Israel, with the initial emphasis on arresting "the rapidly eroding combat capability of [Egypt's] onhand military equipment." Thereafter, JCS planners recommended modernizing Egypt's air force and air defense command and converting its motorized army divisions into more mobile mechanized units, with corresponding increases in ground and air tactical lift capability for troop deployments and logistic support. As a rough estimate of program goals, J-5 suggested an additional 210 M-60 or M-48 tanks, 950 armored personnel carriers, up to 150 advanced multi-role fighters (either F-16s or F-18s), 24 MD-500 attack helicopters, 20 C-130 transports, 20 CH-47 helicopters, and 6 fast attack/missile boats.⁶³

On 20 September 1979 the PRC took up the question of further assistance to Egypt but could reach no firm conclusions owing chiefly to differences of opinion over the timing of the program. State and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) wanted the program delayed until FY 1982, to stay within the administration's self-imposed ceiling on foreign arms transfers, while the Joint Chiefs and OSD favored the initiation of sales in FY 1981, with deliveries to follow as soon as possible. Any delay, they argued, would disrupt M-60 tank production lines (thereby raising the possibility that assistance would have to come out of current stocks—something the services strenuously opposed) and would risk sending the wrong signal to the Egyptians.⁶⁴ Unable to come up with a definite recommendation, the committee referred the matter to President Carter, who decided, at the suggestion of his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, to include Egypt under the FY 1981 budget "compared to worldwide nation-by-nation priorities." Under this formula, with most money already allocated, the practical effect was to defer any major funding until FY 1982.⁶⁵

Despite this setback, plans for long-term military assistance to Egypt went forward, though at a scaled back level from that originally recommended by the Joint Chiefs. In early 1980 Assistant Secretary of Defense McGiffert discussed a five-year security assistance plan with the Government of Egypt that resulted in the programming of the following items: 40 F-16 aircraft; 244 M-60 tanks; 130 M-48 tanks (later canceled in favor of purchasing more M-60s); 550 armored personnel carriers; assorted tank recovery and wrecker-type vehicles; and \$332 million in miscellaneous equipment.⁶⁶ While the details of this program would undergo almost constant change, the Joint Chiefs now saw it contributing more than ever to the ability of the United States to project additional combat power into the Middle East and to develop an efficient infrastructure for support of surge capabilities. Additional goals of the program, in the Chiefs' view, were to maintain the support of the Egyptian armed forces for US regional initiatives (i.e., the recently announced Carter Doctrine), to strengthen their loyalty to President Sadat, and to provide a solid foundation for Egypt's military modernization

and transformation into a “credible deterrent to potential adversaries.” The mention of maintaining the military’s loyalty to Sadat was the first such reference by the Chiefs to the political impact that US assistance could have on Egypt’s internal situation, and in the light of subsequent developments, a somewhat prophetic pronouncement.⁶⁷

While the buildup of Egyptian military strength proceeded relatively smoothly, encountering little overt opposition, the same could not be said of moves toward bolstering Saudi Arabia. Although the United States and the Saudi government shared many common objectives, they were also deeply divided over one key issue—Israel. Approval by Congress of the F-15 sale in the spring of 1978 had significantly improved the overall tone of US-Saudi relations. However, it was a short-lived affair. When the Saudis refused to endorse the Camp David peace accords, they seriously dimmed the prospects of incorporating other Arab countries into the peace process, and in so doing alienated many influential members of Congress, who now felt they may have made a mistake in endorsing the sale of the F-15s. The result was an increasingly antagonistic atmosphere on Capitol Hill toward military sales to the Saudis at a time when events in Iran, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf were drawing the Carter administration into ever closer collaboration with them.

That the Saudis continued to depend heavily on the United States for their security—not just as a provider of sophisticated arms, but in a broader sense as the ultimate guarantor of their territorial integrity—was increasingly obvious. By 1980 Saudi Arabia’s foreign military sales program was the largest in the world, with the United States the principal supplier to all branches of the Saudi armed forces.⁶⁸ An important aspect of arms aid on such a scale, from the Saudi standpoint, was that it provided highly visible and concrete evidence of the American commitment. In return, the Saudis were inclined to be sympathetic to American concerns over energy supplies. Though reluctant to host US forces other than on a temporary basis, they sought closer cooperation and collaboration in other areas, such as training and air defense. Improved military ties thus helped to bridge some of the otherwise intractable differences in US-Saudi relations, but it was a field of contacts in which major constraints and limitations abounded.

For the Joint Chiefs, no issue more fully epitomized this dilemma than the F-15 enhancement and Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) controversy that followed in the wake of congressional action in 1978 approving the sale of fighters to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. To get the F-15 deal for Saudi Arabia through the Senate, Secretary of Defense Brown had had to promise that none of the aircraft involved would be configured for offensive air-to-ground operations. This helped to placate the pro-Israel bloc, even though the Saudis had never requested such capabilities. Exactly why the Saudis later changed their mind is unclear, though according to one informed account, it seems to have been a combination of their desire for further US reassurance and pressure from the assertive head of the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF), Fahd ibn Abdullah, who pointedly insisted that he had never said anything about his planes not needing an offensive ground-attack capability. In any case, once these conditions

became attached to the sale, the Saudis came to view them as an unwarranted intrusion on their sovereignty.⁶⁹

Normally, the procedure for obtaining changes in the terms of the sale would have been to pursue the matter through diplomatic channels. But in September 1979 the Saudi Chief of Staff, General Othman Al-Homaid, took the unusual step of making a direct appeal to JCS Chairman Jones on Saudi Arabia's behalf. Arguing that the RSAF had responsibilities covering "vast areas" and that it needed to see the F-15s' potential "fully exploited," Homaid sought what he described as enhancements to these planes' "defensive capabilities"—MER-200 multiple ejector bomb racks (a type the US Air Force had discontinued procuring) and conformal fuel tanks (CFTs) that would extend the range of the Saudi F-15s. The Chairman's response, prepared in J-5 and extensively coordinated with the Secretary's office and ISA, promised to look into the matter but offered little encouragement. Passing over the policy implications of Homaid's request, General Jones pointed out that the Air Force had dropped plans in 1975 for procuring any MER-200 bomb racks, preferring at the time to concentrate on developing the F-15's potential as an air-to-air fighter. "By the same token," General Jones added, "our Air Force has not yet determined it has a need for procuring the conformal pod."⁷⁰

That Homaid's note to General Jones was probably a trial balloon seems clear from the Saudi government's formal submission in February 1980 of an amended list of desired enhancements to its F-15 program. Undaunted by General Jones' initial response, the Saudis probably felt that, with the American buildup in the Persian Gulf gathering momentum, the time was ripe to approach Washington on obtaining additional arms. The Saudi government may have believed that its request for new purchases was entitled to special treatment. In addition to bomb racks and spare fuel tanks, the Saudis sought agreement in principle to acquire AIM-9L missiles (an improved version of the air-to-air SIDEWINDER), "boom" tanker aircraft for aerial refueling, and E-3A AWACS for more efficient and effective command and control and aerial surveillance.⁷¹ These items, taken together, became known in Washington and Riyadh as the "big five." A year earlier the United States had deployed two AWACS to Saudi Arabia to help monitor the North-South Yemeni conflict, and at the suggestion of US Ambassador John C. West, the Carter administration now side-stepped the need for an immediate decision on selling this type of plane by advising the Saudi government that it was prepared to resume periodic deployments to assist the Saudis in training and surveillance.⁷² But as for taking action on the rest of the Saudi request, the signals from Washington left the Saudis apparently "very displeased."⁷³

A major obstacle was, of course, US election year politics. While the Joint Chiefs reminded the Secretary of Defense that they fully supported a policy of bolstering air defenses in the Persian Gulf, only the Air Force member, General Allen, urged expediting action on the sale of F-15 enhancement equipment.⁷⁴ Meeting in Geneva in June 1980 with the Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan, Secretary of Defense Brown confirmed what the Saudis feared: that the United States could make no new commitments at the present time on F-15 items, and that the nature and timing of any future sales would

have to await consultations with Congress.⁷⁵ But with the Joint Chiefs now deeply into planning for the Rapid Deployment Force, and with tensions between Iran and Iraq putting pressure on Saudi Arabia, Secretary Brown knew that he would have to be ready to move on the Saudi request as soon as it seemed politically feasible. Back in Washington, he authorized the Middle East Task Group to oversee a thorough review of the requested equipment.⁷⁶ But when word of the study “leaked,” President Carter endeavored to fend off criticism by reaffirming that there would be “absolutely no change” in the Saudi arms sales policy announced to Congress in 1978. “We will not agree to provide offensive capabilities for the planes that might be used against Israel,” he told an interviewer in October 1980, “and that obviously includes bomb racks.”⁷⁷

President Carter’s loss of the 1980 election was, as it turned out, Saudi Arabia’s gain, though by then the chill in US-Saudi relations had taken its toll. Irritated especially by what they considered the biased treatment they had received during the campaign, the Saudis had summarily canceled embryonic talks with US military planners on contingency planning, naval cooperation, and the prepositioning of US equipment for the Rapid Deployment Force.⁷⁸ Eager to reopen the dialogue, General Jones included a stop-over in Riyadh for talks with Prince Sultan during a trip abroad in mid-November 1980. As inducements, he presented President Carter’s personally approved offer of early delivery, by January 1980, of six F-15s and promised quick results once the Defense Department completed its review of the “big five.” However, the MERs, he said, posed “special problems” which would probably make it difficult for the United States to supply them. Obviously annoyed and convinced that the United States was still stalling, Prince Sultan set a deadline of two weeks for a response on all requested items other than the MERs, which he agreed should be held in abeyance pending a review of other options (e.g., providing the Saudi Royal Air Force with A-10 aircraft). What would happen if the two weeks passed with no reply was unclear, though as General Jones interpreted the situation, the Saudis were at or near the point of reassessing their relationship with the United States. “What was accomplished on this mission,” he noted afterward,

was some diffusing of the MER issue, the buying of some time, and some feeling that we were becoming more forthcoming on Saudi defense requirements. The proposal for acceleration [of F-15 deliveries] clearly was of great help in cooling the situation somewhat, however, we clearly have our work cut out.⁷⁹

Though not exceptionally well known for his skills as a diplomat, General Jones’ efforts in this instance seem to have paid off handsomely. While diffusing tensions with the Saudis, he was also able to convey to officials in Washington something of the sense of urgency and importance the Saudis attached to these issues, and in so doing, he helped to pave the way for a partial reconciliation. Before leaving office, the Carter administration notified the Saudis that it was favorably disposed to sell them the fuel tanks, the AIM-9L missiles, and the AWACS they had requested and to conduct

further studies on air refueling requirements and air-to-ground support. But with time running out, it fell to the next administration to complete the deal.⁸⁰

Assessing the Changes in US Policy

Despite the continuing tilt in US policy toward Israel, the four years of the Carter administration demonstrated unprecedented American flexibility in dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. That the results were generally favorable from the standpoint of the Joint Chiefs was readily evident from their many years of championing a more balanced approach in the Middle East, with greater emphasis on broadening contacts and collaboration with the Arab states. While the shifts in US policy did not always mirror JCS preferences, they were usually compatible with what the Chiefs saw as a growing US stake in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Arab world and a diminishing responsibility for Israel's security.

In fact, in dealing with the Middle East, as in dealing with other security problems during the Carter years, JCS influence was always considerably less than critics believed it to be. Nor did the Chiefs' recommendations reflect an intrinsically anti-Israel bias, as was sometimes alleged. It was almost axiomatic that the JCS strategic interests would give priority to strengthening the military capabilities of the pro-Western Arab states, rather than those of Israel. These countries formed the backbone of what the JCS saw, by the late 1970s, as an emerging anti-Soviet coalition, loosely tied together with US aid and other inducements, and increasingly integral to assuring Western access to the oil-rich Persian Gulf. With the collapse of the Shah of Iran's regime and the growing Soviet presence in Afghanistan, it became all the more important in JCS calculations to develop this embryonic strategic framework to its fullest possible potential.

Although President Carter eventually arrived at a similar conclusion, he initially approached the problem of Middle East security from a wholly different perspective that accorded military and strategic considerations a lesser priority than achieving a political settlement between Israel and Egypt. Using arms aid as the carrot and the stick, he hoped to nudge the two sides toward an agreement. But as the Joint Chiefs repeatedly pointed out, Israel was by far the strongest military power in the Middle East and was likely to remain so well into the 1980s. The lessened risk to Israel figured prominently in JCS calculations of supplemental assistance to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other pro-Western Arab states—countries which could provide support in future contingencies. Whether such a policy would pay dividends further down the road remained to be seen, but with the increased compatibility in training, facilities, and hardware that was bound to result, the problems of mobilizing and deploying forces to that part of the world were apt to be significantly eased.



White House meeting with Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Conflict and Competition in Africa

On December 1976, shortly before the Carter administration took office, the Joint Chiefs of Staff launched what promised to be their most extensive reassessment in more than a decade of US military interests in Africa south of the Sahara. In the past, except during such emergencies as the Zaire flare-up in the early 1960s, the Joint Chiefs had not paid much attention to Africa. As with their treatment of the Asian mainland prior to becoming embroiled in Vietnam, they had shied away from obligations in sub-Saharan Africa and had looked to others—the United Nations (UN), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), or the former colonial powers—to bear the brunt of responsibility for sustaining the status quo. Their reasoning for adopting this approach appears to have been complex, but basically it reflected a higher priority for defense needs elsewhere, combined with a strong aversion to becoming involved in the explosive racial politics of Southern Africa.¹ Accordingly, under the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP) issued at the end of 1975, the Joint Chiefs ranked no sub-Saharan African countries as vital, significant, or important (Categories 1, 2, and 3, respectively) in US strategy; and they identified only five—Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, and Zaire—as being of “interest” (Category 4) to US military strategy. Among the latter group, only in the case of South Africa did the JCS consider national force levels for their capability to contribute to the defense of the West and to the protection of US air and sea lines of communication.²

One reason the Joint Chiefs preferred a multilateral approach to African security was that they thought it would help diminish the chances of great power rivalry and involvement in Africa’s internal affairs.³ By the mid-1970s, however, it was clear from a growing Soviet-Cuban presence (most notably in Angola, Somalia, and Mozambique) that Africa was increasingly the scene of intense, often violent, East-West competition. The Joint Chiefs thus found that they had no choice but to take closer notice of Africa

and to accept the possibility of a greater range of contingencies that might involve the United States. Acknowledging their responsibility, the Joint Chiefs, under the review initiated in December 1976, proposed to look at three general issues: (1) the JSOP, to determine whether the strategic sensing assigned to selected sub-Saharan countries should be changed; (2) intelligence priorities used in strategic planning; and (3) the Unified Command Plan (UCP), which as yet contained no assignment of command or operational planning responsibility for Africa south of the Sahara.⁴

Not much, in fact, came of this study, other than some modest tinkering with intelligence priorities and equally modest changes in the JSOP: the upgrading of four sub-Saharan countries to Category 3 (important) and two more to Category 4 (of interest).⁵ Command responsibilities, on the other hand, remained unchanged and would be unassigned until the creation of US Central Command (CENTCOM) in the 1980s.⁶ Although increasingly sensitive to problems in Africa, the Joint Chiefs found that, with the advent of the Carter administration, military options initially played little or no part in the President's calculations regarding that part of the world. While parts of Africa (e.g., Angola) had been hotbeds of East-West conflict during the Nixon-Ford years, President Carter resolved to open a new chapter in US-African relations. Going beyond the traditional preoccupation with containment and anticommunism, he viewed US policy toward Africa as resting first and foremost on the protection of human rights. "I hoped and believed," President Carter recalled, "that the expansion of human rights might be the wave of the future throughout the world, and I wanted the United States to be on the crest of this movement."⁷ The essential elements of this policy were a more active opposition to the white South African government's policy of apartheid, using sanctions and other nonmilitary means to lever change; greater attention to the promotion of social and economic development among African countries; and a more low-key approach to security problems in order to downplay East-West competition.⁸

The Shaba I Incident

Less than two months into office the Carter administration's Africa policy, though still not wholly formed, came up against its first test. The occasion was an urgent plea received in March 1977 from President Sese Seko Mobutu of Zaire for three M-60A1 tanks and other military equipment to help fend off rebels who had invaded Zaire's Shaba province (formerly Katanga) from bases in neighboring Angola. Loosely organized as the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FLNC), the insurgents included Zairian dissidents who wanted to topple President Mobutu and the remnants of the Katangan gendarmes, followers of Moïse Tshombe in the 1960s, who had since congregated along Zaire's border with Angola. Although the tank request had been under study in the Pentagon since the previous fall, it had been held up, at the Joint Chiefs' insistence, pending a comprehensive manpower, training, and logistic survey of Zaire.⁹ Angola at the time had a Marxist government, aided and supported by Soviet advisers and Cuban

combat units, and there was some evidence to substantiate President Mobutu's claim that Cuban mercenaries were aiding and abetting the FLNC rebels.¹⁰ President Carter, however, was skeptical and refused to be drawn in too far. While approving \$15 million already earmarked in "non-lethal" aid, he turned down Zaire's request for the tanks, leaving President Mobutu to look elsewhere for arms and assistance. When the Zairian military proved ineffective, France, Belgium, and Morocco organized an expeditionary force that promptly routed the insurgents, after which President Mobutu confessed to having been "bitterly disappointed by America's attitude."¹¹

President Mobutu's criticism aside, President Carter's exercise of restraint in what became known as the Shaba I incident (a similar invasion, known as Shaba II, would follow a year later) generally drew high praise for preventing a localized conflict from escalating into a major crisis. Claiming much of the credit himself, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance felt it only prudent "to deal with the Shaba invasion as an African—not an East-West—problem."¹² Yet what Secretary Vance failed to mention was that less than a month before the crisis broke, the State Department had asked the Director of Security Assistance in the Pentagon to expedite delivery of the tanks as "a political necessity" in deference to President Mobutu's "concerns and expectations." Responding to the director's request for their advice, the Joint Chiefs paid lip service to the possibility that political considerations might be "overriding," but they recommended against the transfer anyway on the grounds that it would deplete existing stocks and set a regrettable precedent for further, and perhaps larger, transfers.¹³ With the Joint Chiefs thus poised to oppose the tank deal, and with no groundswell of public or congressional support forthcoming for Zaire when the crisis erupted, it was relatively easy for President Carter and Secretary Vance to back away.

Outwardly, the impression left by President Carter's handling of the Shaba I incident was that the new administration had possibly found the key to containing big-power competition in Africa, but from the Joint Chiefs' standpoint, such was not the case. On the contrary, although the Chiefs had not endorsed Zaire's request for arms, they remained convinced that Soviet involvement and the presence of large numbers of Cuban "proxies" posed a continuing threat to peace and stability throughout Africa. But with US resources limited, they saw no point in pressing for stepped-up military aid or other security programs and generally deferred to State's lead in relying on political, economic, and diplomatic instruments rather than military ones to advance US interests and to counter growing Soviet and Cuban influence.

Trouble in the Horn of Africa: The Ogaden Crisis

The question of how to deal with specific African problems remained one of intermittent high-level concern throughout the rest of 1977 and on into 1978, with Soviet and Cuban activity in the Horn of Africa soon replacing Zaire as the center of attention. Here, unlike Zaire, the Joint Chiefs could readily identify geostrategic inter-

ests of crucial importance to the United States and its allies, as reflected in the area's proximity to the Middle East oil fields, the sea oil routes, and the Red Sea passage to the Mediterranean.¹⁴ But as in dealing with Zaire, they found President Carter and Secretary of State Vance both averse, as the latter put it, "to threaten or bluff in a case where military involvement was not justified."¹⁵ Accordingly, the Chiefs hesitated to recommend military courses of action which they knew might entail further complications and therefore not receive serious consideration.

The immediate concern that drew attention to the Horn was the steady growth of Soviet and Cuban influence in Ethiopia, a country that had once been among America's oldest and most dependable friends in Africa. But since the army mutiny that had overthrown the decrepit government of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, Ethiopia had gradually become a Marxist country, dominated by radicals under the leadership of Colonel Haile Mariam Mengistu. Seeking closer ties with the Soviet Union, Colonel Mengistu in December 1976 concluded the first of several secret military aid agreements with Moscow. By April 1977, with Soviet arms (including tanks) beginning to flow in from South Yemen, relations between Washington and Addis Ababa were at the breaking point. In rapid succession, Ethiopia terminated its 1953 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with the United States; expelled most US government personnel, including those serving with the US Military Assistance Advisory Group Mission and the United States Information Service; and told the United States to speed up the closing of its communications base at Kagnew. By way of retaliation, President Carter condemned what he found to be human rights abuses by the Ethiopian government and suspended the delivery of \$10 million in promised military aid, portions of which had already been paid for by the Ethiopian government.¹⁶

The crisis in US-Ethiopian relations ran parallel to another set of developments in the Horn of Africa: the reassessment by Somalia of its once-close ties with the Soviet Union and the offer by Somali President Mohammed Siad Barre, in the summer of 1977, to switch sides if in exchange the United States would provide it with military aid. Somalia had also been a Soviet client state, but the relationship had cooled appreciably as the Soviets apparently came to see better prospects in neighboring Ethiopia. Experienced professionals in the State Department and on the National Security Council (NSC) Staff urged caution in dealing with President Siad, who had a reputation for being capricious and double-dealing.¹⁷ But after the defection of Ethiopia, President Carter was eager to regain a foothold somewhere in the area. As early as March 1977, he therefore directed the Policy Review Committee to reexamine US policy toward the Horn of Africa, looking closely at building better ties with Kenya, Sudan, and if possible, Somalia as well.¹⁸

As President Carter quickly discovered, the wooing of Siad Barre was not without pitfalls which threatened to draw the United States more deeply into the very same problems in Africa that he so earnestly sought to avoid. Despite the administration's policy of curbing overseas arms transfers, President Carter told the Somali ambassador to Washington in June 1977 that he was not averse to considering Somalia's needs for "defensive" armaments. The Somalis interpreted this as a "forthcoming

attitude,” and on 9 July they submitted a specific request for arms which the President endorsed “in principle.” But before the month was out, President Carter rescinded his offer amid reports that Somalia had invaded the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia and was, in effect, at war with Ethiopia. Unlike the United States, which imposed an arms embargo on the warring sides, the Soviet Union showed no such restraint. Stepping up its aid, Moscow supplied Ethiopia not only with additional arms and equipment but also with technicians, military advisers, and elite Cuban combat units. Early in February 1978, Ethiopian forces under a Soviet commander launched their counterattack, quickly driving back the Somalis, capturing or destroying large amounts of equipment, and raising worries in Washington that they might not stop until they had reached Mogadishu, the Somali capital.¹⁹

Throughout the ensuing crisis, JCS interest remained substantially greater than the extent of the Chiefs’ direct involvement or inputs would indicate. The Chiefs had already made it clear that they considered the Horn of Africa to be of considerably greater strategic importance than did the State Department and that they felt Soviet moves there should be viewed with the gravest concern. But owing to the Carter administration’s preference for political, economic, and diplomatic solutions in Africa, the JCS made little effort to develop and promote military solutions. The only military plans currently applicable to the Horn of Africa were two JCS contingency plans. The first, CONPLAN 0100, provided for assistance with US military forces, as feasible, for the protection and evacuation of US noncombatants and designated aliens in African countries south of the Sahara, while the second, CONPLAN 0200, was for emergency disaster relief. In late January 1978, extending these plans a step further, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George S. Brown, USAF, provided the Secretary of Defense with a general estimate of available air, naval, and ground forces from US reserves and forces on duty in Europe and the Pacific. Yet even with fairly sizable forces only days or, in some cases, hours away, the absence of bases and overflight rights in sub-Saharan Africa severely limited what the United States could do.²⁰

One means by which the United States could speedily bring significant military pressure to bear on the Ogaden situation was through deployment of a naval carrier task force off the Horn, a proposal floated by the President’s National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, before the Special Coordination Committee (SCC) on 26 January 1978. Citing assurances he had received from JCS Chairman Brown, Dr. Brzezinski believed it would be relatively easy to reinforce the Red Sea and Indian Ocean with some of the vessels, including one of two carriers, normally deployed in the Mediterranean.²¹ Unsure whether the current crisis was serious enough to merit such action, Secretary of Defense Brown pointed out that a surface combatant task force consisting of a cruiser, two frigates, and an oiler—all part of a routine augmentation—would arrive in the vicinity by the end of February.²² Until then, Secretary Brown offered to preposition fuel for reconnaissance flights over eastern Africa.²³ Dr. Brzezinski accepted, but in so doing indicated that he wanted to retain the option of possibly stronger measures as well. Bowing to Dr. Brzezinski’s persistence, the SCC agreed on

10 February to keep a carrier task force on standby at Subic Bay in the Philippines “for convenient deployment to the Horn area if this becomes desirable.”²⁴

Meanwhile, Joint Staff planners began a systematic canvassing of other alternatives. Not surprisingly, the Navy, as the Service with the most experience and assets in the region, took the lead in offering suggestions. On 17 February the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral James L. Holloway, III, USN, presented his JCS colleagues with a plan, organized around five basic options, for further augmenting US naval strength in the Indian Ocean. In addition to the scheduled surface deployments, Admiral Holloway outlined a buildup that would peak at two carrier task forces (one from the Mediterranean, the other from the Pacific) and a Marine amphibious force. However, recognizing the strains that such a diversion of resources would place on US commitments elsewhere, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) especially, Admiral Holloway felt it advisable to restrict any immediate augmentation to a single US Pacific Command (PACOM) carrier, holding additional deployments in reserve should the situation warrant.²⁵ The Joint Chiefs, still awaiting guidance from the White House, took no immediate action on Admiral Holloway’s proposal, but as a precaution the Director, Joint Staff, instructed J-5 planners to continue their review.²⁶

Matters came to a head at an SCC meeting on 21 February, at which Acting Chairman General David C. Jones, USAF, represented the JCS. Dr. Brzezinski, feeling that a showdown was imminent, sought a recommendation to the President to position a US carrier task force off the Horn of Africa as a “confidence building measure, encouraging countries in the region that the U.S. is present, stands with them, will protect the flow of arms, and will provide protection from the Russians.” Dr. Brzezinski doubted whether President Carter would approve such a show of force, but he wanted to explore the idea anyway and be prepared to act in case the President changed his mind. With the backing of the task force, Dr. Brzezinski hoped to encourage Saudi and Iranian military intervention behind Somalia “to match the Cubans.” But as both Secretary of Defense Brown and General Jones hastily pointed out, the Iranians and the Saudis were no match for Cuban forces. Returning to the use of the task force, General Jones observed that once it was sent in, “there will be much harder decisions afterward.” Secretary of Defense Brown’s main objection was the precedent such actions might set. If events came to “a bad end” in Somalia, he argued, the task force would appear a failure, possibly impairing the credibility of task force exercises in future crisis situations elsewhere. Secretary of State Vance essentially agreed and thought that diplomacy should be given more chance to resolve the conflict.²⁷

While the SCC arrived at no conclusion on the task force, it did recommend other measures—diplomatic initiatives designed to bolster Somalia’s defenses. Convening the full NSC on 23 February, President Carter gave the go-ahead for the recommended assistance to proceed, despite warnings from Acting Chairman Jones that it might be too little too late. In the view of the Joint Chiefs, General Jones said, third country or even direct US materiel assistance might prolong the conflict but it would not stop the Ethiopians as long as they had Soviet and Cuban help. All the same, General Jones

made no attempt to argue for tougher, more direct action involving the United States. The only one to do so, in fact, was Dr. Brzezinski. Insisting that the ripple effects of an Ethiopian victory would destabilize Saudi Arabia, Iran, and even NATO Europe, he reminded the President that the carrier task force option was still open and that it would offer an opportunity for the United States to send a strong message to the Russians and the Cubans. But President Carter was loath to become more involved and agreed with Secretaries Cyrus Vance and Harold Brown that the United States would be putting more on the line than the situation warranted. Somalia was, after all, the initial aggressor in the Ogaden conflict and until recently had been a Soviet client. Given the background of the current situation, President Carter seriously doubted whether he could mobilize much support at home for an overt show of force or US intervention on Somalia's behalf. "Congress," he thought, "would react with horror." The most he would agree to do was to send the task force as far as Diego Garcia and let events take their course from there.²⁸

In this instance, at least, US restraint paid off. In March the Soviet-backed Ethiopian offensive halted at the Somali border, thus averting a complete Somali collapse and bearing out assurances the Ethiopians had given through diplomatic channels that their aims were limited to regaining the territory that Somalia had seized the year before.²⁹ With the crisis seemingly contained, the Joint Chiefs saw no useful purpose in further study of possible military action and, accordingly, shelved the report that J-5 had started to prepare, pending action on a larger, more comprehensive policy study being organized by the SCC.³⁰ All the same, the Ogaden war had clearly drawn attention to the limited military capabilities the United States had in the region and, in the months to come, would generate increased interest in both the Joint Staff and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA) for exploring more effective means of projecting US military power. This would include not only the carrier task force proposal that Admiral Holloway and Dr. Brzezinski had raised but also a competing measure, recommended by the Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command (CINCSAC), General Richard H. Ellis, USAF, to upgrade base facilities on Diego Garcia to handle B-52s and their tanker support.³¹ Both, as time went on, would become increasingly attractive options for countering the upheavals taking place in Iran, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf.³² But in the Horn of Africa the US military posture was, as events surrounding the Ogaden war had revealed, precariously weak and would remain so for the next several years, until new requirements growing out of the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force hastened a further reappraisal.

Assessing the Impact of the Soviet-Cuban Presence

Despite the decision not to intervene in the Ogaden border war, the sudden upsurge in Soviet-Cuban power in the Horn of Africa posed a challenge that the

United States could not afford to ignore and that would, in time, recast US thinking as to security needs throughout sub-Saharan Africa. While it was still conceivable, as Secretary of State Vance argued, to view African problems as unique, the fact remained that the Soviets and their Cuban allies had established a presence across the continent and that they exercised considerable influence in several key countries, Angola and Ethiopia especially, which they might use as stepping stones for extending their influence even further. Despite an acceptable outcome in the Ogaden war, President Carter was increasingly worried about the Cuban role in Africa, which he viewed as more serious than did Secretary Vance and the State Department.³³ The result, while not a total abandonment of the cautious policy that Secretary Vance espoused was, nonetheless, a gradual drift toward a more proactive posture, more in line with what Dr. Brzezinski favored and ultimately more supportive of US interests as the JCS perceived them.

The first outward indication that President Carter was prepared to take a more forceful approach to African problems came in response to renewed attacks by FLNC rebels on Zaire's Shaba province in May 1978. This time the rebels entered through Zambia, and within days they controlled the economically important city of Kolwezi. As news of the invasion reached Washington, the SCC assembled a State-Defense task force to monitor the situation and to keep the President apprised. Once again, the French and Belgians organized an expeditionary force, only this time they had active US support. Earlier, on 9 May, at a secret meeting in the Pentagon, US, British, and French military planners had agreed in principle, chiefly with a disruption in oil supplies in mind, to provide trilateral naval coordination for the protection of shipping around Africa. Though this was not the sort of emergency that the planners had envisioned at the time of their meeting, it was in a very real sense a first test of their willingness and ability, expressed in their recent agreement, to work together in an emergency involving Africa.³⁴ On 18 May 1978 the Joint Chiefs advised US European Command (USEUCOM) that the President had approved US airlift assistance to deploy Belgian and French troops and to evacuate civilians. Over the course of the next several weeks, US C-141s flew eighty missions, providing refueling and communications support and airlift of cargo. The only Americans directly involved in Zaire were eleven servicemen who went there, outside the area of conflict, for air traffic control and cargo handling purposes. Taking precautions, the Joint Chiefs placed units of the 82nd Airborne Division on alert. But by the end of May, with the needs of the expeditionary force having been met, President Carter directed that the airlift be wound down as soon as possible, a clear sign that while the President was willing to accept some degree of increased risk and responsibility, he was still reluctant to become deeply involved.³⁵

Despite the limited nature and abrupt curtailment of the Shaba II operation, Dr. Brzezinski roundly applauded US participation as "an important step showing our determination," in effect the show of force (or something like it) that he had tried but failed to get during the Ogaden war.³⁶ Although there was no overt evidence of Soviet-

Cuban involvement in this latest African flare-up, President Carter could not help but feel that it was, to some extent, Soviet—or Cuban—inspired and that it reflected a pattern of stepped up communist activity in Africa and elsewhere which, if left unchecked, might jeopardize the attainment of higher priority foreign policy objectives, a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty agreement especially.³⁷ Accordingly, with the Shaba II incident still fresh, he asked the Policy Review Committee (PRC) to review the impact and status of Soviet-Cuban involvement in Africa and to provide, as an antidote, “a full range of options for furthering US interests.”³⁸

The President’s action (PRM-36) canceled what had been plans by the SCC for an interagency study of US national security interests in the Horn of Africa and redirected attention toward the narrower, but seemingly more urgent, question of Soviet-Cuban involvement. At the same time, however, by taking responsibility away from the SCC, which Dr. Brzezinski ran, and reassigning it to the PRC, which the State Department normally chaired, President Carter was in effect handing control of the project to Secretary Vance, thereby all but guaranteeing that the results would encompass few, if any, punitive measures involving military action. Indeed, despite the President’s call for “a full range of options,” terms of reference issued by the State Department to the Joint Chiefs confined their participation to providing military-related analysis of “positive as well as negative measures which would both encourage responsible action on the part of the Soviets and the Cubans and discourage or restrain irresponsible meddling.” The only advice of a specifically military nature that State requested was in connection with support of regional African defense groups or efforts by individual countries “via direct assistance, third country transfers, etc.”³⁹

Though organized and initiated on an urgent basis, the impetus behind PRM-36 dissipated quickly with the restoration of government control over Zaire’s Shaba province, signs of improving US-Ethiopian relations following the dispatch in July 1978 of a new American ambassador, and growing problems elsewhere, in and around the Persian Gulf especially. What Dr. Brzezinski saw as an “arc of crisis” moving eastward, Secretary Vance interpreted as the successful frustration of Soviet-Cuban designs in Africa.⁴⁰ Either way, Africa was fast becoming an area of receding geostrategic importance and, as such, no longer attracted the close attention it had formerly received. The study thus went forward, but at a low priority pace and with diminishing expectations that the outcome would substantially alter US policy or lead to any significantly increased US commitments in that part of the globe.

Inputs from the JCS were necessarily modest, a reflection of both the prevailing tendency to downplay military measures in solving African problems and the genuine lack of options, as JCS planners saw it, for bringing military pressure to bear in any meaningful way that would circumscribe Soviet-Cuban influence. Indeed, so well entrenched had the Soviets and Cubans become in certain African countries that it seemed altogether likely their influence would be felt throughout the continent for years to come. The Joint Chiefs estimated that by 1978 the Soviet and Cuban military presence in Africa totaled some 4,000 Soviets in twenty countries and 35,000 to 38,000

Cubans in twelve, with Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique hosting the largest contingents. At the same time, the Soviet Union had mounted an extensive military aid program, valued at \$800 million to Ethiopia alone within the last year, with an additional \$300 million scattered among its other African clients. In contrast, US security assistance over the same period totaled a mere \$200 million, but would rise to over \$1 billion in FY 1978, with roughly half this amount earmarked for the Egyptian F-5 aircraft program. The US military presence in sub-Saharan Africa numbered only 63 defense attachés and an additional 114 military personnel.

In these circumstances, the Joint Chiefs saw little that available military measures alone could do to dislodge Soviet-Cuban influence. But combined with diplomatic and economic initiatives, they were reasonably confident that programs of stepped-up security assistance—arms transfers, military training, military construction activity, and the like—could help reduce African countries' incentive to seek Soviet assistance and eventually improve US-African relations. Other options the Chiefs considered were an increase in US support for African peacekeeping efforts; greater encouragement of contributions by non-African countries on behalf of African security; and, should conditions warrant, the introduction and use of US combat troops in Africa—an extreme course, admittedly, for which President Carter had often said publicly the United States had no plans, but one the Chiefs felt should be recognized as a possibility nonetheless. Lastly, there were actions outside Africa the United States might take, such as harassing Soviet ELINT flights and conducting aerial reconnaissance over Cuba. However, the Chiefs were dubious whether these measures would have much impact on Soviet-Cuban actions in Africa and warned that they might backfire by inviting Soviet retaliation in kind.⁴¹

By the time the interagency report on PRM-36 was ready for President Carter's review, African issues had practically fallen off the President's agenda. Even so, President Carter decided to make the report the focal point of a full-fledged NSC meeting on 6 October 1978, a sign perhaps that, among other things, he was tired of the squabbling between Secretary of State Vance and Dr. Brzezinski and wanted to bring debate firmly to a close. Though described by Secretary Vance as a "critical meeting," the only decision taken was the President's perfunctory reaffirmation of the current US policy, encompassing primary reliance on economic and political instruments and leaving the exercise of military options open to future deliberations. Discussion, such as it was, seems to have been a recapitulation by Secretary Vance and Dr. Brzezinski of their respective positions. When the meeting adjourned, Secretary Vance felt vindicated that his view had prevailed. Yet it was, for all practical purposes, as even Secretary Vance recognized, a hollow victory that offered no real solution to the problem of Soviet-Cuban involvement in Africa. How the United States would respond should there be a recurrence of episodes like those in Zaire and Ethiopia remained to be seen.⁴²

Strengthening Ties in East Africa

Despite a well-established Soviet-Cuban presence in Ethiopia by mid-1978, analysts in the Pentagon and at the State Department reported no significant change in the geostrategic balance in the Horn of Africa over the course of the next year and a half. Once Ethiopia regained control of the Ogaden, the situation seemed to stabilize, with occasional clashes along the border, to be sure, but no resumption of heavy fighting. At the same time, however, developments in Iran, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf, starting with the collapse of the Shah of Iran's regime in January 1979, put steadily growing pressure on the United States to reassert its power and influence in that part of the world and, in doing so, caused the Carter administration to shed some of its inhibitions about becoming militarily involved in Africa. Not surprisingly, as contingency planning for the Gulf went forward, the Joint Chiefs urged closer cooperation and collaboration with friendly governments in East Africa, with an eye toward the possibility of acquiring bases and access rights there. Invariably, the inducements the Chiefs suggested involved one form or another of security assistance—measures that met with little favor at either the White House or the State Department. But with the onset of the hostage crisis in November 1979, this opposition began to give way.

Prior to the hostage crisis, the most consistent advocacy of an increased US military presence in East Africa came from the Navy which, of all the Services, had the most well established interests and contacts in the region. Not only was the Navy actively promoting its assets as a deterrent to Soviet adventurism in the area, as witnessed by the CNO's carrier task force proposal during the Ogaden crisis, but also it hoped to establish a network of bases and other facilities that would allow it to project its power more effectively and efficiently throughout the region in future such crises. With the breakdown of arms control talks on the Indian Ocean, the Navy anticipated a competition with the Soviet Union for the few remaining deep-port facilities along the eastern coast of Africa. From the Navy's standpoint, the United States needed to act quickly before the Soviet Union, already well situated with access rights in Aden and growing interests in Ethiopia, gained additional footholds. A case in point was the former French colony of Djibouti, which the Navy worried might fall under Soviet influence or control unless the United States provided token aid to assure the Djibouti government's continued Western orientation. Though initially cool toward the Navy's suggestion, the Joint Chiefs gradually warmed to the idea, and in May 1979 they urged Secretary of Defense Brown to support it as well.⁴³ However, the State Department, fearing that a "formal US presence" would jeopardize Djibouti's "neutral position," effectively blocked any immediate action.⁴⁴

The turning point was the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran in early November 1979, which prompted President Carter to order a State-Defense review of transit and operating privileges needed to support US military operations in and around the Persian Gulf.⁴⁵ Without waiting for the results, the President on 4 December 1979 concurred in a suggestion offered by National Security Adviser Brzezinski that approaches

be made immediately to Oman, Somalia, and Kenya with a view toward formalizing air and naval access agreements with these countries.⁴⁶ The Joint Chiefs, in initially assessing the situation, saw no urgent need for bases in Africa other than in Morocco and Egypt—countries that formed direct links in the line of communications between the United States and the Persian Gulf.⁴⁷ But within weeks, as it became clear from the findings of a State-Defense survey team that Somalia and Kenya were both eager to negotiate agreements, the Chiefs altered their position and decided that it made sense to obtain access agreements there as well, as long as the opportunity presented itself.⁴⁸

Of the ensuing accords and the role played by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their negotiation, mention need be made here of only two—one with Somalia, the other with Kenya. (Negotiations for base rights with Djibouti, instigated at the insistence of the CNO as an add-on to the original list, were still in progress at the time the Carter administration left office.) The agreement with Kenya, signed in June 1980, formalized US access to air and sea facilities at Mombassa and to airfields at Nairobi and Nanyuki in exchange for unspecified assistance. Among the countries of East Africa, Kenya was by far the most pro-Western, one of the few even to allow visiting US warships to use its ports for liberty leave.⁴⁹ In recognition of the Kenyan government's cooperation, the Joint Chiefs in recent years had looked favorably on its requests for security assistance. As recently as 1978 they had prevailed over State Department objections in securing an exemption to the President's restrictive foreign military sales policy (PD-13) to allow Kenya to acquire a fleet of thirty-two helicopters armed with TOW missiles.⁵⁰ Although the US embassy in Kenya thought it should administer the program, a J-5 survey team recommended direct military control, especially if there were any possibility that the helicopter request might lead to additional new assistance. Eventually, the American ambassador concurred, and in January 1980, the US Commander in Chief, Europe (USCINCEUR), established a small Kenya-US military liaison office (KUSLO) in Nairobi.⁵¹ By this time Kenya was receiving between \$20 and \$25 million annually in US military assistance, making it one of the largest US recipients in sub-Saharan Africa. Though officially the question of aid and access to bases remained two separate issues, the Kenyans left no doubt that, in making facilities available, they expected to receive stepped-up American assistance, including F-5 jet fighters, armored personnel carriers, and other sophisticated military hardware estimated to total more than \$230 million. But in the opinion of the State-Defense negotiating team sent out to complete the deal, Kenya's chronic balance of payments problems and the limited capacity of its armed forces to absorb additional aid practically foreclosed the possibility of any larger program.⁵²

While rapid progress was being made with Kenya, the negotiations with Somalia hit numerous snags, effectively delaying conclusion of an agreement until late August 1980. US-Somali relations had waxed and waned since the end of the Ogaden war in March 1978, at which time the United States had offered to resume discussion of initiating a military supply relationship, provided Siad Barre agreed not to use US aid to renew his war with Ethiopia. The position taken by the Joint Chiefs at that time was that the United States should keep open as many options as possible by providing

Somalia with the defensive aid proffered just before the Ogaden war, while avoiding any further obligations that might jeopardize improvements in US-Ethiopian relations or alarm the Kenyans, who were suspicious of their Somali neighbors.⁵³ But after the onset of the hostage crisis, the need for bases and access rights took priority. Realizing that his bargaining position had improved, President Siad escalated his demands for assistance, citing what the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) considered highly inflated estimates of the opposing threat from Ethiopian forces.⁵⁴ In May 1980 the Joint Chiefs endorsed a more limited level of assistance, worth approximately \$20 million annually.⁵⁵ After further give and take, President Siad finally accepted the US offer, but in doing so avoided having to make a formal renunciation of his irredentist claims to the Ogaden, as the United States had insisted upon in the past.⁵⁶

Although seemingly important at the time, the access agreements concluded in 1980 with Somalia and Kenya came to occupy a very limited place in JCS plans for surge deployments and other operations in the Persian Gulf. Indeed, early planning done by the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) in the fall and winter of 1980-1981, made no mention of Somalia or Kenya except for training and exercise purposes.⁵⁷ To be sure, the Joint Chiefs never regarded either country as providing a major rear echelon staging area, like Ras Banas in Egypt. Instead, they looked upon Somalia and Kenya more as backup should bases in Egypt or the Gulf itself become untenable. Both Somalia and Kenya were about the same distance from the Gulf as Diego Garcia, and in Somalia there already existed a 13,500 foot runway that could accommodate Air Force C-5s and B-52s. But for political and strategic reasons, the Joint Chiefs chose to funnel investment first into developing and refurbishing facilities on Diego Garcia (a British possession) rather than in East Africa. Congress had little confidence in the erratic and unreliable Siad Barre regime, and there were some members, including seven of the eight who sat on the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, who tried to block implementation of the arms-for-bases agreement until President Siad provided guarantees that he had no further designs on the Ogaden.⁵⁸ Subsequently, in allowing the deal to proceed, the House Appropriations Committee attached a requirement making the sale or transfer of any equipment conditional upon the receipt of "verified assurances" that no Somali forces remained in the Ogaden.⁵⁹ As it turned out, two years would elapse before any US equipment reached Somalia, a not unusual delay considering the time lags normally associated with the initiation of a new supply program but a sign, nonetheless, that strengthening the US position in East Africa was not as high a priority as it might once have been.

Problems in Southern Africa

What became by 1979-1980 a deepening preoccupation with countering Soviet-Cuban involvement in Africa never was, of course, President Carter's intention or desire. On the contrary, he entered office initially averse to practically any military

involvement in Africa, including military aid, hoping instead to make US policy there a model for solutions by economic, political, and diplomatic means. In particular, he wanted to improve America's standing in the eyes of black Africans by demonstrating that the United States "stood for freedom and justice for all people," and he intended to start by putting pressure on the white minority regimes in southern Africa to accept the principle of majority rule. In practical application, this meant the immediate transfer of power to blacks in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe); self-determination for Namibia, virtually a South African colony since 1916; and eventually the dismantling of racial segregation, known as apartheid, as practiced in South Africa.⁶⁰

Eager to see change in southern Africa, President Carter directed that a review of US policy (PRM 4) should be one of his administration's earliest and highest priorities.⁶¹ Out of the ensuing exchange it became clear that State and Defense, including the JCS, held differing views about the strategic importance of South Africa to the United States. Defense, while acknowledging the need for consistency between US policies and basic American principles, noted that the United States should not lose sight of the importance to US security of unimpeded access to important minerals in South Africa and uninterrupted use of the sea lanes around Africa by ships supplying the United States and its European allies with Middle Eastern oil. By 1977 between sixty and seventy ships rounded the Cape of Good Hope daily; this figure would significantly increase if the Suez Canal were to close. Due to critical currents and sea conditions in the Cape area, desired sea lanes were restricted to approximately thirty miles, making sea traffic highly vulnerable to interdiction.

State had no quarrel with this analysis, but emphasized that US relations with other African states and access to their mineral wealth and coasts also had to be weighed, as did the adverse long-term effect that prolonged racial strife could have on the availability of South African minerals to the United States. State concurred that it was vital to keep African sea lanes open, but believed that if hostile military action were ever taken to interdict the route from Western European waters around the Cape of Good Hope to the Persian Gulf (described by State as "a World War II type of scenario"), it was unlikely that this would be done in the remote area of South African waters. State did not agree, in other words, that the sea lanes around South Africa were of such vital importance, as Defense seemed to suggest, that this issue should stand in the way of putting pressure on the South African government to change its racial policies.⁶²

President Carter had no trouble making up his mind in favor of State's position, but he deferred a decision on punitive sanctions and other measures pending a fuller interagency review.⁶³ Occasionally mentioned as one possibility was the creation of a United Nations-led peacekeeping force for Rhodesia and Namibia, a prospect that drew a tepid response from the Joint Chiefs, especially if US forces participated, even on a limited scale. Before committing to such an exercise, the Chiefs advised the administration to weigh carefully the costs involved and the potentially adverse impact on US stocks should the United States be called upon to provide equipment and other supplies. Additional constraints cited by the Chiefs included the War

Powers Act, under which Congress would need to be consulted; the reaction of US public opinion at seeing American forces drawn into “a potential racial conflict”; and Soviet reactions to substantial US involvement in peacekeeping duties. Taking a dim view of peacekeeping missions in general, the Chiefs were doubly skeptical of being associated with one in southern Africa.⁶⁴

Sanctions, however, were a different matter. Among the various measures of particular interest to the Joint Chiefs was a cut-off of cooperation and collaboration in the nuclear field between the United States and South Africa.⁶⁵ This issue acquired unexpected significance when in early August 1977 the Soviet Union disclosed to the United States that it had evidence (later confirmed as satellite photos) indicating that South Africa was building what appeared to be a nuclear test site in the Kalahari Desert, near the borders of Namibia and Botswana.⁶⁶ According to published CIA estimates, out of an annual defense budget of \$2.3 billion, South Africa was allocating about \$100 million a year to its nuclear weapons program.⁶⁷ South Africa’s consistent refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) had raised questions before as to its ultimate intentions in the nuclear arena, but until the discovery in the Kalahari there was no concrete evidence that it might be on the verge of testing a weapon. Not only was the Soviet revelation an embarrassment for US intelligence, which was caught unawares, but also it was one more item, albeit a major one, increasing the strain on the already fragile relationship between Washington and Pretoria.

Whether a demonstration test was impending or not, the Kalahari incident would mark a crucial turning point in US-South African relations: the beginning of the end of what had been two and a half decades of nuclear cooperation. That relationship dated from the early days of the Cold War, when the United States, needing additional sources of uranium ore supply for its atomic weapons program, had turned to South Africa, among others. Between 1953 and 1971 the United States imported over 43,000 tons of nonenriched uranium, worth \$450 million, and reciprocated by providing South Africa with equipment, technical expertise, and enriched uranium to start its own nuclear power program. But by the early 1970s, as the United States began to scale back on its nuclear stockpile, the need for South African uranium rapidly declined. At the same time, there was growing pressure from anti-apartheid groups for the United States to curtail its nuclear cooperation, and with the advent of the Carter administration, cutbacks—or a cessation of assistance altogether—appeared inevitable. The Kalahari incident, it seems, merely speeded up this process.⁶⁸

Clearly skeptical of South Africa’s intentions, the Carter administration reacted with predictable concern. In an analysis prepared for the PRC, State and the NSC Staff pointed to the negative consequences a South African test could have, both on worldwide nonproliferation efforts under the NPT and on the more immediate problem of achieving a settlement in Southern Rhodesia. The white minority government there, led by Ian Smith, might feel emboldened to hold out against black majority rule if it knew it had a friendly neighbor armed with nuclear weapons. All in all, while there were strong arguments for putting pressure on South Africa to dismantle its facility in

the Kalahari, State and the NSC concurred that little could be done other than through diplomatic channels and that the whole matter should be handled in a low-key manner that would attract as little attention as possible. The Joint Chiefs took note of this advice but offered no separate comments of their own.⁶⁹

In fact, fears that South Africa's nascent nuclear weapons program would have a destabilizing effect on sub-Saharan Africa turned out to be unfounded. Not only did the threat of a nuclear-armed white South Africa fail to intimidate its black neighbors but also it lent little if any support or encouragement to Ian Smith's breakaway regime in Rhodesia. Unable to overcome either the international sanctions imposed upon it by the UN or the guerrilla war being waged by African insurgents, Smith's regime gradually crumbled, and in 1980, he handed over power to the black majority.

Meanwhile, in an effort to avoid being caught off guard again, the White House ordered stepped-up surveillance. In early September 1977 President Carter suspended nuclear fuel deliveries until such time as the South African government provided "solid evidence" that it was not building atomic bombs.⁷⁰ However, the administration's official position continued to be that it had no intention of severing nuclear ties with South Africa, a position that generally accorded with the JCS view of sanctions. Although the Chiefs accepted the threat of sanctions as a diplomatic necessity, they preferred wherever feasible to rely on persuasion and negotiations.⁷¹ The State Department, on the other hand, and in particular the US delegation to the UN, headed by the President's confidante, Andrew Young, tended to take a tougher line. But because of the highly competitive nature of the international nuclear supply business, it was practically impossible for the Carter administration to formulate and enforce a wholly effective nuclear embargo.⁷²

Morocco and Conflict in the Western Sahara

North Africa, like the south, presented its own unique problems which, in certain respects, attracted closer JCS attention than those elsewhere on the continent. American regional security interests affected by developments in North Africa included maintenance of sea lines of communication in the Mediterranean, support for the Sixth Fleet, protection of NATO's southern flank, and denial to the Soviets of bases and naval repair facilities. Although global and domestic political considerations had greatly reduced the forward-deployed forces that the United States once had had in North Africa, it remained a region of important strategic significance and would become even more so as the United States, toward the end of the Carter administration, found itself increasingly involved in guaranteeing the security of the Persian Gulf.

Apart from Egypt, which was really more a part of the Middle East, the North African country of most immediate JCS concern was Morocco. Having maintained generally cordial relations with the United States since gaining independence from France in 1956, Morocco at one time or another had played host to an array of US air and naval facilities. Though most of these were gone or were being phased out by the

mid-1970s, largely at US initiative, the Joint Chiefs believed that the United States had “a continuing important interest” in preserving Morocco’s receptivity for US military access and US installations.⁷³ At the outset of the Carter administration, Morocco still welcomed US naval visits. Strongly anticommunist, King Hassan II of Morocco shared much the same assessment as the Joint Chiefs regarding the unsettling Soviet-Cuban presence in sub-Saharan Africa, and in 1977 and again in 1978 King Hassan had sent troops to help repel the rebel invasions of Zaire’s Shaba province (see above). At the same time, Morocco was also providing covert military assistance to the guerrillas operating against the Marxist government of Angola and had contributed forces in an unsuccessful bid to overthrow the Marxist-Leninist regime in Benin.⁷⁴

During most of the Carter years, however, the Joint Chiefs’ greatest interest in Morocco revolved around its escalating hostilities with the Polisario Front, a western Saharan nationalist movement with Marxist leanings that wanted to carve its own state out of territory formerly controlled by Spain, but divided between Morocco and Mauritania early in 1976. Armed largely with Soviet-made weapons provided courtesy of Algeria, the Polisario launched a steadily growing insurgency that attracted an increasing degree of international attention. Privately, the United States welcomed the absorption of the Sahara by Morocco and Mauritania as the preferred alternative to the creation of an Arab radical mini-state under Algerian and/or Soviet influence. However, in an effort to avoid being drawn further into the conflict, the United States stopped short of publicly endorsing Morocco’s claims and adopted instead a posture of neutrality and support for self-determination.⁷⁵

Events that would precipitate changes in US policy began to unfold in the summer of 1977, at which time the Joint Chiefs started to receive requests from the Moroccan government for ammunition and weapons suited for counterinsurgency operations against the Polisario. Among the items on Morocco’s shopping list were twenty-four Cobra helicopters and an equal number of OV-10 (Bronco) aircraft, a lightly armed but highly maneuverable surveillance plane.⁷⁶ The United States had had a security assistance agreement with Morocco since 1960, and in 1974, at Morocco’s request, it had undertaken a defense modernization program directed primarily at strengthening Morocco’s ground and air capabilities in order to counter growing Algerian military strength that had resulted from an infusion of Soviet-supplied equipment.⁷⁷ The terms of the 1960 agreement restricted US arms to internal security purposes and legitimate self-defense, and the State Department interpreted this as applying to Morocco’s operations against the Polisario as well since, technically, the western Sahara lay outside Morocco’s internationally recognized borders.⁷⁸ The Joint Chiefs, after examining Morocco’s request for the OV-10s, found that such planes probably would be used “to thwart insurgent activity but would not adversely affect the regional arms balance.” For this reason the JCS were inclined to go along with Morocco’s request, with an initial sale of six planes, drawn from current stocks, followed by the rest as soon as an in-country survey team completed its report assessing Morocco’s support equipment and training needs.⁷⁹

With final action on Morocco's latest arms requests still pending, President Carter in April 1978 asked the State Department to head a PRC review of US policy in North Africa (PRM 34), looking specifically at relations with Morocco and Algeria, the Soviet role in North Africa, and prospects for settling the conflict in the western Sahara.⁸⁰ Earlier, the State Department had informed key members of Congress that it intended to initiate the paperwork for the sale of the OV-10s, but it had run into strong opposition from the House International Relations and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees over the unresolved question of self-determination for the western Sahara and reports that Morocco was using US-built F-5s against the Polisario. Threatened with committee action to curb arms sales to Morocco, the State Department had shelved further action. The result was a stalemate between Congress and the administration over further security assistance to Morocco and a widening rift in relations between Rabat and Washington.⁸¹

Following the Shaba II incident of May 1978, the prospects that the United States would lift some or all of its strictures on arms sales to Morocco appeared momentarily to brighten. Morocco's participation in the US-backed intervention in Zaire created a more receptive mood in Congress toward US security assistance to African countries and helped persuade the administration, as part of its North Africa policy review, to take a second look at Rabat's arms requests, now pared to the purchase of just twenty-four Cobras.⁸² The Joint Chiefs received no request to look into the Cobra sale, but having earlier endorsed the purchase of the OV-10s, they remained sympathetic to Morocco's needs. In June 1978, with the PRC scheduled to resume deliberations on North Africa, J-5 recommended to JCS Chairman General Jones that he offer a compromise based on proceeding with the sale of either the Cobras or the OV-10s, or both, in exchange for assurances from Morocco that it would refrain from using US-provided equipment in the western Sahara. State, ISA, and the NSC Staff concurred that the United States should be more forthcoming toward Morocco, but they found the issue now complicated by two new developments: the apparent need, as State and Defense legal experts saw it, for an amendment to the 1960 bilateral assistance agreement the United States had with Morocco; and a recent warming trend in US relations with Algeria, which the State Department worried might be jeopardized by stepped-up arms aid to Morocco.⁸³

Taking these various factors into account, the PRC recommended, and President Carter approved, a policy that wound up straddling two stools, calling for maintaining close relations with Morocco while strengthening ties with Algeria. In Morocco's case, however, the inducements were few. For Morocco to receive the Cobra helicopters it had requested, it would first have to withdraw its US-built F-5s from the western Sahara and agree not to use any US-supplied military equipment outside its recognized borders.⁸⁴ This was a somewhat more exacting position than the JCS had recommended, and it had the predictable effect of further antagonizing the Moroccans. But it was fully in line with the emerging State Department view—shared to some extent by ISA and the Joint Chiefs—that Morocco was involving itself in an unwinnable war of attrition and

that pressure should be brought to bear somehow to make Rabat more amenable to negotiations and a compromise settlement.

Unable to secure all it wanted from the United States, Morocco turned to France to supply it with arms, including Mirage I fighter-bombers to replace its F-5s. Meanwhile, a growing number of attacks by the Polisario, some inside Morocco's borders, suggested a change in the nature of the war, prompting the PRC in March 1979 to establish a special Sahara Working Group to monitor the situation. As participants in this group, the Joint Chiefs undertook a further, albeit quiet, examination of Morocco's military posture and operations against the Polisario, from which they concluded that Morocco would need not just weapons but advisory and training assistance as well.⁸⁵ Toward the end of the following September, with the western Saharan situation continuing to deteriorate, and with the JCS increasingly involved in planning for what would become the Rapid Deployment Force, the PRC embarked upon yet another review of US security assistance policy toward Morocco. Among the options under consideration were an Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) proposal to stand pat on current restrictions; a State Department plan, endorsed by several leading members of Congress, to allow a partial relaxation of current strictures, but not to the extent of providing Morocco with arms primarily designed for counterinsurgency warfare; and a third option, favored by the Joint Chiefs, ISA, and the NSC Staff, to liberalize the US arms supply relationship with Morocco by providing not only weapons like the OV-10, and spare parts and ammunition for previously supplied US equipment, but also counterinsurgency training, intelligence, and advisory support. Although the Joint Chiefs concurred that it was probably beyond Morocco's capacity to bring about a military solution, they saw US assistance strengthening King Hassan's military position and hence his ability and willingness to negotiate with the Polisario.⁸⁶ Initially unsuccessful in reaching a consensus, the PRC met again in mid-October, at which time it rejected the proposal to provide Moroccan forces with counterinsurgency training and advisors, but adopted practically everything else under the third option package.⁸⁷

Despite the administration's reversal of policy, US arms aid to Morocco in its struggle against the Polisario was slow to materialize during the remainder of the Carter administration. Congressional opposition, especially among liberal House Democrats, remained strong, and there were continuing misgivings at the State Department that by supplying arms, the United States would be encouraging Morocco to hold out against a negotiated solution in the western Sahara. The Joint Chiefs, on the other hand, viewed State's attitude as an impediment to improving US-Moroccan relations at a time when the United States had an increasingly urgent requirement to acquire facilities for shifting forces rapidly into the Middle East-Persian Gulf region. Indeed, as planning went forward for the Rapid Deployment Force, the Joint Chiefs specifically identified Morocco as one of five countries "most crucial" to the maintenance of en route base support and overflight privileges in projecting US military forces into the Gulf region.⁸⁸ Toward this end, the Joint Chiefs believed that security assistance afforded the United States "considerable leverage" in possible negotiations with Morocco for access there

to airfields and ports and the right to reopen former US airfields.⁸⁹ But until a new administration took office in Washington in 1981, these views had little noticeable impact on the conduct of US policy.

The slow progress made in changing US policy on assistance to Morocco points up the uncertainties and ambiguities that plagued US policy toward the whole of Africa throughout the Carter years, and that made it exceedingly difficult for the Joint Chiefs to develop and act on clear-cut military priorities. Although they had few concrete interests in Africa south of the Sahara and did not want to become involved in that region's complex and controversial racial politics, the strong Soviet-Cuban presence there left the Chiefs no choice but to contemplate expanding the US military role. Though the responses they suggested were generally limited, they tended more often than not to involve infusions of military assistance or displays of military power that ran counter to President Carter's preferences for political, economic, and diplomatic initiatives. Yet as time went on, even President Carter's aversion to military solutions weakened as he began to recognize the need for US friends and allies in Africa in order to support American interests elsewhere, in the Persian Gulf especially. The result was a shift toward policy tactics more outwardly attuned to what the JCS felt should be done, in East Africa and Morocco most notably, but with no strong high-level commitment behind them to follow through.



President Jimmy Carter and General Omar Torrijos pose with other dignitaries after signing the Instruments of Ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty.

Latin America

In addition to their mounting concern for problems in the Middle East and Africa during the Carter years, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found themselves faced with a growing array of security issues closer to home, in Latin America and the Caribbean Basin. Broadly speaking, the JCS viewed US security interests there as having four general objectives. The first and most important, underscored by the ominous confrontation of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, was to prevent the introduction of nuclear weapons systems capable of striking the United States. Second was to maintain the security of US territory and possessions in or contiguous to the Caribbean Basin. Third was to protect against the development of potentially hostile forces within the region, either indigenously or from external sources. And fourth was to protect and preserve vital lines of communication, especially those through the Panama Canal.

In strategic terms, Latin America presented a mixed picture. Only one country in the region—Mexico—ranked in the “vital interest” category that the Joint Chiefs used for strategic sensing purposes. Three countries—Brazil, Panama, and Venezuela—held “significant” interest; and eleven more fell into the “important interest” category.¹ Even so, the Joint Chiefs accorded Latin America significantly greater attention than their paper estimates of the region would appear to dictate. Part of the explanation was the existence of Fidel Castro’s Cuba and the continuing Soviet presence there, which together posed an ever-present danger to US interests and hemispheric stability. Additionally, there was a long (and sometimes controversial) history of US participation in a variety of bilateral and multilateral military relationships with Latin American countries, some dating from the late nineteenth century, but others of more recent vintage. In the latter category were the creation of the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) in 1942, the World War II lend-lease program and the military assistance and advisory system that superseded it in 1949, and the Organization of American States (OAS) for politico-military consultation. Through these and other sundry contacts, JCS planners had gradually acquired a fairly extensive firsthand knowledge of that part of the world and, in doing so, had also developed a close rapport with their Latin

American counterparts—closer perhaps than with any other group of foreign officers outside NATO Europe. As a result, in assessing US strategic interests the Joint Chiefs tended to give Latin America extra consideration. Maintaining a credible US military presence there, they believed, was integral to preserving not just US security but also US self-esteem and prestige.²

The incoming Carter administration adopted a somewhat different outlook, with initially different priorities. As in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World, the new President put protection of human rights and economic development above military and security concerns. Many of those who joined the new administration at the State Department and on the National Security Council (NSC) Staff tended to be skeptical of US military involvement in Latin America and, in policy deliberations, preferred to screen out military participation insofar as possible. President Carter himself spoke a little Spanish and was sincerely dedicated to improving the US image in Latin America. In the words of National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President “recognized the changed realities of North and South America and was willing to work constructively to build more mature relationships based on mutual respect.”³

One reason President Carter felt able to adopt the position that he did at the outset was the low profile of security problems in Latin America by the mid-1970s. Compared with the decade before, when Latin America had been a hotbed of political turmoil, the situation at the beginning of Carter’s presidency was one of relative quiescence. Though committed to preserving a general framework of security, President Carter saw an opportunity for reforms and for bettering the US image that other presidents simply had not enjoyed. The Joint Chiefs, mindful of the controversial reputation the United States had in parts of Latin America, were cautiously optimistic in initially endorsing the President’s program. But as time went on, the deteriorating state of US-Soviet relations, more aggressive behavior by Castro’s Cuba, and an upsurge in leftist insurgency movements convinced them otherwise. By the end of the Carter presidency, American policy had come practically full circle and was more preoccupied with security problems in Latin America than at any time since World War II.

The Panama Canal Controversy

The first item of business on the new administration’s Latin America agenda was to settle the disputed status of the Panama Canal. Even though formal talks with Panama had been ongoing for over a decade, delays and difficulties of one sort or another had plagued the negotiations. Prior to President Carter’s advent, the most recent breakthrough had occurred in 1974, when Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Panamanian Foreign Minister Juan Antonio Tack had agreed in principle that Panama should receive increased revenues and, at some future date, assume full responsibility for the canal’s operations.⁴ Critics, including California Governor Ronald Reagan, promptly assailed the agreement as a “give-away,” and in 1976 it became a central issue

in the Republican presidential primaries. Rather than further fuel the debate, the Ford administration suspended negotiations, with the implied understanding that a replacement treaty would receive prompt attention once the US elections were over.⁵

Although the Joint Chiefs had supported the Kissinger-Tack agreement, they did so on condition that the final treaty incorporate a “neutrality guarantee” safeguarding US access rights once the canal passed from US to Panamanian control. Additionally, the Chiefs preferred a treaty with the longest possible duration, the longest possible term for exercising options to extend the canal’s capacity, and the longest and broadest expansion of US control over operations and defense.⁶ But with the arrival of the Carter administration, they braced themselves for the possibility that the United States would end up making further concessions. According to Dr. Brzezinski, President Carter wanted to use the canal negotiations to demonstrate that the United States was “committed to eliminating the anachronistic ‘colonial’ aspects” of US policy toward Latin America. The longer the United States delayed, President Carter believed, the greater the chances of violence causing irreparable harm all around.⁷

In addition to the Chiefs’ understandable concern for the canal’s security, there were other reasons why they were uneasy over seeing precipitate changes in the status quo. Panama, like the majority of Latin American countries at the time, was under a military regime, headed by General Omar Torrijos, who ruled as an all-powerful executive backed by the National Guard. A self-styled populist, General Torrijos actively courted the Left with strident anti-American rhetoric and friendly relations with Cuba, and by allowing the Moscow-line Communist People’s Party limited participation in national politics. General Torrijos and members of his family were also rumored to be involved in illegal drug trafficking. Though thought to be small, their involvement by 1977 had become the subject of a US Justice Department investigation, which had yielded one sealed indictment against General Torrijos’ brother, Moises, Panama’s ambassador to Spain.⁸

In the past, the presence of such a regime might have served as ample invitation for the United States to intervene, either overtly or covertly, and to replace it with one more amenable to US interests. But by President Jimmy Carter’s time, with Vietnam, Watergate, and the Church Committee investigations still fresh in many people’s memory, such behavior was practically unthinkable. Instead, during his first week in office, President Carter ordered a full analysis by the Policy Review Committee (PRC) of the key issues yet to be resolved with Panama, to be followed by an “immediate, well-organized and coordinated effort involving the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Defense and State Departments” to enlist congressional support for a new treaty. Although publicity efforts of this sort were not uncommon, it was rare to see the Joint Chiefs singled out for participation. Usually, if the JCS were involved at all, it was in providing expert testimony, not lobbying. But obtaining congressional backing for changes in the status quo promised to be an extraordinary effort. Anticipating that opponents would attack any treaty on security grounds, President Carter obviously wanted it made clear from the beginning that his policy had full JCS endorsement, to vouchsafe that it was militarily sound.⁹

Although resigned to giving up control of the canal to Panama, the Joint Chiefs cautioned against precipitous action. On 21 January and again on 26 January 1977 they reviewed their position in anticipation that talks with Panama would soon resume. Immediately after the second meeting, the JCS Chairman, General George S. Brown, USAF, met with Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Lieutenant General Welborn "Tom" Dolvin, USA (Ret.), who served as the OSD-JCS representative to the negotiations. Instead of seeking explicit assurances, the Secretary suggested the Chiefs consider a broadly worded neutrality guarantee that would continue beyond the termination of US operation and allow either the United States or Panama to protect and defend the canal as either saw fit. The advantage of adopting such an approach was that it skirted two extremely sensitive issues: whether treating the canal as neutral territory diluted Panama's sovereignty over it; and whether the United States retained the right of unilateral intervention. General Brown liked the idea and promptly submitted it to his JCS colleagues, asking that they provide their views prior to a PRC meeting the next morning. All expressed reservations but endorsed the Secretary's formulation as an expedient means of solving the problem.¹⁰ As eventually incorporated into the treaty as Article IV, the neutrality guarantee read as follows:

The United States of America and the Republic of Panama agree to maintain the regime of neutrality established in this Treaty, which shall be maintained in order that the Canal shall remain permanently neutral, notwithstanding the termination of any other treaties entered into by the two Contracting Parties.¹¹

On 27 January the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman briefed the PRC. General Brown explained that while his JCS colleagues would have preferred a stronger neutrality guarantee, they had agreed to accept the Secretary's proposed language because of its flexibility. Under this, he said, each country could interpret the treaty its own way, and there would be no requirement for residual defense. Acknowledging that this was admittedly an ambiguous statement, General Brown still felt that it would meet US requirements.¹²

Even with the breakthrough that the so-called Brown-Brown formula helped to produce, it was not until May 1977 that US and Panamanian negotiators reached a tentative settlement. The outcome was a two-part agreement: a replacement treaty that would phase out American operation of the canal by the year 2000 and turn it over to Panama; and a separate treaty covering neutrality guarantees. The interpretation that President Carter chose in his memoirs to apply to the crucial Brown-Brown formula was that the United States retained the right of defense against external threats, while Panama would protect the canal against danger from within.¹³ Although the Chiefs said they would have preferred more explicit provisions for residual defense matters, they professed to be satisfied that "legal and political arguments could be made to support a unilateral US intervention in the event any nation, including Panama, threatened the nondiscriminatory operation or security of the canal in time of war or peace." In

other words, it was the Chiefs' understanding that, under the agreed arrangement, the United States still reserved the right to do whatever it felt best to keep the canal open.¹⁴

More negotiations followed to iron out details, but by late August 1977 the treaties were complete. On 2 September, without elaborating, the Joint Chiefs added their concurrence, thus technically certifying that they considered the treaties militarily acceptable.¹⁵ Opinion polls, however, showed that only around 30 percent of the American public approved of the treaties, and there quickly emerged a strident and well-funded opposition dedicated to thwarting ratification.¹⁶ Among the opponents were four former Chiefs of Naval Operations—Admirals Robert B. Carney; George W. Anderson, Jr.; Arleigh A. Burke; and Thomas H. Moorer, General Brown's immediate predecessor as JCS Chairman. In a joint letter they urged President Carter to reconsider relinquishing control of the canal and to bear in mind that it was "indispensable during periods of tension and conflict."¹⁷ Finding that "military uniforms were of great help" in rebutting such criticism, President Carter came to rely heavily on the Joint Chiefs to persuade wavering members of the Senate and key opinion leaders that they should support the treaties. Most active of all in this regard was General Brown, who organized briefings, wrote letters explaining the administration's position, and helped to persuade former President Ford and former Secretary of State Kissinger to come out in favor of ratification.¹⁸

General Brown knew that, despite the public posture adopted by the Joint Chiefs, support for the treaties in the military community—active and retired alike—was less than enthusiastic. The letter from the four retired CNOs was especially bothersome because it left him wondering whether the opposition might not be stronger and better organized than he had supposed it to be. As a precautionary measure, he asked the Joint Staff to look into the probable impact and implications of alternative courses of action should the treaties fall through.¹⁹ Army planners, citing "considerable speculation of violence," expressed similar interest in such a study.²⁰

On 12 September 1977 the Joint Staff responded with what was, in many respects, a remarkable and unexpected reassessment. While earlier staff studies, including one supplied to Congress as recently as the spring of 1976, had suggested that the United States might need a force of up to 100,000 troops to maintain law and order, revised threat estimates generated over the summer of 1977 reduced this figure to approximately 36,000, including personnel afloat, owing to what the intelligence community and the US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) saw as the decreased likelihood of Cuban and/or other Latin American intervention. With its best units tied down in Africa, Cuba seemed less likely to intervene directly in support of Panama. At the time USSOUTHCOM, headquartered in Panama, had a force of about 9,500 troops. But with reinforcements available from the United States, protection of the canal seemed eminently more feasible now than under the more dire assumptions used in previous contingency planning.²¹

The ratification debate was, as many observers expected, a contentious and lengthy affair, lasting from September 1977 to April 1978, when the Senate finally con-

sented to the two treaties. Since much of the outcome hinged on defense and security concerns, JCS views played a crucial part in shaping attitudes and arguments on both sides of the issue. Proponents of the treaties went to considerable lengths to demonstrate that the Joint Chiefs not only supported the agreements, but that they welcomed them as preserving and enhancing national security.²² Testifying in late September 1977, General Brown reaffirmed the Chiefs' support of the treaties, stressing that their number one concern was access to the canal, not control or ownership per se. Personally and professionally, he explained, these treaties had his full endorsement because of the "favorable impact ratification would have on all Latin America and the acceptance of the United States as living by the moral principles that we espouse in divesting ourselves of this last appearance of colonialism in Panama."²³

Opponents countered that the Chiefs were only doing what they were told to do and that the opposition of other military officers, all retired, pointed up the treaties' questionable military merits. Admiral Moorer, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, characterized US policy as tantamount to "surrender" and cautioned that losing control of the canal would open the way for further Soviet penetration of Latin America. Once US forces were gone, he warned, the Soviets would begin making inroads in Panama and gain proxy control of the canal, just as they had gained proxy control over Cuba. Admiral Moorer also took issue with earlier JCS statements that it would take around 100,000 troops to protect the Canal Zone should the treaties fail of ratification. Terming that figure "ridiculous," he asked, rhetorically, under what conditions such forces would be needed?²⁴ Although the Joint Chiefs never completely answered the admiral's question, General Brown conceded that that estimate derived from a "worst-case scenario" that might no longer be valid. And under questioning from the Senate Armed Services Committee, Lieutenant General Dennis P. McAuliffe, USA, Commander in Chief, US Southern Command, acknowledged that a force "something upward of 40,000 troops" would probably suffice to meet any foreseeable contingency. However, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Louis H. Wilson, continued to talk as if the 100,000 figure was still valid for planning purposes.²⁵

This was, as it turned out, as much as the administration would reveal of contingency plans should the treaties fail. Despite further probing by members of Congress, the revised Joint Staff estimates never surfaced, though whether they would have made any difference is debatable. While military and strategic considerations formed the crux of the Senate debate, JCS assessments played a lesser role in deciding the outcome. Indeed, most senators eventually voted for the treaties, not because they particularly wanted to but because they viewed them as politically and diplomatically advisable in order to promote good will in Latin America and to forestall outbreaks of violence in Panama and elsewhere that might ensnare the United States in another Vietnam-type conflict. Only a small Senate minority questioned the Chiefs' assertion that the treaties were militarily sound, and of these the administration needed the support of only a handful to achieve the required two-thirds majority for ratification. Crucial to the outcome was the administration's decision to impose a unilateral "condition" demanded by Senator

Dennis DeConcini of Arizona that made explicit what the Joint Chiefs had privately assumed all along: that once the canal passed into Panama's hands, the United States would still have the right of using military force unilaterally in Panama to keep it open. Although the Panamanians were furious over the DeConcini reservation, feeling that it abused their sovereignty, President Carter reluctantly accepted it as the price that had to be paid for Senate approval.²⁶

Ratification of the Panama Canal treaties thus came with mixed feelings all around, not least of all for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Lukewarm supporters of the treaties to begin with, they found themselves facing the prospect of eventually turning the canal over to a regime of dubious character, inclined toward closer ties with Cuba. Whether this would lead to further Soviet penetration of Latin America remained to be seen. For the time being, however, the Chiefs were confident that they could live with these treaties and the changed status in US-Panamanian relations that was bound to ensue. But as time went on they would see problems emerge to challenge this and other key assumptions in the Carter administration's efforts to chart a new policy in Latin America.

Policy Reappraisal: PRM-17

With the Panama Canal treaties finally out of the way, President Carter looked ahead to further improvements in US-Latin American relations. As outlined in an April 1977 speech to the OAS, his aim was to promote "constant cooperation, consultation, and harmony among the nations of this hemisphere." Broadly speaking, the essential elements of this policy were three-fold: respect for the sovereignty of other countries; respect for human rights; and closer cooperation in encouraging progress in economic and social areas. Even steps toward normalizing relations with Cuba were on the agenda. Emphasizing what he termed "human development," President Carter played down security concerns and mentioned only two specifically: his interest in establishing Latin America as a nuclear-free zone under the Treaty of Tlatelolco; and his desire, there as elsewhere, to curb the trade in conventional arms.²⁷

Astute observers quickly noted that the ideas in the President's OAS speech closely resembled those of a 1975 report by the Commission on United States-Latin American Relations (the Linowitz Commission), a private, bipartisan group that sought to improve hemispheric relations.²⁸ Seeking to translate the commission's recommendations into concrete initiatives, the President in January 1977 had asked the PRC to undertake a general review of Latin American policy (PRM-17), in tandem with its reassessment of the Panama Canal situation.²⁹ But unlike the quick action taken on the Panama Canal issue, the PRM-17 review made slow headway, partly owing to a lack of urgency but also because of simmering differences between the Joint Chiefs and the State Department over the future of US political-military relationships in Latin America.

A major stumbling block was what to do about the US military advisory group (MILGP) structure, traditionally a key source of US influence among Latin American governments but also an object of considerable controversy and criticism. By the mid-1970s all but four Latin American countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Costa Rica) were under some form of military rule, and it was almost an article of faith among a fairly large number of American liberals in Congress that US military assistance and the presence of US military advisors contributed heavily to, and perhaps encouraged, the high number of military coups and military governments. In the late 1960s Congress began imposing piecemeal restrictions on US arms transfers and other military assistance to Latin America. In 1976 it adopted a more comprehensive approach by passing the Arms Export and Control Act (PL 94-329), which called for the elimination of grant assistance (unless specifically authorized by Congress), closer control over the training and education of foreign military officers under the US-sponsored International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, and a worldwide ceiling on the number of US military advisory programs.³⁰ The immediate effect within the Latin American region was the disestablishment of the MILGPs in Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Uruguay and personnel reductions in most of the remaining seventeen advisory groups.³¹ In keeping with what it perceived to be congressional preferences and those of the incoming Carter administration, the Department of State proposed a further restructuring of the MILGP system that would, in effect, eliminate it altogether within a few years.³²

Although Defense officials, including the Joint Chiefs, recognized that changes in the MILGP system in Latin America were becoming unavoidable, they cautioned against hasty action. US arms sales and grant assistance to that part of the world had been declining for a number of years, and by the mid-1970s the United States was no longer the major arms supplier to Latin America. Instead, European and Israeli firms accounted for approximately 70 percent of the weapons sold there.³³ With the shrinkage in the US role of arms supplier had come a reduction in the American military presence—from 769 military advisory personnel in the region in 1968, to fewer than 180 by the mid-1970s—and, as many Defense planners also believed, an accompanying loss of influence. Defense was thus troubled that a further withdrawal of the MILGPs would seriously weaken US interests in preventing inroads by hostile influences and in mobilizing effective Latin American cooperation in defense matters. Citing an “unstable security environment,” the Department of Defense warned that immediate withdrawal of any more MILGPs would be “inopportune” and that it would signal to the Latin Americans that the United States was no longer earnestly concerned for their security.³⁴

On 23 March 1977 the PRC met for what proved to be an inconclusive discussion of the progress thus far on its PRM-17 Latin America study. Anticipating the outcome, a DoD-JCS talking paper prepared in advance speculated that the study would need considerably more work before it could be submitted for presidential consideration, and that one of its principal flaws was a lack of perspective and balance.³⁵ Expecting further revisions, the Chiefs were therefore surprised by President Carter’s speech to

the OAS prior to completion of the PRC study. That the President chose to stress the themes that he did—especially those dealing with the protection of human rights and normalization of relations with Cuba—seemed all the more perplexing to the Chiefs in view of the adverse reactions from abroad that had greeted the recent release of a series of State Department reports to Congress condemning alleged human rights violations in certain Latin American countries traditionally friendly toward the United States. Primarily as a consequence of these reports, Brazil in March 1977 had renounced its twenty-five yearlong Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with the United States, while four other countries—Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Uruguay—had rejected US security assistance for the upcoming year. Commenting publicly on these developments, JCS Chairman Brown regretted what he saw as the possible “long-term fragmentation and loss of hemispheric solidarity.” Although General Brown believed that human rights had to be respected, he said he hoped a way could be found to do so “without losing our friends in the process.”³⁶

Most disturbing of all from the JCS standpoint was what the Chiefs discerned to be the administration’s emerging practice of giving priority to political and economic problems in Latin America at the expense of US security interests. Not only had the President himself paid little attention to defense-related matters in his OAS speech but also, in assigning follow-up responsibilities, his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, had largely overlooked them as well, mentioning only two that he thought needed to be further addressed: consultations with Latin America on the limitation of conventional arms transfers, and support of OAS peacekeeping ventures.³⁷ Worried that security problems would continue to be short-changed, the Joint Chiefs in July 1977 felt compelled to bring the matter to the attention of the Secretary of Defense, in hopes that he would discuss it with the Secretary of State and the President’s National Security Adviser at one of their regular weekly luncheons. “Many Latin American leaders have expressed doubts about the continuing US commitment to collective hemispheric security,” the Chiefs said.

The deterioration of Latin American/US security relations was reflected in actions by Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Uruguay. The principal actions which contributed to the deteriorating trend included: US efforts to modify the nuclear technology agreement between Brazil and the Federal Republic of Germany; US sanctions against Chile and Uruguay (for alleged human rights abuses); increasingly stringent arms transfer and grant training policies; declining US military presence; perceived inconsistency of US policy seeking rapprochement with Cuba while criticizing human rights performance of traditional friends; and a seeming lack of US understanding for Latin American concerns over the subversive threat present in most Latin American countries. The combined results of these actions were to weaken bilateral and multilateral security arrangements and erode US credibility with regard to collective security.

Although the Joint Chiefs readily acknowledged the importance of strengthening economic and political relations, they felt that US policies and programs should project a “balanced emphasis” with due regard for security concerns as well, especially

the preservation of the MILGP system and favorable action on “reasonable requests” for military assistance and arms transfers. Last, but not least, they gave vent to growing frustrations over the processing and handling of US policy. Implying that many decisions to date had not followed proper procedure, they reminded the Secretary of Defense that “any US policy, program, or action that impacts upon US security interests/collective security should be formally coordinated with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”³⁸

The response from OSD offered little encouragement that the Joint Chiefs could expect to receive either the cooperation or changes in policy they believed to be needed. Having studied their complaints, the Acting Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs (ISA), Walter Slocombe, notified the JCS in September that he saw no appreciable support for their position, either elsewhere in the Executive Branch or in Congress, that might justify a reexamination of earlier actions. “Many of the specific approaches advanced in . . . your memorandum,” Mr. Slocombe said, “are no longer feasible in light of recent developments.” He insisted that the Chiefs’ views had in fact received “adequate recognition,” but in the end prevailing sentiment had been in favor of other ideas. Difficult as it may be, Mr. Slocombe urged the Chiefs to recognize that decisions “did not always come out exactly as DoD would have preferred.”³⁹ Refusing to accept this verdict as final, the Chiefs advised the Secretary of Defense in December that they regretted the “limited success” they had had thus far in “refocusing attention on security issues in Latin America” and vowed to forge on, seeking changes in US policy as the opportunities presented themselves.⁴⁰

Unable to convince the Secretary’s office to help them, the Joint Chiefs in late March 1978 took matters into their own hands, ordering the Joint Staff to initiate a “strategic military appraisal” of Latin America, similar to the one being conducting almost simultaneously on the Middle East-Southwest Asia region (see chapter 2). Because of the highly visible and active Cuban presence in the Horn of Africa around this time, the two projects had much in common and tended to attract more than the usual degree of outside attention. Upon learning that the JCS were planning a major paper on Latin America, the Assistant Secretary for ISA, David E. McGiffert, proposed the creation of a “joint OSD/JCS task force” to oversee the study, with the Director of the Inter-American Region within ISA serving as the chair.⁴¹ However, the Joint Chiefs, having been let down in the past whenever they had solicited OSD support, eschewed a collaborative effort for the present. Instead, they recommended postponing the creation of a joint task force pending completion of their internal appraisal, and using that appraisal as the foundation for an OSD-JCS reassessment. Once the reassessment was finished, the Chiefs added, they hoped the Secretary of Defense would then reconsider his position on reopening the PRM-17 study.⁴²

As it happened, the Joint Staff moved too slowly and events too quickly for the JCS strategic military appraisal to figure prominently in any immediate reappraisal of US policy. While originally scheduled for completion by the end of May 1978, the Joint Chiefs sought additional views and information from the combatant commanders, a process that effectively delayed the coordination of inputs until the end of the sum-

mer. Even then, it was not until January 1979 that the Chiefs informed the Secretary of Defense of their findings—an unequivocal need for preserving a secure southern flank and a rather generalized set of warnings against allowing further Soviet encroachments on the hemisphere.⁴³ For all the time and effort taken in preparing the study, the outcome was decidedly anticlimactic and unexceptionable. But with new troubles brewing in Cuba, Nicaragua, and elsewhere in the Caribbean Basin, there seemed little point in drawing further attention to security matters. These problems were becoming plentiful and plain enough, and would in a very short time so engulf the Carter administration as to leave it no choice but to rethink its views and responses throughout the region.

Cuba: The MiG-23 and the Soviet Brigade Episodes

The sense of growing crisis that came to overshadow the Carter administration's dealings with Latin America during its last two years in office grew, first of all, from a breakdown of efforts to achieve a rapprochement with communist Cuba. President Carter, at the outset of his presidency, wanted to reopen a dialogue with the Castro regime as the first step toward restoring something approximating normal relations between Washington and Havana. Toward this end, he ordered the cessation of SR-71 reconnaissance flights over Cuba as one of several goodwill gestures. Although the Joint Chiefs regretted losing this intelligence, it was not their sole or even primary source of information. The loss could be made up in other ways, but as a sign of the times it seemed to the Chiefs another indicator of the low priority the new administration attached to security matters in Latin America.⁴⁴

Despite what some considered a promising start, reciprocal gestures from Cuba failed to live up to American expectations. Especially disappointed were the Joint Chiefs, who had hoped to see a lessening of Cuban military activity in Africa. Instead, by late 1977 Cuban forces there were busier than ever in support of the Marxist government of Ethiopia in its war against neighboring Somalia (see chapter 5). The obvious inference was that Castro's interests lay more in assisting Soviet designs in Africa than in pursuing better relations with the United States. At the same time, a noticeable increase in Soviet naval traffic around Cuba prompted Secretary of Defense Brown to solicit JCS views on whether to hold a large-scale US naval maneuver in the Caribbean. Disavowing any intention of seeking to intimidate Cuba, Secretary Brown believed instead that, with appropriate publicity, the exercise could be used to dispel popular perceptions in the United States and elsewhere of growing Soviet naval strength beyond the Soviet Union's immediate waters.⁴⁵ While the Chiefs doubted whether one exercise would do much to realign world opinion of Soviet seapower, they concurred that such a demonstration would assert the US naval preeminence in the Caribbean and, by extension, help to demonstrate Soviet naval limitations in the area.⁴⁶

Though planned for late November or early December 1978, the exercise came to be postponed indefinitely in an apparent effort not to exacerbate tensions arising

from another issue: the discovery in May 1978 and subsequent confirmation that the Soviet Union was supplying Castro's Cuba with MiG-23 fighter-bombers, estimated to number between one and two dozen planes. Further analysis revealed that these were D or F models, either of which could threaten US air defense sites in south Florida, the MacDill submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) site, the Eastern Test Range, and the Texas coast. The D model (also known as MiG-27) was nuclear-dedicated, whereas the F model required modifications to perform nuclear missions. Unable to find any separate evidence that the Soviets might be reintroducing nuclear weapons into Cuba, the intelligence community backed down from its initial finding that these were D models and identified them instead as nonnuclear F models.⁴⁷ Even so, analysts in J-5 considered the very presence of the planes a provocative act: doubtless a violation of the precedents set by the 1962 Kennedy-Khrushchev agreements ending the Cuban missile crisis, and probably the 1970 Cienfuegos naval facilities agreement as well. Viewed in the context of other recent Soviet actions in the region—recurring Soviet naval activity in the Gulf of Mexico and continuing BEAR (TU-95) reconnaissance flights along the US east coast, with periodic overflights of US naval units—J-5 planners saw the presence of MiG-23s in Cuba as part of a continuing Soviet campaign to put escalating pressure on the United States as near to home as possible. Although the Defense Department had repeatedly drawn attention to this situation, urging that something be done by way of diplomatic protest, J-5 noted that to date the State Department had not acted.⁴⁸

The Joint Chiefs presumably hoped that, this time, with the provocation so obvious, the outcome would be different. On 10 October they met with Secretary of Defense Brown to review the situation and to discuss remedial measures recommended by the Joint Staff. Even though the Chiefs doubted whether the introduction of the MiG-23s into Cuba would significantly affect the regional balance of power, they argued that the presence of the planes could not go unchallenged: US acquiescence might condition the United States to accept further incremental changes in Cuban offensive capabilities and could place the United States in a more difficult position in the future. Secretary Brown shared the Chiefs' concerns, and on 23 October he brought the matter to President Carter's attention, urging also that the State Department initiate appropriate diplomatic action to secure early withdrawal of the planes and removal of the danger.⁴⁹

Though handled thus far in a low-key manner, "leaks" to the press soon led to public speculation that the United States and the Soviet Union might be veering toward a repetition of their 1962 confrontation. The first public reference to the planes in Cuba came in an Associated Press dispatch appearing on 31 October in the *Washington Post*. There followed on 15 November a more detailed account, containing a summary of the Secretary's 23 October memorandum to the President, by syndicated columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak.⁵⁰ The day before the appearance of the Evans and Novak exposé, Secretary of State Vance had met with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. But until then, State had been reluctant to pursue the issue, fearing that it would harm the prospects for an arms control agreement and other ongoing negotiations. Prodded

by the publicity, Secretary Vance met three more times with Mr. Dobrynin, while in Moscow US Ambassador Malcolm Toon held talks with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. The Soviets did not deny the presence of the planes, but insisted that they were part of a routine upgrade of the Cuban air force, involving the replacement of obsolete MiG-21s with more up-to-date MiG-23s. Accepting this explanation, the State Department dropped demands that the aircraft be withdrawn in exchange for Soviet assurances that there would be no increase in the number of planes and that they would pose no nuclear threat to the United States. Though not everything in terms of a settlement that the JCS had wanted, it did at least address a part of their concern by putting a cap on future deployments. On 30 November 1978 President Carter declared at a press conference that he saw no violation of the 1962 Kennedy-Khrushchev agreements and that he was treating the matter as closed.⁵¹

One promising outcome of the whole affair was the prospect that the JCS would have better intelligence in the future through the resumption in November 1978 of SR-71 reconnaissance flights over Cuba. Though not something the Joint Chiefs had specifically requested, they welcomed it nonetheless. Throughout the entire episode, senior policymakers had to operate somewhat in the dark. Initially, the State Department opposed the resumption of reconnaissance flights, feeling that it would send a “negative signal” to Cuba at a time when the United States was trying to improve relations. But others, including National Security Adviser Brzezinski, saw nothing to lose and possibly much to be gained, and with President Carter’s nodding approval, the flights resumed.⁵²

A year later the Joint Chiefs found themselves involved in yet another contretemps over Cuba, this time in response to intelligence disclosures that the Soviets had stationed a combat brigade on the island. The discovery—or re-discovery, as it proved to be—that the brigade was there came not from any new information but from a review of previous intelligence on Soviet military activity in Cuba ordered by Dr. Brzezinski in the aftermath of the MiG-23 affair. This review unearthed files pertaining to the existence in Cuba of a unit termed a “brigade,” estimated to number from 2,600 to 3,000 men. From the date of the intercepts, intelligence sources concluded that the unit was a fairly recent addition and, as such, an escalation of the Soviet military presence in Cuba. But for reasons that remain unclear, they had never before passed these findings along to others in the intelligence community for more thorough vetting and analysis. In fact, as further investigation revealed, the unit in question had been in Cuba, in one form or another, probably since the 1962 missile crisis, and had stayed behind as part of a rump garrison.⁵³

What made the situation more ominous than it initially seemed was the apparent change in the brigade’s mission. Originally set up as part of a joint Soviet-Cuban combat training center, it had since evolved into an exclusively Soviet combat training unit, without Cuban participation. This gave it an offensive capability that it apparently did not have at its beginning. Although the intelligence community was unable to determine for certain when and how the change in training activity took place, it

was clear that the nature of the Soviet presence was significantly different from what it had been in the early 1960s. Scattered evidence further suggested that there might be additional Soviet units training in Cuba, but the intelligence community dismissed these reports as being less than wholly reliable.⁵⁴

Unlike the MiG-23 affair, which had obvious security implications, the existence of the Soviet brigade seemed more an intelligence matter than a military issue, and therefore did not prompt a formal JCS action. Even so, the Chairman's office and planners in J-5 followed the issue closely throughout the summer and early fall of 1979, amid "leaks" and congressional inquiries which threatened to inflate the matter into a full-blown crisis and delay indefinitely both the implementation of the Panama Canal Treaty and the ratification of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, then pending before the Senate (see chapter 9). From the JCS standpoint, the principal military significance of the brigade's presence arose from the possibility that it might foreshadow the creation of a Soviet power-projection capability in the Western Hemisphere and cause some Latin Americans to question the ability of the United States to control hemispheric events.⁵⁵ Ideally, JCS planners hoped to see a total withdrawal of Soviet forces from Cuba. Failing this, they recommended that the United States insist upon measures that would reduce the brigade's combat effectiveness (removal of tanks and heavy weapons, for example) and that Washington step up its efforts, in quid pro quo fashion, to expand politico-military collaboration with China and Yugoslavia. But having witnessed the administration's handling of the MiG-23 episode the year before, they exhibited little confidence that this time around the outcome would be any different.⁵⁶

On 1 October 1979, in a televised speech to the nation reminiscent of President Kennedy's dramatic appearance seventeen years earlier during the Cuban missile crisis, President Carter laid to rest the mini-crisis of the Soviet brigade. As with the MiG-23s, President Carter accepted Soviet assurances that the brigade posed no threat to the United States, nor would it in the future.⁵⁷ But just in case, he issued a Presidential Directive (PD-52) calling for stepped-up State-Defense planning to counter possible Cuban and Soviet expansionism in the Caribbean and Central America and set in motion the creation of a Caribbean Combined Joint Task Force (CCJTF).⁵⁸ Later, President Carter acknowledged that his main reason for not making more of the Soviet brigade issue was his desire not to impede ratification of SALT II.⁵⁹ Cuba was thus to remain a thorn in the American side, as it had been for some years, but only in the interests of pursuing what President Carter considered a higher, more immediate objective. The Joint Chiefs likewise wanted SALT to go through, and as a practical matter they had nothing more concrete to suggest in dealing with Cuba than diplomatic protests. Yet, as the MiG-23 and Soviet brigade episodes clearly demonstrated, there was strong and growing evidence to support the JCS contention that the Carter administration needed to pay more attention to security issues in Latin America and that these problems were just as important as dealing with social and economic issues.

Nicaragua: Downfall of the Somoza Regime

As worrisome as the situation in Cuba may have been, it was apparent by the end of the Soviet brigade episode that the Carter administration would take no direct action there, but would instead concentrate on peripheral areas—Central America especially—where US-supported regimes faced steadily mounting pressure from Cuban- and Soviet-supported insurgencies. As a rule, it had been President Carter's policy since taking office to avoid unilateral involvement in the affairs of Latin American countries. However, starting with the 1978-1979 crisis in Nicaragua, the United States gradually abandoned its posture of neutrality in favor of more direct and assertive action. The result was a policy more in line with JCS preferences and recommendations, but as witnessed in Nicaragua, these changes were too little and too late to make any real difference there.

Nicaragua was, in fact, one of the last places in Latin America where the Joint Chiefs expected serious trouble. Relatively stable and prosperous by Latin American standards, Nicaragua was under a right-wing dictator, Anastasio Somoza, whose family had ruled the country with the help of the US-trained and US-equipped *Guardia Nacional* since the 1930s. President Somoza himself was a 1946 graduate of West Point, and over the years since then he had cultivated close personal and political ties with many influential Americans, especially on Capitol Hill. Known more for its corruption than its brutality, the Somoza regime had historically tolerated some dissent from moderate opponents, but tended to crack down hard on left-wing groups. With the advent of the Carter administration, President Somoza became increasingly the target of State Department criticism for alleged human rights abuses. Indeed, soon after taking office, as an indication of the direction in which it intended to proceed, the Carter administration canceled export licenses for the sale of ammunition to Nicaragua, the first step toward suspending new military sales and Military Assistance Program (MAP) activities later in the year.⁶⁰ The Joint Chiefs, on the other hand, thought that Nicaragua needed about \$14 million annually in security assistance and continued to regard that country as “a reliable ally,” partly in deference to President Somoza's strong anticommunism and his endorsement of US foreign policy but also because of Nicaragua's pivotal geographic position. Were Nicaragua to fall to a Cuban-style revolution, the Chiefs feared, the rest of Central America would be left exceedingly vulnerable to similar takeovers.⁶¹

Though buffeted from time to time in the past by incipient insurrections, Anastasio Somoza had always managed to pull through with his power and authority more or less intact. But by the mid-1970s his luck appeared to be running out. Not only was he under mounting pressure from Washington to improve his regime's human rights record but he was obliged also to do so in the face of intensifying criticism at home of his government's corruption and a growing leftist insurgency led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). By September 1978, with his back against the wall, President Somoza authorized the National Guard to launch an all-out offensive against

the Sandinistas. The Guard did in fact deal the rebels a severe military setback, but in doing so it also destroyed many towns and villages and inflicted heavy civilian casualties, alienating considerable segments of the population. Posing as a popular defender, the President of Venezuela, with General Torrijos' cooperation, moved planes into position in Panama to bomb Mr. Somoza's headquarters but backed off from doing so when the United States ordered an alert of F-4s and other aircraft based in the region.⁶² Nevertheless, to signal US disapproval of President Somoza's actions, the Defense Department, at State's request, suspended all remaining shipments of foreign military sales and MAP materiel to Nicaragua on 22 September.⁶³

Henceforth, the United States sought to promote a smooth democratic transition in Nicaragua but faced repeated difficulties in finding a side it felt comfortable supporting. While the Carter administration had little use for Anastasio Somoza, it was equally leery of the FSLN, whose Marxist rhetoric and Cuban connections seemed certain to place it on a collision course with the United States should it ever manage to come to power. The hoped-for outcome, crafted at a series of interagency meetings during the autumn of 1978, was that moderate political elements would assert themselves, thereby lessening Sandinista influence, and that President Somoza would accept a mediated settlement with his enemies, thus paving the way for democratic elections. A modest approach built almost exclusively on diplomatic initiatives, it was in certain respects similar to the policy the United States adopted around this same time in dealing with the declining popularity of the Shah of Iran. And in both cases, the solutions would come up short.⁶⁴

The Joint Chiefs went along with this policy, not because it struck them as particularly persuasive and appealing or bent upon success but because, once again, they found themselves practically frozen out of the decision-making process. The policy that emerged in Nicaragua was primarily the product of debate and dialogue between the State Department and the NSC Staff. While the JCS Chairman, General Jones, or his assistant, Lieutenant General William Y. Smith, USAF, participated in all the relevant interagency deliberations, the records in the JCS files confirm, as Robert Pastor put it, that they played a "secondary role." Mr. Pastor's explanation was that Defense planners were too Pacific-oriented to understand the nuances and problems of Nicaragua.⁶⁵ But the real reason appears to have been the recognition both in the State Department and on the NSC Staff that military options were not a viable alternative and that President Carter would do almost anything to avoid US intervention.⁶⁶

Just the same, the threat of American intervention loomed heavily over the ensuing efforts at mediation and was rendered implicit, if not explicit, by the inclusion of Lieutenant General Dennis "Phil" McAuliffe, USA, Commander in Chief, US Southern Command, in a US delegation that visited Managua just before Christmas of 1978. By then negotiations had reached a stalemate and patience in Washington was wearing thin. Lieutenant General McAuliffe's presence, the State Department believed, would "demonstrate US determination" to reach a solution, one way or another.⁶⁷ Meeting with President Somoza on 21 December 1978, Lieutenant General McAuliffe was

exceptionally blunt. “The reason that I’m here,” he explained, “is that we perceive that the cooperation you have given to the negotiating team is no longer evident. . . . Speaking very frankly, Mr. President, it is our view that peace will not come to Nicaragua until you have removed yourself from the presidency and the scene.”⁶⁸

Despite Lieutenant General McAuliffe’s warning, President Somoza grew more obstinate than ever. He seemed to feel (in General McAuliffe’s opinion) that he was still capable of exercising full control over his country.⁶⁹ Faced with President Somoza’s continuing intransigence, the consensus in Washington was that the United States should step up the pressure with additional sanctions in hopes that he would see the light and agree to a plebiscite.⁷⁰ Final decisions emerged at a PRC meeting on 26 January 1979, at which General Jones represented the Joint Chiefs. Others present included National Security Adviser Brzezinski and members of the NSC Staff, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Ambassador William Bowdler (the US Mediator to Nicaragua), Secretary of Defense Brown, Assistant Secretary of Defense for ISA David McGiffert, and the Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Stansfield Turner. All agreed that the situation in Nicaragua had reached a critical turning point and that in the short term US options were limited. The preferred solution—mediation—was not working. Not only had President Somoza recently bought himself more time by strengthening the National Guard with arms imported from Israel, Argentina, and Guatemala but he also continued to enjoy strong support among an influential group of legislators on Capitol Hill. The meeting agreed, however, that as the polarization of Nicaraguan politics progressed, President Somoza would become increasingly isolated and vulnerable to “a radical solution.” Discussion ruled out most economic sanctions as contrary to long-term US interests, and the meeting concluded by adopting “politically symbolic steps” to show US displeasure at President Somoza’s failure to cooperate, starting with the immediate withdrawal of the four-member US military advisory group and the paring back of other US missions. The aim was to put distance between the US government and President Somoza, but not to the extent of forfeiting the opportunity of influencing him later.⁷¹

Following President Carter’s approval of these additional sanctions, the State Department on 8 February announced that it was suspending its mediation efforts and would, in effect, let events take their own course.⁷² This action abrogated the 1952 and 1953 Air Force and Army Mission Agreements and officially terminated the Defense Department’s security assistance program to the Somoza government on 17 March.⁷³ The assumption at the time in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS), as elsewhere in Washington, was that if President Somoza had survived this long, he was apt to hold on to power indefinitely, but with the distinct possibility that the longer he stayed, the greater would be the threat of violence and radicalization accompanying his eventual departure. The challenge now was to prepare for as smooth a transition as possible, and toward this end Dr. Brzezinski in February encouraged the State Department to begin looking at various options, in anticipation that a comprehensive NSC review would follow.⁷⁴ By early May 1979 State’s efforts had reached the point that the Presi-

dent requested the PRC to do a formal study (PRM-46) incorporating “a coherent set of policies” not just for Nicaragua but for the entire Central American region.⁷⁵

In contrast to the Latin American review (PRM-17) it had directed two years earlier, the State Department this time made gestures toward assimilating military viewpoints by inviting the US Commander in Chief, Southern Command (USCINCSO), Lieutenant General McAuliffe, to attend a Central American chiefs of mission meeting, held 17-18 May in San Jose, Costa Rica. By then, however, State’s paper on Central America was in its fourth draft, and with a report due at the White House by early June, it seemed highly unlikely that there would be any major changes. The paper’s basic thesis was that a lack of political legitimacy lay at the heart of Central America’s problems and that the US posture toward the region should be to encourage more open political dialogue, free elections, democratic processes, and improvements in social and economic conditions. In Lieutenant General McAuliffe’s view, the opinions expressed both in the paper itself and by the various chiefs of mission were “shallow.” Planners in J-5 rendered a similar judgment. Echoing their earlier complaints, they declared the paper “flawed” for ignoring the security problems that governments throughout the region faced. “It is unlikely,” they argued,

that meaningful reforms will be implemented when governments are under siege. The challenge is to restore some measure of stability in order to bring about a climate for political openness and social/economic development. The United States must be involved because Central America matters profoundly to US security, self-image, and values.⁷⁶

By the time State’s report on PRM-46 came up for discussion in the PRC on 11 June, events in Nicaragua had precipitated yet another crisis there, starting on 29 May with the launching of what the Sandinista’s described as their “final” offensive against President Somoza. By early June, however, it was clear that US intelligence had misjudged the situation and that the Sandinistas were embarked upon a major offensive, in part as a result of weapons covertly supplied by Cuba, though where it would lead was as yet unclear. Meeting on 11 June, the PRC went ahead with its scheduled discussion of State’s report on PRM-46, but with a growing awareness that long-term policy decisions might have to give way to more immediate problems. The Defense representatives—Lieutenant General W. Y. Smith for the JCS and Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles W. Duncan, Jr., for OSD—came armed with talking points which, while sharply critical of the State Department’s position, seem to have been more intended for posterity than for debating purposes. The preferred approach, both in the Joint Staff and in ISA, where these talking points had originated, was to resume immediate support of President Somoza in order to put down the Sandinista insurrection and eliminate the danger of external intervention, before embarking on further political and social reforms. But in deference to “political realities,” the recommended Defense position that Lieutenant General Smith and Mr. Duncan used as their guide instructed them to accept almost anything State and NSC proposed.⁷⁷

As a result, the meeting broke little new ground and instead wound up essentially reaffirming existing policy, such as it was. All agreed that, even though President Somoza was losing support and might not last out his term, his ability to defend himself with the National Guard remained viable and this latest offensive by the Sandinistas would probably play out to a standoff. Hoping to keep the conflict from getting worse and possibly spreading, National Security Adviser Brzezinski offered a three-point plan: (1) diplomatic inquiries into the possible creation an inter-American peace force to restore order; (2) the issuance of a “clear statement” at the OAS or elsewhere supporting self-determination, a negotiated transition of power, and free elections as feasible; and (3) public and private warnings to the arms suppliers of both sides (i.e., Cuba and Panama, which were running arms to the Sandinistas, and Israel and Argentina, which had become President Somoza’s biggest providers) to cease and desist. The meeting recognized that some of these measures might require forceful action for implementation, and therefore decided that the time had come for the Defense Department to start looking into military contingencies.⁷⁸ Although any intervention would have to be multinational in nature, all present recognized that it would be up to the United States to take the lead. As David Aaron, Dr. Brzezinski’s deputy national security adviser, is said to have quipped: “The peso [sic] stops here.”⁷⁹ Aaron was apparently unaware that Nicaragua’s unit of currency was the Cordoba.

On 13 June the Joint Chiefs received the formal go-ahead from President Carter for the development of military options.⁸⁰ Even so, JCS planners clearly operated under severe constraints and found themselves dealing mainly with evacuation plans as the fighting in Nicaragua intensified. Anticipating events, they were poised to implement airlift evacuation plans for as many as 4,500 US and third country nationals (TNC). Since commercial airlines had discontinued flights into Managua because of the security situation, the State Department requested military help. On 12 June the Joint Chiefs tasked USCINCSO to provide the necessary airlift using his six C-130 assets from Howard Air Force Base in the Canal Zone. Later, the Joint Chiefs also authorized the deployment to USSOUTHCOM of four HH-53 Air Rescue helicopters and three AN/WSC-3 tactical satellite terminals. By the time the US embassy closed down on 19 July, USSOUTHCOM had directed a total of nineteen C-130 missions and had evacuated 1,423 personnel without incident. All the same, the operation was not without risk or political complications. On 9 July, for example, USCINCSO deployed two of the HH-53s, one WSC-3, and an eight-man security police team to Liberia, Costa Rica, to minimize the response time. After two days the Costa Rican legislature, made up of a majority with pro-Sandinista sympathizers, ordered the aircraft out of the country in a move aimed at embarrassing both the Costa Rican president and the United States.⁸¹

All this while, Joint Staff planners saw the Nicaraguan National Guard facing an increasingly desperate situation. While diplomatic pressure did virtually nothing to stem the flow of arms and ammunition from Cuba to the Sandinistas, it led to an almost immediate cessation of resupply from Israel to the Somoza regime.⁸² By mid-to-late June the National Guard was down to a two-week supply of small arms ammunition

and had completely exhausted its stockpile of rockets, hand grenades, mortar rounds, recoilless rifle shells, and heavy machine-gun ammunition. Unable to get ammunition for his army, President Somoza turned to the use of air power, which sharply escalated death and destruction among civilians. Responding to requests from President Somoza for help, J-5 planners began studying the pros and cons of a clandestine supply mission routed through Honduras, with the aim of preserving something of the National Guard's power to counterbalance the Sandinistas, provided President Somoza would agree to step down. Thus, in resuming military aid, the United States would not be propping up the President but would instead be protecting its options by preventing the Sandinistas from filling the expected power vacuum by themselves.⁸³ Assuming policy approval, J-5 planners estimated that supplies could be on their way to Nicaragua "within a few hours."⁸⁴ But in late June, presumably acting on White House authorization, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher advised US embassy officials in Managua to inform President Somoza that he should not expect any US help. "We are clearly in no position to supply the Guard with equipment," Deputy Secretary Christopher said, "which among other things could lead to further civil war."⁸⁵

From this point on, the National Guard steadily disintegrated, making a Sandinista victory practically inevitable. Although the Joint Staff continued to survey military options, including blockade actions to shut off the flow of Cuban arms, the obvious preference of both the NSC Staff and the State Department was to rely on political and diplomatic suasion to contain the conflict and, if possible, to limit the impact of the expected Sandinista victory. So demoralized, disorganized, and unpopular had Somoza's regime become that probably nothing short of large-scale US intervention could have saved it and even that, in all probability, would have been a stop-gap measure. In the event, Sandinista resistance doubtless would have been exceedingly strong. When at last on 17 July 1979 Anastasio Somoza finally stepped down and fled, he left behind a country in physical ruin and political disarray, a ripe target for communist penetration and a potential launch pad for Cuban adventurism elsewhere in Central America. The Joint Chiefs had worried that something like this might happen, but with the administration's attention fixed on achieving a political solution, military advice and influence had played little part in the development of US policy prior to President Somoza's overthrow. Henceforth, with military factors increasingly more prominent in Central American affairs, their views would carry more weight.

Limiting the Consequences of the Sandinista Victory

Like the fall of the Shah of Iran, the collapse of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua was so sudden and unexpected that it left the United States with no immediate fallback position. Up until the final month or so prior to Somoza's collapse, the operating assumption among US policymakers and JCS planners was that a Sandinista victory was an unlikely possibility and that the consequences of the rebels' recent offensive were most

apt to be seen in growing political pressure on President Somoza to make concessions to his opponents and open up the political process. But with the sudden shift in power came uncertainties, not only about Nicaragua but also about countries elsewhere in Central America as well. The upshot was a growing sense of unease that leftist insurrections, aided and abetted by the Sandinistas, might take place elsewhere in the region and that, out of them, there would be an increase of Cuban and/or Soviet influence.

Aware that their own efforts to influence policy had made little difference, the Joint Chiefs looked increasingly to Secretary of Defense Brown to plead their case. Preoccupied with SALT II and other matters, Secretary Brown so far had not paid much attention to the situation in Central America. But after the unexpected and well publicized successes of the Sandinista offensive, he became persuaded that the Joint Chiefs had a point. In late June, he accepted their suggestion that he alert President Carter to the need for promoting a more stable security environment in Central America. Should the Sandinistas prevail in Nicaragua, Secretary Brown said, two probable consequences were apt to follow: an upsurge in leftist opposition in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; and a sharp reaction from rightists to protect their positions. "In sum," the Secretary warned, "a Sandinista victory will strengthen the leftist insurgents and increase the likelihood of Left-Right confrontations in these countries." Lest the Right over-react, Secretary Brown urged patience and support for the existing regimes and, as necessary, additional assistance, including military aid, to encourage stability.⁸⁶

This was not, of course, as strong a recommendation for security measures as JCS planners had hoped to see.⁸⁷ But prior to President Somoza's collapse it was about as far outside the current mainstream of US policy as a senior official dared to go. Even after the Sandinista victory, the Carter administration remained cautiously hopeful that moderate elements in Nicaragua would prevail and curb the radicals' instincts for exporting revolution. By extension of this policy, the United States wound up adopting a somewhat ambivalent approach to the rest of Central America, not wanting to be identified with right-wing repression, but not wanting to be seen as showing encouragement for leftist guerrilla movements, either. Yet as events would demonstrate, the middle of the road was perhaps the most difficult and treacherous path of all.

The initial US reaction was to play for time. At a Special Coordination Committee (SCC) meeting on 20 July, attended by the Chairman's new assistant, Lieutenant General John Pustay, USAF, all agreed (though the OSD representative, Assistant Secretary David McGiffert, expressed unspecified reservations) that unqualified US support of the status quo in Central America was out of the question: not only was it too sharp a departure from the administration's overall foreign policy objectives but also it was impractical. Most desirable of all would be a multilateral solution, with the Latin Americans themselves taking the lead. Barring this, the meeting agreed that the United States should be prepared to move ahead on two fronts. One was to explore the feasibility of closer ties with Nicaragua, to keep it from becoming another Cuba, using offers initially of humanitarian assistance (later expanded to include nonlethal military aid) to establish an inroad; the other, to reassure the neighboring "Northern

Tier” governments (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), made nervous by the possibility that the Nicaraguan revolution might spread, that the United States would continue to support them. Toward this end the United States should be prepared to offer “some” economic and military aid to bolster the Northern Tier, but make it clear that such assistance was conditional upon progress by these countries in enacting political reforms.⁸⁸

As part of the ongoing review, the SCC asked the Defense Department to explore ways the United States could use the military power it had on hand in the Caribbean Basin to help promote a more stable environment there. On 1 August 1979 Secretary of Defense Brown submitted an inventory of major bases and other facilities, together with a tentative list of low-budget air and naval exercises and surveillance measures the United States might adopt to enhance its image and operational readiness. Dr. Brzezinski concurred that, for the most part, the proposed actions met the criteria the SCC had in mind, but he also worried that they might not go far enough to meet the problem. “In general,” he observed, “I am concerned that the U.S. military profile in the Caribbean has been permitted to slip to such a low level.”⁸⁹ Unable to get all that he wanted from the Secretary of Defense, Dr. Brzezinski turned to the JCS Chairman’s office for help. What Dr. Brzezinski wanted to know, an aide explained, was how the Cubans were supplying arms to the Central American revolutionaries and, in practical terms, whether the United States had the resources readily available to mount “a meaningful interdiction effort.”⁹⁰

That such an effort would be aimed mostly at thwarting a communist takeover in El Salvador was never seriously in doubt. Ruled by a conservative oligarchy, El Salvador had been slow to enact political and economic reforms, and by the late 1970s it was beginning to pay a heavy price in the form of mounting violence and street assassinations by rival rightist and leftist forces. On 15 October 1979, amid the deteriorating security situation, a group of reform-minded junior officers staged a coup that toppled the government of General Carlos Humberto Romero and installed a military-civilian junta. But for all its good intentions, the coalition made little dent in solving the country’s problems. In January 1980 the three civilian junta members walked out, provoking a political crisis which intelligence analysts speculated could open the door to a leftist takeover. Fearing that the crisis would grow to compete with the already heavy demands on US resources in Southwest Asia, Dr. Brzezinski called for a wholesale reassessment of US military and intelligence needs throughout Central America.⁹¹ The response was a fast-paced round of interdepartmental Special Coordination Committee meetings (SCC and mini-SCC) that, as a stop-gap measure, led to the reprogramming by the State Department in March of \$5.7 million in foreign military sales (FMS) financing for El Salvador.⁹²

Despite an aroused sense of concern, the State Department and the JCS often differed over the particulars of assistance programs to El Salvador and other Caribbean Basin countries. As outlined by the Joint Chiefs in early February 1980, the US effort should encompass both the creation of a Caribbean contingency fund to shorten the

response time in meeting urgent needs and the easing of legislative restrictions to allow training and materiel support for the constabularies of the region.⁹³ As part of this, the Chiefs recommended a grand aid program of \$96.4 million for the entire Caribbean Basin, including \$25.2 million for El Salvador and \$31 million for Honduras.⁹⁴ But as the deliberations progressed, Joint Staff planners began to sense a lack of cooperation and “foot-dragging” by the State Department. A case in point was a JCS proposal to introduce mobile training teams (MTT) into El Salvador to assist in managing riot control and other contingencies, a measure approved on an emergency basis by the SCC in February but delayed in implementation by State Department caveats attempting to link it to the inclusion of Nicaragua in US-sponsored naval training exercises for Honduras and El Salvador.⁹⁵

For the remainder of President Carter’s term, the Joint Chiefs continued to evince serious concern over the deteriorating security conditions in Central America, but with modest-to-poor success in generating the level of response they hoped to see either from the White House or from OSD. One reason was the competing demand for resources to meet expected emergencies in Southwest Asia. But partly also it was the President’s own lingering preference for nonmilitary solutions, as exemplified by his inauguration in April 1980 of a people-to-people program, “Caribbean/Central American Action,” to promote greater understanding and cooperation within the region.⁹⁶ As a result, policy came to be addressed in what General Edward C. Meyer, the Army member of the Joint Chiefs, described as “a fragmented, reactive manner,” which made contingency planning exceedingly haphazard and difficult.⁹⁷ Seeking guidance, the Joint Chiefs in August 1980 invited the President’s National Security Adviser to brief them on current US policy and objectives in Latin America, but they had to settle for a meeting with Ambassador William Bowdler, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs.⁹⁸

General Jones concurred with his Army colleague that there existed an urgent need for a more systematic approach to US policy. Accordingly, he paid close attention to updating assistance options papers, incorporating Joint Staff and USSOUTHCOM viewpoints, should the need arise.⁹⁹ Late in the year Congress finally passed a foreign assistance bill adding \$5.7 million in FMS credits for El Salvador, as well as IMET (International Military Education and Training) funds and other moneys.¹⁰⁰ But on 5 December 1980 President Carter suspended all military and economic aid to El Salvador pending the outcome of an investigation into the apparent murder of four American women, three of them Catholic nuns, by right-wing security forces. Though mindful of the adverse impact that such incidents could have, the Joint Chiefs nonetheless agreed with Secretary of Defense Brown that an early resumption of security assistance was essential, lest the situation deteriorate further.¹⁰¹ With guerrilla activity on the upsurge, President Carter finally accepted the findings of a US investigative commission that no senior Salvadorian authorities were implicated in the murders, and shortly before leaving office he authorized military aid to resume.¹⁰² A small but important step, it

would set the stage for what would become in the next administration a larger and even more determined effort to thwart leftist movements in Central America.

Thus, by the end of Carter's presidency, US policy in Latin America was beginning to approximate something closer to what the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed it should be, with more attention and resources devoted to security needs. While President Carter came into office determined to reduce the US military presence in Latin America, he left with the same number of MILGPs (seventeen) in operation as at the start and with a growing portfolio of commitments to provide assistance against what seemed a rising tempo of leftist insurgencies throughout Central America. The Joint Chiefs warned repeatedly that conditions in Latin America did not warrant any large-scale curtailment of US military interest or involvement. But it was only after the collapse of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, accompanied by continuing controversy over the Soviet presence in Cuba and the growing leftist insurgency in El Salvador, that their advice began to receive serious consideration. Yet even then, the response from Washington continued to mirror the President's unshakable belief that the answer to Latin America's problems rested not on military power but on a broadly based policy combining political, economic, and social reforms.

Although the Joint Chiefs applauded the President's commitment to improve US-Latin American relations, they also regarded his overall approach to that part of the world as rather naïve and short-sighted. While the JCS were not the arch-reactionaries that some critics accused them of being, it is true that their sympathies lay more with Latin America's conservative regimes, like those in Argentina and Chile, than with the left-of-center governments that were taking root in Panama, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and elsewhere. The reason was fairly simple: cooperation and collaboration in maintaining security arrangements just came easier with conservative governments, particularly those with close ties to the military. Such thinking was especially evident among Joint Staff action officers, who handled most of the day-to-day JCS business involving Latin American affairs, and who were almost constantly at odds with their State and NSC counterparts over the role of US military power in Latin American policy. Within the JCS organization, it was almost an article of faith that the United States had long and well-established defense and security interests in Latin America—the Panama Canal being the major case in point—and that such actions as ceding the canal to Panama should not obscure the fundamental need to protect those interests. The threat posed by Castro's Cuba remained, for all practical purposes, the most dangerous and overt in the hemisphere. But it was the exercise of Cuban-Soviet influence through the use of surrogates and proxies, such as the Sandinistas, to support and sustain leftist guerrilla movements elsewhere that elicited the Joint Chiefs' most urgent concern. That the US response should be more paced to the rising tempo of military developments was certainly not what President Carter wanted to see, but by the time he left office it was fast becoming the only effective alternative to a possible succession of leftist takeovers.



Seated during the Clark Air Force Base turnover ceremonies are from left to right, Ambassador Richard W. Murphy; Philippine President and Mrs. Ferdinand Marcos; and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David C. Jones.

The Far East

During the Carter years developments in the Far East continued to play a major part in JCS deliberations, but with the clear understanding that the goal of US policy was to reduce the US presence and US responsibilities throughout the region. Like many Americans at the time, President Carter saw the Far East in terms of the recent war in Vietnam, a disaster he pledged not to allow to happen again. His means of doing so were three-fold: (1) to restructure US commitments so as to avoid being drawn into a future Asian war; (2) to shift military assets out of Asia and the Pacific to Europe and the Middle East, areas he considered strategically more important; and (3) to encourage more local self-reliance, mutual cooperation, and respect for human rights among US friends and allies. While not radically different from the policies pursued during the Nixon-Ford years, President Carter's approach routinely downplayed the risks involved (except when faced with overwhelming evidence to the contrary, as turned out to be the case in Korea) and relied more heavily on diplomacy to help shore up apparent weaknesses in the US defense posture.

In dealing with the Far East, as in dealing with security problems elsewhere, the Joint Chiefs of Staff found themselves often at odds with the political direction they received from the White House. Although cutbacks in Asia and the Pacific had been the order of the day since the Vietnam War ended,¹ the Joint Chiefs believed that the reductions contemplated by the Carter administration went well beyond advisable limits. While US military power in the region was contracting, that of the communist states there was surging. Not only did the Soviet Union continue to maintain and upgrade large and effective air, ground, and naval forces in the Far East but also it retained close and supportive ties to North Korea, a formidable military power in its own right. China, despite its professed desire to normalize relations with the United States, was still a largely unknown quantity, locked in a bitter dispute with the regime on Taiwan, a US ally.

The most sizable and ominous threat came from the Soviet naval presence in the Pacific, which by the mid-1970s numbered some 112 submarines and 64 principal

surface combatants, compared to a US force of 6 carriers, 32 submarines, and 80 principal surface combatants. In addition, the Soviet Pacific Fleet normally deployed two YANKEE nuclear ballistic missile submarines in the eastern Pacific and occasionally one DELTA SSBN as well. Normally, Soviet surface combatants operated in the area of their bases at Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk, but increasingly they were showing up in the Indian Ocean and the Philippine Sea. The more far-flung the threat, the more difficult it became to contain. Although considered a manageable problem with available resources, Pacific Command (PACOM) planners were considerably less confident of being able to protect essential lines of communication against Soviet interdiction if in an emergency substantial PACOM forces had to be rushed to support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).²

Taking these various factors into account, the Joint Chiefs could not help but react to talk of US reductions and redeployments in the Pacific and Far East as ill-timed and ill-conceived. The differences that resulted between the President and his senior military advisers were not the product of misunderstandings or miscommunications, but of differing priorities. For the Joint Chiefs, the first order of business in the Far East was to preserve as viable a defense posture as possible, while for President Carter it was to adopt and implement new policies reflecting the “lessons” of Vietnam. More often than not, this meant breaks with the past and the status quo that left the JCS uneasy over the possible consequences.

Recognition of the People’s Republic of China

Along with the Israeli-Egyptian peace accord and the Panama Canal treaty, the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was arguably one of the three outstanding foreign policy achievements of Jimmy Carter’s presidency. But like the other two, it elicited mixed reactions from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Building on the rapprochement achieved during the Nixon-Ford era, President Carter came into office intent on completing the process of shifting US diplomatic recognition from the government on Taiwan (the Nationalist-led Republic of China) to the People’s Republic. It was, in fact, one of President Carter’s personal top priorities. As the President’s National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, recalled: “Normalization of relations with China was a key strategic goal of the new Administration. We were convinced that a genuinely cooperative relationship between Washington and Beijing would greatly enhance the stability of the Far East and that, more generally, it would be to US advantage in the global competition with the Soviet Union.”³

The process of normalizing relations with the People’s Republic of China elicited avid interest from the JCS regarding the effect it would have on the long-standing military-to-military relationship with Taiwan, which they had maintained since the signing of the mutual defense treaty (MDT) in 1954. As long as the MDT was in effect,

the JCS felt responsible to honor its commitment and fulfill its obligations.⁴ In a memorandum to Dr. Brzezinski, Secretary of Defense Brown noted that the “key issues of concern to the Defense Department will be the timing, the phasing, and the manner in which our present relationship with the Republic of China or Taiwan—with whom we maintain a security treaty—will be altered . . . and what actions we might be willing to take to ensure that there is a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves.”⁵ Despite the legitimate concerns of the JCS, it was becoming painstakingly clear that the Carter administration believed that it could secure safeguards for Taiwan with any new agreement between the United States and the People’s Republic of China.⁶

By far the larger and more fundamental question that normalization raised was the impact it would have on the Soviet Union, a recurring subject of speculation during early interagency deliberations as the new administration endeavored to frame a specific policy. The JCS position, as articulated by the Chairman, General George S. Brown, USAF, was that the United States should treat China and the Soviet Union more or less the same, using military contacts where feasible to improve relations with both countries. “‘Even-handedness’ in our relations with the PRC and the USSR,” General Brown believed, “. . . requires similar military contact initiatives in the case of China, even though these do not elicit quick responses.” While cautioning that the outlook for future US-Chinese military collaboration was not propitious, General Brown, in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, provided input on potential US initiatives and measures for developing future military contacts with the PRC. Specifically, the JCS Chairman wanted to develop and expand contacts between defense attachés in third countries, establish a program of reciprocal visits between the Defense Liaison Office/Hong Kong and US Army Center of Military History with appropriate People’s Liberation Army (PLA) counterparts, utilize the United Nations to initiate talks with the PLA military regarding Law of the Sea negotiations and its military implications, establish an exchange program between the National Defense University/National War College and its PLA equivalent, and offer to host PLA personnel as observers during US military exercises in the Pacific.⁷ Armed with this information, Dr. Brzezinski recommended to President Carter that the Department of Defense prepare a paper providing an in-depth analysis of the recommendations submitted by General Brown after the initial interagency review.⁸

In April 1977 President Carter formally requested the Policy Review Committee to coordinate an interagency study of US policy toward the People’s Republic (PRM-24) organized around: (1) an analysis of broad options toward the People’s Republic; (2) an analysis of the ways the United States could continue its withdrawal from Taiwan; and (3) an analysis of the transfer of defense-related technologies to Mainland China.⁹ The inclusion of the last topic seems to have been Dr. Brzezinski’s idea, and reflected his growing interest in finding ways of putting pressure on the Soviet Union following Moscow’s recent rejection of President Carter’s “deep cuts” arms control proposal (see chapter 9). Policy analysts at State doubted whether a tilt toward China would have much effect on Soviet behavior, other than to add new strains to Soviet-American

relations. But the idea that closer US-Chinese ties might hold significant complications for Soviet military planning was increasingly attractive, both to members of Dr. Brzezinski's NSC Staff and to JCS planners. The upshot was the development of a wide range of options, framed within a more or less inconclusive review of US policy, which culminated in a spirited debate at a meeting of the PRC on 27 June 1977.¹⁰

Following usual procedure, the Director, Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Ray B. Sitton, USAF, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA), David E. McGiffert, prepared a joint talking paper for the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense outlining recommended positions. Among these was a Joint Staff proposal that, before proceeding with recognition of the People's Republic, additional analysis be done to determine the impact that normalization, in conjunction with the withdrawal of US ground forces from Korea and possible force reductions in the Philippines, would have on the strategic balance in East Asia. The Joint Staff also favored retaining approximately 550 US military support personnel on Taiwan, both as a symbolic deterrent to the People's Republic and to provide a capability for immediate commitment of US forces, until the security of Taiwan could be assured by other means. However, ISA recommended against this, feeling that withdrawals should go forward as scheduled and that the United States could just as easily rely on naval power to assist the Nationalist Chinese in the defense of Taiwan.¹¹

Meeting on 27 June, the Policy Review Committee sidestepped a lengthy debate on the recognition question by agreeing to recommend to President Carter that he seek normalization of relations in the "near term," but only under conditions that would not jeopardize Taiwan's security. The committee also discussed the question of "security enhancements" between the United States and the People's Republic through such things as the exchange of military attachés, allowing the Chinese to have greater access to "dual use" (civilian and military) technologies and equipment, and US acquiescence in third-country sales of military equipment to China. According to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Secretary of Defense Brown and National Security Adviser Brzezinski both were convinced that the United States could "persuade Moscow to be more careful in their dealings with us and our interests for fear of pushing us into substantial security cooperation with China." Secretary Vance, however, did not consider China to be a major military or economic power, nor did he see it becoming one any time soon, even with the benefit of the help Secretary Brown and Dr. Brzezinski were suggesting.¹²

Taking these various views under advisement, President Carter decided in late July 1977 to proceed with normalization as quickly as possible, and in late August he dispatched Secretary of State Vance to Beijing with the apparent aim of concluding a deal.¹³ The main obstacle, as President Carter and his advisers realized, was China's insistence on three "matters of principle": termination of the US-Taiwan mutual defense treaty; acceptance of the Beijing government, rather than Taiwan, as the only legitimate government of China; and withdrawal of all US military forces from Taiwan. Offering a compromise, President Carter was willing to jettison the mutual defense treaty but

insisted on preserving the US right to sell Taiwan military equipment and to conduct unofficial cultural, economic, and trade relations with Taiwan. The Chinese, however, were still wrestling with internal leadership problems and politely declined any compromise, making Secretary Vance's visit a "congenial" but unproductive experience. President Carter then decided to "put this project on the back burner" until after Congress finished with the Panama Canal treaty.¹⁴

During the hiatus in negotiations the Joint Chiefs continued to follow developments closely, correctly assuming that their views would be needed at a later date. Toward the end of 1977, to help them formulate their position, the new Director, Joint Staff, Vice Admiral Patrick J. Hannifin, USN, asked the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) to provide an "estimate of the global reactions" should the United States recognize the People's Republic. Confirming what the JCS already suspected, DIA concluded that most countries would view US efforts to normalize relations with the PRC either "favorably or with relative indifference," while the Soviet Union would express "some concern" and Taiwan would "vigorously oppose." In a follow-up analysis, DIA speculated that the Soviets would "oppose" US efforts at normalizing relations with the People's Republic "to the extent that they perceive an implied threat of combined action against Soviet interests." One possibility, DIA believed, was that the Soviets could stiffen their armed forces in the Far East and bring them to a higher state of readiness, but it was far more likely that they would limit their actions to the diplomatic sphere.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the emergence of Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping as Mao Zedong's successor seemed to clear the way by the beginning of 1978 for a renewed rapprochement with the United States. At the same time, President Carter began taking a renewed interest in Chinese matters, and encouraged National Security Adviser Brzezinski to hold regular conversations with Ambassador Han Xu, the acting chief of China's Liaison Office in Washington. The net effect was a gradual improvement in US-Chinese relations and, in May 1978, a visit by Dr. Brzezinski to Beijing, paving the way for an agreement on normalization.¹⁶

By late September 1978, with negotiations on recognition entering their final and most difficult stage, Secretary of Defense Brown asked the Joint Chiefs for a fresh statement of their views on the impact of terminating the mutual defense treaty with Taiwan, as the Chinese were demanding. The Chiefs' position, essentially unchanged from a year before, remained in favor of normalizing relations, providing it could be done without jeopardizing "the security of the people on Taiwan." At stake, the Chiefs believed, was the perceived value of a US alliance and the strength of US resolve to remain a Far Eastern power. For these reasons, the JCS urged that the United States make every effort to obtain "adequate assurances" from the People's Republic respecting Taiwan's security and, at the same time, that the United States maintain "strong economic and cultural ties" with Taiwan. Assuming these conditions could be met, to one degree or another, the Joint Chiefs were then ready to certify that "the Mutual Defense Treaty could be terminated."¹⁷ This was not as solid an endorsement of the administration's position as Secretary of Defense Brown hoped to hear, and in

acknowledging the Chiefs' advice, he asked them to bear in mind that Chinese leaders had consistently refused to be bound by any public or explicit commitments toward Taiwan. That they might change their policy and agree to do so in the future seemed to Secretary Brown exceedingly unlikely.¹⁸

In fact, the Joint Chiefs expected no major concessions from the Mainland Chinese, nor did they get any. What emerged was a joint communiqué, issued on 15 December 1978, disclosing that the United States and the People's Republic would establish full diplomatic relations as of 1 January 1979 and that henceforth the United States would recognize the PRC as the "sole legal" government of China, including Taiwan. At the same time, the United States announced that it would withdraw all its remaining military personnel from Taiwan within four months and, at the end of 1979, terminate its mutual defense treaty with the island. Anticipating criticism that the United States was walking out on a longtime ally, President Carter explained publicly that even though the United States and Taiwan might no longer have formal ties, they would still maintain commercial, cultural, and "other relations" through nongovernmental channels.¹⁹ This was something of a setback for Chinese efforts to isolate Taiwan, for it clearly implied that US trade with the island, including arms transactions, would continue. However, in deference to Chinese objections, President Carter imposed an unannounced one-year moratorium on new arms sales to Taiwan.²⁰

Unresolved differences over Taiwan notwithstanding, the Carter administration pressed ahead with a rapid expansion of commercial, academic, cultural, and other civilian contacts with the People's Republic and achieved considerable progress in such areas as civil aviation, port security policy, and exchanges of nonmilitary scientific and technological information during its last two years in office. At the same time, however, differences between Dr. Brzezinski's NSC and the State Department left the question of military contacts dangling until Secretary of Defense Brown visited Beijing in January 1980. At the Secretary's request, the JCS Chairman, General Jones, assembled a list of politico-military topics of interest to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for possible discussion. Should the opportunity arise, the Chairman urged the Secretary to reassure the Chinese on four main points: (1) that the United States would continue to maintain a strong, credible defense posture; (2) that it was interested in exploring ways in which the United States and China could cooperate on security issues of mutual concern; (3) that it wanted to clarify the US and Chinese positions on security issues where they disagreed (e.g., Taiwan); and (4) that US military leaders were indeed serious in seeking to lay the foundations which could lead to future military relations between the two countries, but without any implied commitments.²¹

One key objective of Secretary Brown's trip to China was to develop a framework for wider contacts and possible exchanges between the defense establishments of the United States and the People's Republic of China.²² But otherwise, the trip was more symbolic than substantive, projecting a greater degree of harmony and common interests than was actually the case. That he arrived in Beijing just two weeks after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, thereby suggesting that the United States and

China might be collaborating on a common response, was purely a coincidence: the trip had originally been planned for the previous autumn. Secretary Brown informed the Chinese that the United States was prepared to sell them certain types of non-lethal military support equipment, including dual-use technology which the United States would not sell to the Soviet Union. This announcement marked a fundamental turn away from the “evenhandedness” that had characterized US policy for the past decade and would launch the United States on a course toward the establishment of an arms transfer relationship with the People’s Republic. Summing up what he had accomplished during his trip, Dr. Brown felt that “we have taken a significant step in our strategic relationship with the Chinese.”²³

By the summer of 1980 US-Chinese relations had matured to the point where General Edward C. Meyer, the Army Chief of Staff, sought the support of his JCS colleagues for an interagency study to help determine “an overall policy to cover multifaceted issues that will be generated by expanded contacts.” At the time, Army and JCS planners were deeply engaged in developing the Rapid Deployment Force, which was apt to compete for funding and resources previously earmarked for the Pacific. Looking for guidance, General Meyer suggested a study addressing such questions as the role of China in US security; areas of possible military cooperation, with an assessment of the gains and risks; and the integration of military with civilian initiatives in the development of a comprehensive national plan. Although a sound idea on the face of it, the consensus among the other Chiefs was that the issues involved were exceedingly complex and sensitive and that the JCS should clarify their own views before engaging in interagency deliberations. Accordingly, in August 1980, they asked the Director, Joint Staff, Vice Admiral Thor Hanson, USN, to initiate, in collaboration with the Military Services, a “broad, in-house study to address the full implications of the US-Chinese security relationship.” Undertaken as a long-term project, it was still unfinished when the Carter administration left office, after which it became absorbed into various Reagan administration initiatives.²⁴

All the same, it was abundantly clear by the end of the Carter years that normalization had vastly improved US-Chinese relations—indeed, that it had ended one of the Cold War’s oldest and most bitter rivalries. Moreover, this improvement could not have come at a more opportune time, as the United States found itself facing heightened tensions over Iran and Afghanistan and growing obligations in the Persian Gulf. With greater assurance of increased stability in East Asia, it now became possible, as planning for the Rapid Deployment Force and other contingencies went forward, for the JCS to contemplate shifting US military assets to where they were needed more, i.e., the Middle East and Persian Gulf region. From this perspective, recognition of the People’s Republic already promised to pay handsome dividends. But it also carried with it certain risks, as the Joint Chiefs were well aware, most notably in the uncertain future of America’s erstwhile ally, Taiwan.

Arms Aid to Taiwan

As a result of actions taken to normalize relations with Mainland China, the JCS realized that Taiwan would soon be on its own, especially in the critically important area of acquiring arms, where over the years US support had been substantial. During the Nixon-Ford years, despite the avowed aim of improving ties with the People's Republic, the United States had always found quiet ways of keeping arms and related assistance flowing to Taiwan.²⁵ But with the advent of the Carter administration it was increasingly doubtful whether the United States would continue to be quite so flexible as President Carter was determined to pursue a worldwide curb on arms transfers. With less direct help from the United States, Taiwan would increasingly have to look elsewhere for arms or do without. As an early indication of how he intended to proceed, the President in March 1977 approved the use of \$34.8 million for logistic support of US fuel and equipment stockpiled on Taiwan but placed a "hold" on an \$8 million sale of seventy-two improved Hawk surface-to-air missiles to the Republic of China (ROC) armed forces, on the grounds that the Taiwan government already had a sufficient supply of such weapons.²⁶

The status of arms aid to Taiwan was matter of special concern to Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), who exercised responsibility over such matters through a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Taipei headed by Brigadier General L. R. Forney, Jr., USA. Like many MAAG chiefs, Brigadier General Forney was sensitive to his clients' needs, and in his end-of-tour report, forwarded to CINCPAC in late August 1977, he expressed concern over the current moratorium on arms-aid to Taiwan. Not only were the ROC's requests for weapons going unanswered but also it was virtually impossible for the MAAG to obtain authoritative guidance that it could pass along, owing to an apparent embargo on high-level liaison between US and ROC officials pending the outcome of normalization talks with the mainland. "I have an uneasy feeling," Brigadier General Forney said, "that there is little military judgment being applied to the discussions in Washington on normalization." According to the MAAG Chief's estimate of the situation, Taiwan's capacity to maintain a credible deterrent rested on the early acquisition of a broad range of new weapons systems, including F-16s or other advanced fighters to replace an obsolescent fleet of F-104s and F-100s; "smart bombs" and air-to-surface weapons to counter the PRC's STYX missile boats and any invasion fleet; improved radar and air defense missile capabilities; new ships to replace an aging destroyer fleet; and an additional 100 M-48 tanks. Though not overly optimistic that any of these requests would find favor, Brigadier General Forney thought that at the least there should be greater frankness with Taiwanese officials and, in Washington, closer attention to "a military input" into decisions.²⁷

Following the submission of Brigadier General Forney's report, CINCPAC in late September 1977 urged the Joint Chiefs to approach the Secretaries of State and Defense on reopening the question of security assistance to Taiwan.²⁸ Shortly thereafter, whether by coincidence or design, the Chief of the ROC General Staff, Admiral Soong

Chang-Chih, took the unusual step of sending JCS Chairman Brown a personal letter appealing for his support in obtaining US approval for the sale of F-16 aircraft, Harpoon antiship missiles, and Improved Chaparral surface-to-air missiles. These “essential” weapons, Admiral Soong said, were needed to counter the “severe threats from air and missile attacks” which could place Nationalist control of the Taiwan Straits “in serious jeopardy.”²⁹ The Chairman’s reply, cleared and coordinated with the State Department and the NSC Staff, was anything but encouraging. Only in the case of the Improved Chaparral missiles did he think that a reexamination might be possible owing to “some recent exceptions” to the US policy of restricting arms transfers incorporating sensitive advanced technology. As for the other weapons, General Brown said that a decision was still pending. Current US policy, he advised, placed an overall ceiling on arms sales worldwide, restricted the introduction of new technologies into a region, and required a delay in the sale of specific items until US forces received them. But he promised to continue to review the ROC’s requests and to notify the Nationalist government as soon as he had something more to report.³⁰

Although General Brown regretted not being able to offer a more positive response, he and his JCS colleagues realized that, pending the outcome of normalization talks with the mainland, it was practically impossible to fix a US position on assisting Taiwan. Recognizing the predicament, late in 1977 the NSC requested a summary of outstanding arms sales cases to the Republic of China and designated State and ISA to work up an interim policy on transfers. Though not as definitive a review as the Joint Chiefs would have liked, they welcomed it nonetheless, since the Republic of China had a substantial backlog of requests, many with long lead times for procurement.³¹

Adopted in early March 1978 at an NSC-chaired mid-level interagency meeting, the joint State-Defense paper established both general and specific criteria for providing arms aid to Taiwan. The premise was that the United States would resume sales to the ROC of new military hardware so long as it was “essentially defensive in nature” and its provision did not pose a serious threat to normalizing relations with Beijing; did not distort the military balance in the Taiwan Straits; did not contribute to the ROC’s nuclear, long-range/intermediate missile, or chemical warfare development program; and was consistent with the President’s overall policy (PD-13) on arms transfers.³² Turning to specifics, the meeting agreed that, in line with these conditions, clearance could begin soon on the sale of howitzers, unserviceable M-48 tanks for “cannibalization,” mobile radar systems, and a low-altitude aircraft detection system. But it deferred action on Taiwan’s request for more Hawk missiles and recommended that decisions on other highly sophisticated weapons (e.g., jet aircraft and Harpoon and Maverick missiles) be given further study, possibly with reference to the Policy Review Committee.³³

Not surprisingly, these unresolved issues—especially the question of aircraft sales—formed the nut of the problem. The Joint Chiefs felt that, for the time being, the ROC could do without the Improved Chaparral missiles it had on order.³⁴ But they had no doubt that Taiwan needed a new all-weather fighter-bomber, and in early January 1978 they so advised Secretary of Defense Brown. Citing their most recent (FY 1979-

1986) Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP), the Chiefs indicated that they supported a mid-range force structure for the ROC of up to three squadrons of advanced tactical fighters and one squadron of improved reconnaissance fighters. Though originally interested in acquiring the F-16, the Nationalists in December 1977 had submitted a new request, following advice from CINCPAC, to purchase sixty-eight F-4s, a high performance fighter but an older type that might not be as politically controversial as the F-16. The Joint Chiefs had not previously considered or established a position on the sale of F-4s, but after examining the ROC request, they concurred with analysts in J-5 that, of the US aircraft that could reasonably be expected to be made available to Taiwan, the F-4 appeared the best fitted to meet ROC needs.³⁵

Despite JCS endorsement of the F-4, the State Department and the White House kept delaying a decision on ROC aircraft needs pending the outcome of normalization talks with the mainland and the possibility that formal curbs on assistance to Taiwan might be part of the deal. Feeling it prudent to look elsewhere for planes, the Republic of China resumed talks it had broken off earlier with Israel on acquisition of the Israeli-made KFIR fighter-interceptor. Purchases of the KFIR would be in lieu of the preferred US-built F-4 and would require US approval since the KFIR used US-designed avionics and the American-made J-79 engine. But even though the State Department seemed favorably disposed toward the sale, the Nationalists in March decided against it, reportedly on the grounds that they did not want to risk a rupture in their relations with Saudi Arabia by dealing with Israel.³⁶

Having ruled out the Israeli KFIR, the Taiwanese were now more dependent than ever on favorable action from Washington. Anticipating an imminent decision from the President, the Joint Chiefs in July 1978 reaffirmed their earlier recommendation that the F-4 was “best suited” in order to satisfy the ROC’s future requirements.³⁷ Weeks passed, however, with no response from the Oval Office. Finally, in late August, while visiting CINCPAC, Admiral Soong let it be known that while his government preferred the F-16, F-18, or F-4 (not necessarily in that order), it was willing to entertain the possibility of other planes, so long as they were high performance models.³⁸ As a possible compromise, Secretaries Vance and Brown and National Security Adviser Brzezinski tentatively settled on offering the Nationalists a yet unbuilt plane designated the F-5G (later designated the F-20), which Northrop planned to develop for export markets. Although distinctly inferior to the F-4 in speed and altitude capabilities (and therefore less threatening to the People’s Republic), the F-5G promised to have advantages in range and maneuverability, as well as cost-effectiveness, and since the ROC Air Force (ROCAF) already operated an earlier model, the F-5E, it would seem to have little trouble fitting in. Asked by Secretary Brown whether the JCS could support the sale, Chairman Jones offered as his personal opinion a qualified endorsement, providing the F-5G lived up to expectations. As a practical matter, however, General Jones doubted whether the F-5G would be ready soon enough to avoid any degradation of the ROCAF’s capabilities and speculated that a possible solution to this problem might be to allow the Taiwanese to acquire additional F-5Es.³⁹

General Jones' advice made a lot of sense, and in October 1978 President Carter decided to hold the sale of the F-5Gs in abeyance (whether to produce them or not was still undecided) and to offer instead additional F-5Es, together with the Israeli-built KFIR, if the Taiwanese government so desired.⁴⁰ Subsequently, in November, the President tried to sweeten the deal by adding that the United States would agree to co-produce up to forty-eight F-5Es and would also sell Taiwan 500 Maverick missiles and 400 laser-guided bombs. But he specifically ruled out selling a more advanced fighter bomber like the F-4 or F-16 that the People's Republic might consider threatening and advised the Taiwanese not to expect an F-5 follow-on any time soon.⁴¹ The aim, as Secretary of State Vance later described it, "was a clear demonstration to both Taipei and Peking that we meant what we said about supplying defensive weapons to Taiwan."⁴² But it was a decision that pleased neither side, least of all the regime on Taiwan, which expressed regret over the US decision not to allow the sale of more sophisticated planes while the United States was preparing to normalize relations with the mainland. In late December Deputy Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher was instructed by President Carter to pay a goodwill visit to Taiwan. However, the two-day meeting between Deputy Secretary Christopher and the ROC government was less than productive.⁴³

Withdrawal from Taiwan

Though not wholly unexpected, the announcement that as of 1 January 1979 the United States would withdraw diplomatic recognition of the Republic of China dealt the Government on Taiwan (GONT), as it would henceforth be known, a hard blow just the same. While President Carter pledged to maintain existing commercial, cultural, and trade relations with Taiwan through nongovernmental channels, his decision to terminate the mutual defense treaty and to withdraw all US military personnel in four months meant that the island could no longer count on US protection. As mentioned above, a secret addendum to the normalization agreement (subsequently "leaked" to the press) included a one-year moratorium on new US arms sales to Taiwan. Items in the pipeline prior to 1 January 1979, including equipment, training of military students, spare parts, and ammunition, would be delivered on schedule. But any new requests for security assistance would be held in abeyance until 1980. For at least a year, in other words, Taiwan could expect no further promises of help from the United States.⁴⁴

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the ending of US recognition of Taiwan posed two sets of interrelated problems, one immediate, the other more long-term. The immediate one involved overseeing the physical withdrawal of the US military presence—the closing of facilities, the termination of the MAAG and related security organizations, and the relocation of war reserve materiel stockpiled on the island, including what amounted to one-third of the Air Force's aviation fuel in the Western Pacific. In fact, the US withdrawal from Taiwan had been in progress for several years, following the "opening" to the People's Republic in the early 1970s, and since then had led to a steady

diminution of the US military presence.⁴⁵ About 1,800 US military personnel remained at the start of the Carter administration, compared with 9,000 five years earlier. Citing US obligations under the Mutual Defense Treaty, the Joint Chiefs had proposed retaining a residual mission on Taiwan of approximately 500 uniformed personnel for advisory, administrative, and treaty support functions.⁴⁶ The Chiefs also had hoped to postpone as long as possible the transfer of the war materiel and petroleum, pointing to the deficits and additional burdens that would fall on an already overtaxed logistical system in the Western Pacific. But under the terms agreed upon in 1978 for recognition of the PRC, a speedy withdrawal of all US personnel and the completion of new storage facilities in South Korea and elsewhere became unavoidable.⁴⁷

Despite the severing of formal diplomatic ties, the United States continued to maintain strong unofficial relations through a nonprofit corporation chartered by Congress known as the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), run by retired US military and Foreign Service officers, whose sole purpose was to represent the people of the United States in conducting and carrying out business with the people of Taiwan. Defense coordination, pending expiration of the mutual defense treaty in January 1980, fell to a Provisional Plans Office, collocated with and responsible to CINCPAC in Hawaii.⁴⁸ As part of what proved to be an exceptionally smooth disengagement and withdrawal, the Joint Staff compiled a list of politico-military agreements the United States had with Taiwan and recommended several for continuation after 1979, including search and rescue, security assistance, grant aid, property disposal, and procedures for flight clearance, special mission coordination, and Taiwan Strait patrol. But as a practical matter, JCS planners recognized that it would take time and patience to sort out which agreements to keep and which to terminate.⁴⁹

Related to this was the longer-term and no less complex problem of developing a policy on future arms transfers to Taiwan once the moratorium ended in 1980. That sales and assistance would resume seemed likely, though at what level remained to be seen. While the Joint Chiefs acknowledged that further aid was essential, they downplayed any immediate need, causing themselves some credibility problems with Congress. Matters came to a head during committee hearings in February and March 1979 over a legislative measure known as the Taiwan Relations Act, to facilitate derecognition. Among the items the Chiefs believed Taiwan eventually would have to have were a new all-weather fighter and an antiship missile. However, speaking for himself and his JCS colleagues, General Jones explained that Taiwan's security posture was such that it could effectively deter any attack from the mainland "now and for a considerable time to come into the future." "We don't see an acceleration of the threat," General Jones said, "and we don't see any great urgency at this moment to make decisions on additional equipment."⁵⁰ Congress, though, was skeptical, and in enacting the April 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (PL 96-8) it incorporated provisions more explicit than the administration had proposed, assuring Taiwan that it could count on the United States to make available "such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability."

The language was of course subject to interpretation, but the sentiment behind it left no doubt that Congress wanted arms sales and other assistance to Taiwan to resume as soon as it became practicable.⁵¹

Despite the new legislation, there was mounting concern both on Taiwan and in Congress as 1979 progressed that the administration might decide to extend the arms embargo as a means of cultivating improved relations with Mainland China, at a time of deteriorating US relations with the Soviet Union.⁵² Fearing increased isolation, the Taiwan government in August 1979 submitted a fresh request for fifteen (later increased to seventeen) major weapons systems, listing an improved all-weather fighter and air and sea defense weapons as its most urgent requirements, and in November Taiwan sent a high-level delegation to Washington to plead its case. In accordance with established procedure, CINCPAC reviewed the GONT's request and submitted recommendations to the Joint Chiefs. Attached was a personal endorsement of Taiwan's request from Admiral Maurice F. Weisner, USN, Commander in Chief, Pacific, to General Jones.⁵³ However, the State Department proved exceedingly cautious in approaching new sales to Taiwan. State viewed even the smallest issue involving Taiwan as having repercussions for US relations with the PRC, and therefore insisted that Taiwan's arms requests be handled incrementally, with each increment including some noncontroversial items and a mix of systems. State's rationale was that such an approach would allow more time for deliberations within the US government, that it would reduce the overall impact of the program on relations with the People's Republic, and that it would allow a better gauge of the Chinese reaction to resuming arms sales to Taiwan.⁵⁴

The result, announced in early January 1980, was a resumption of arms sales, but on terms that further fueled Taiwan's anxieties and disappointed its supporters in Congress. Only six of the seventeen requested items received approval for sale at the time, for a total transaction of \$287 million. Nearly all the items approved were older model weapons that Taiwan already had in its arsenal. Notably absent were the more sophisticated systems—a new fighter and advanced missiles—that the Joint Chiefs concurred Taiwan would need, sooner or later, to maintain a credible conventional deterrent in the 1980s. Although the JCS went along with State's recommendation to withhold these systems for the time being, analysts in J-5 hastened to point out that lengthy delays in approving many of the pending items could have exceedingly untoward effects, especially on Taiwan's air defense posture.⁵⁵ Under pressure from Congress, the State Department in June 1980 agreed to allow competing contractors to discuss possible sales to Taiwan of the so-called FX advanced fighter—either Northrop's proposed F-5G (F-20) or the J-79 version of the F-16, an export model under development by General Dynamics. But by the time the Carter administration left office in January 1981, these discussions had barely begun.⁵⁶

Still, even with the holdup on aircraft sales, the Nationalist Chinese probably fared better than they might have, owing largely to JCS and congressional persistence on Taiwan's behalf. As a rule, the US military enjoyed a more positive relationship with the Nationalists than did either the State Department or the White House during the

Carter years, and it was partly as a result of this that Taiwan avoided the near-total isolation that US recognition of the mainland threatened to produce. While the Joint Chiefs never believed in handing Taiwan a blank check, their support of the island's arms requests was as readily forthcoming and consistent as political circumstances would allow. As much as the Joint Chiefs may have welcomed the closer ties that normalization of relations brought with the mainland, they were not above hedging their bets by wanting to preserve Taiwan's self-defense capabilities to help offset the PRC's growing power and influence in East Asia. But with the new relationship blossoming between Washington and Beijing, US assistance to the Taiwanese was bound to lessen as time went on, no matter how strongly the Joint Chiefs of Staff supported their cause.

Korea: Initiating the US Withdrawal

Another Asian ally, the Republic of Korea (ROK), also saw the US military presence diminish during the Carter years, though not by as much as President Carter initially hoped to see. As a candidate for the White House, Governor Carter served notice that one of his administration's first objectives would be to withdraw all US ground combat and support troops from South Korea over the next several years.⁵⁷ According to published accounts, he was swayed by the arguments of analysts at the Brookings Institution that the large US presence in South Korea amounted to a "trip wire" that could automatically involve the United States in another Asian land war.⁵⁸ Shortly after the election he held a news conference at which he affirmed that the withdrawal of US troops from Korea would be one of his first priorities. As Secretary of State Vance recalled: "Americans paid his comments little attention. Asians reacted in shock."⁵⁹

Officially, the rationale for the withdrawal rested on three elements: (1) that South Korea's ground forces, bolstered by a five-year Force Improvement Plan (FIP) launched in 1975, would soon be strong enough to repel a North Korean ground attack on their own; (2) that an improved international situation—i.e., *détente* with the Soviet Union and the rapprochement with China—afforded the United States an ideal opportunity to scale back its involvement; and (3) that the United States would still maintain a clear commitment to South Korea's security under the 1954 mutual defense treaty.⁶⁰ That the pullout of US forces would in the long run save sizable sums of money, free up assets for redeployment to Europe and elsewhere, and distance the United States from what President Carter considered the South Korean government's wobbly human rights record seem to have been additional considerations influencing the President's thinking.⁶¹

Seeking to make good on his campaign promise, President Carter directed the Policy Review Committee (PRC) on 26 January 1977 to undertake a broad reexamination (Presidential Review Memoranda 13) of US policies toward the Korean peninsula, with a report due by 7 March. Among other things, President Carter asked the committee to identify US interests and objectives, analyze the existing and prospective north-south military balance, and examine possible courses of action for dealing with

the reduction of US conventional force levels, the southward redeployment of the US 2nd Infantry Division (generally considered the backbone of South Korea's defense), and future levels of military assistance to South Korea. Effectively precluding a status quo option, the President's guidance left little for the committee to consider other than the composition and timing of troop withdrawals. Subsequent deliberations thus tended to revolve around a rather narrow core of issues, with much of the discussion devoted to analyzing and interpreting intelligence data on the threat posed by the north and how to phase the removal of US forces with the least danger of exposing South Korea to attack.⁶²

The most serious quarrel, which effectively delayed submission of a report well past the due date, was between the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) over the data the PRC should use in assessing the military balance on the Korean peninsula. As a rule, the OMB stayed out of intelligence matters such as these, but because of the budgetary impact that troop withdrawals from Korea could have on force levels elsewhere, it took an unusually keen interest in the matter. Initially, DIA offered an estimate of North Korean military capabilities that OMB challenged on several grounds: that it was not an authoritative intelligence community product; that it failed to include the effects of available US support on the outcome of a North Korean attack; and that it gave "an exaggerated impression" of North Korea's advantages. To counterbalance the data supplied by DIA, OMB analysts believed that PRM-13 should take into account a recent study prepared in the Office of the Secretary of Defense by the Director for Planning and Evaluation (DP&E), which credited the North Koreans with more modest capabilities and projected a military balance more favorable to South Korea.⁶³

Faced with ongoing disagreements over "potential risks," the PRC met on 21 April 1977 in an attempt to iron out a policy acceptable to all concerned. What emerged were a "general agreement" on intelligence assessments and a "prevailing view" that ground combat and combat support forces could be withdrawn over the next four or five years without undermining deterrence or the strategic balance on the Korean peninsula. However, opinions differed as to the timing and modalities of the withdrawal process. The Department of State wanted a five-year phased withdrawal, with the bulk of the troops removed early on, whereas the Department of Defense preferred a "back loaded" pull-out, with one brigade and its support elements coming out in Fiscal Year 1978, the balance in 1981 or 1982.⁶⁴ Despite these continuing differences, however, it was increasingly clear that a policy of withdrawal was a virtual *fait accompli*. On 26 April 1977 Secretary of Defense Brown notified the Joint Chiefs that, even though the PRC had yet to come up with a fully agreed plan of action, they should begin thinking ahead by developing detailed options for the full withdrawal of US ground troops no later than 1982 and that they should also develop an analysis of ROK military requirements, based on a prioritized list of major equipment needs.⁶⁵

On 5 May 1977 President Carter issued a presidential directive (PD-12) endorsing the phased withdrawal plan for US troops in line with State's proposed timetable. Under the

approved formula, withdrawals were to start with one brigade and its supporting elements (but no less than 6,000 troops) by the end of calendar year (CY) 1978, and a second brigade and supporting elements (no less than 9,000 personnel) by the end of June 1980. To help South Korea cope, the President asked the Defense Department to provide, by 16 May, a plan of “military assistance at levels adequate to overcome deficiencies arising from the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces.” And, last but not least, he agreed with the JCS that there should be consultations with the Korean and Japanese governments and ordered that a special mission be sent to Seoul and Tokyo to explain US policy.⁶⁶

Although President Carter was well aware that his policy of troop withdrawals from Korea was unpopular among his military advisers, he no doubt underestimated the full extent of their anxiety and probably never expected that any would “go public” with their objections. The most well known case was that of Major General John K. Singlaub, USA, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Command (UNC) and US Forces, Korea (USFK), who found himself summoned back to Washington in late May 1977 to explain statements he had made to the *Washington Post* that the President’s withdrawal plan would undermine stability on the Korean peninsula and “lead to war.”⁶⁷ This was not the first instance of a senior officer making such comments. Indeed, Major General Singlaub’s immediate superior, General John W. Vessey, Jr., USA (later Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff), had said essentially the same thing the month before in a not-for-attribution interview reported by United Press International. As a senior member of General Vessey’s staff at the time later recalled, “We all were deeply opposed to Carter’s policy as increasing the risk of war.”⁶⁸ Major General Singlaub’s mistake was twofold: he had allowed himself to be interviewed on the record; and he had done so after President Carter had signed off on the presidential directive, thereby making the policy official, a fact of which Major General Singlaub professed to be unaware. From President Carter’s standpoint there was no choice other than to relieve Major General Singlaub of his duties and reassign him. Nonetheless, the controversy was only beginning and would gain momentum over the summer, spurred on by a congressional investigation.⁶⁹

As the Singlaub incident suggests, there was mounting concern in Washington for shoring up deterrence as US forces made ready to withdraw. One possible course of action was that suggested by Morton I. Abramowitz, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for ISA (East Asia and Pacific Affairs), who informally approached the Joint Chiefs for their views on increasing the level of permanently assigned US tactical air to South Korea. From a purely practical standpoint, the Chiefs doubted whether an increase such as Mr. Abramowitz proposed was necessary, since emergency procedures for augmenting tactical air capabilities on the Korean peninsula, demonstrated as recently as 1976, adequately addressed the problem. But for “show of force” purposes and as a concrete gesture of US resolve, they welcomed the idea and endorsed transferring twelve additional F-4D fighters to Kunsan Air Base, Korea, bringing to seventy-two the number of tactical aircraft permanently assigned to Korea.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, following an annual practice inaugurated in 1968, senior South Korean and US defense planners, including the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint

Chiefs of Staff, assembled in Seoul on 25 and 26 July 1977 for their tenth Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). The SCM confirmed the interest of both the United States and South Korea in preserving their military collaboration through a new Combined Forces Command (CFC), to exist alongside the current United Nations Command, but with more direct control over operations and planning and with increased ROK participation to reflect South Korea's enlarged role in its own defense. The plan adopted at the SCM was virtually a carbon copy of a JCS-proposed command change which the Chiefs had long argued was needed to provide alternative arrangements, outside UN channels, lest the United Nations fail to act in a future emergency.⁷¹ Under the agreed guidelines, a US general would serve as the commander in chief (CINC) for as long as the United States made a "significant contribution" to South Korea's defense, while his deputy and the deputy chief of staff would be ROK officers. A permanent Military Committee consisting of the CINCCFC and the ROK CJCS would be responsible to the National Command Authorities and would coordinate appropriate guidance and directives for day-to-day CFC operations. The CFC staff would have a fifty-fifty mix of US and ROK personnel and was to be up and operating prior to the withdrawal of the first increment, scheduled for late 1978. Numerous details, of course, had to be resolved, but with both sides committed to meeting the deadline, further negotiations proceeded in business-like fashion, with the CFC finally becoming a reality on 7 November 1978.⁷²

US Troop Withdrawals from Korea Suspended

While obliged to go along with the President's policy, it was clear that the Joint Chiefs of Staff viewed the imminent pullout of US forces from Korea with growing apprehension and that they were therefore inclined to give it, at most, their grudging support and cooperation. Coupled with developments elsewhere in the region—the downsizing of the US presence in the Philippines (discussed below) and the impending disengagement from Taiwan—the withdrawal from Korea raised disturbing questions, administration assurances notwithstanding, as to whether the United States would be in a position to play a credible security role in East Asia. Accordingly, as planning for the first withdrawal increment progressed, the JCS continued to survey ways of minimizing the impact or, alternatively, of staving off withdrawals altogether as long as possible, perhaps indefinitely.

In fact, though, JCS advice played a relatively minor part in convincing President Carter that he should slow down and eventually suspend the US troop withdrawals. More direct and influential was the skepticism of leading members of Congress, whose concern over security issues, coupled with the controversy of an ongoing congressional investigation into Korean bribery charges (the so-called "Koreagate" lobbying scandal), threatened to delay legislation implementing the military assistance measures promised to the South Koreans. By April 1978 the NSC Staff had practically given up on obtaining favorable congressional action in the foreseeable future, but readily acknowl-

edged that continued JCS support of the withdrawal plan was heavily contingent upon enactment of the aid package. As a fall-back position, with the JCS specifically in mind, the NSC Staff circulated an option paper weighted in favor of delaying the withdrawal of combat units for six months or so, while proceeding with the pullout of nonessential support personnel. The Chiefs, with minor reservations, concurred in this approach, and on 21 April 1978 President Carter announced a delay in the first increment of withdrawals. While the redeployment of 2,600 noncombat elements and one combat battalion would proceed as planned by the end of the year, President Carter said, two other combat battalions also scheduled for withdrawal would remain behind, their departure to be rescheduled for some time in 1979.⁷³

In September Congress finally passed the International Security Assistance Act of 1978 (PL 95-384), authorizing the transfer of equipment to the South Koreans, as the President had requested, but with an added provision establishing reporting requirements to Congress prior to any future withdrawal of US forces, commencing in 1979.⁷⁴ Though not a serious handicap, the reporting requirement was yet one more obstacle thrown in the way of the President's troop withdrawal plan and, as such, an unwelcome complication to an already troubled and unpopular policy. If, as seems possible, President Carter was starting to look around for a way out of the dilemma in which he found himself, he did not have far to look or long to wait.

The coup de grace to the President's policy was the appearance of a new intelligence estimate which "leaked" to the press in January 1979.⁷⁵ Showing substantially greater North Korean military capabilities than previously reported, this new intelligence caused a stir in Congress and led to renewed calls on President Carter to suspend the pullout of US forces. Adding to the chorus, the Joint Chiefs in late January 1979 proposed a one-year deferment on the removal of 945 Army personnel and the equipment of two US Improved Hawk (I-Hawk) air defense battalions, scheduled for withdrawal as part of the second increment by 30 June 1980.⁷⁶ President Carter, realizing that it would now be more difficult than ever to carry through as planned, ordered an immediate interagency review, in part to test the validity of the new intelligence.⁷⁷ But there was little point in resisting the inevitable, especially at a time when the deteriorating situation in Iran argued against inviting trouble elsewhere. On 9 February, acknowledging that the situation in Korea had changed, President Carter told a news conference that he was "holding in abeyance" any further removals of US troops.⁷⁸

Although forced to backtrack from his original policy, President Carter viewed the current suspension as a temporary measure that did not apply to previously planned withdrawals. Accordingly, in June 1979 Secretary of Defense Brown notified Congress that the United States was going ahead (as Secretary of State Vance had indicated earlier) with inactivation of certain units and would turn over their equipment to the ROK army.⁷⁹ But as the refinement of intelligence estimates progressed, the Joint Chiefs again cautioned against precipitate withdrawals that could leave South Korea vulnerable.⁸⁰ Noting that the "increased threat posed by the North" had dramatically raised the "risk of war," the JCS also recommended a program of enhanced offset measures, including

such weapons as F-16 fighters, both to impress upon the North Koreans the seriousness of “US long-range intentions” and to “build ROK confidence in the US commitment.”⁸¹

In late June 1979 President Carter visited South Korea amid unauthorized disclosures of supposedly new intelligence (actually, the results of the interagency review he had ordered earlier) confirming the North Korean buildup.⁸² According to Secretary of State Vance, the source of these leaks appeared to be Capitol Hill. “The president,” Secretary Vance recalled, “was not happy, feeling that his hand was being forced.” Arriving in Seoul, President Carter found himself subjected to a 45-minute harangue by President Park Chung Hee, amounting to an “assault” on the US policy of troop withdrawals. Personally affronted, President Carter was further taken aback when, in private discussions afterwards, it became clear that, of his senior advisers, only one—Brzezinski—continued to support him on the troop withdrawals.⁸³ Disgusted and frustrated by the whole affair, President Carter returned to Washington and left it up to Dr. Brzezinski to tell the press that while token removals would continue through the end of the year, large-scale troop withdrawals were being suspended indefinitely.⁸⁴

Strengthening Ties with Japan

The decision to suspend the withdrawal of US ground troops from Korea also helped to ease what had been a growing strain on relations with another important US Asian ally, Japan. Although in a sense the Japanese had no choice but to go along with the withdrawal decision when President Carter announced it, they did so reluctantly and were greatly relieved when in 1979 the United States chose to reverse course.⁸⁵ Since World War II the Japanese had tended to eschew defense obligations, both in deference to their American-designed constitution renouncing war and as part of a self-imposed policy limiting military expenditures to no more than 1 percent of their country’s gross national product (GNP). While not unmindful of the Soviet threat nearby, Japanese leaders saw no urgent need to do more on the military-security front as long as Japan and the United States continued to enjoy a close and cordial security relationship built around the US nuclear deterrent, a stable military balance on the Korean peninsula guaranteed by the US presence, and US control of the seas to preserve Japan’s access to markets and raw materials. The possible withdrawal of US forces from Korea thus came as a sharp reminder that American security guarantees might not be as permanent or as durable as many Japanese presumed them to be.

By the mid-1970s, despite its outwardly antimilitary posture, Japan had regained the status of a fairly formidable military power. With annual expenditures of nearly ¥1,700 billion (\$6.1 billion), Japan’s defense budget was the fourth largest among nonnuclear countries in the world and eighth largest overall. Its Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) comprised an army of 13 active divisions, a navy of 60 major combatant ships (destroyer-type and larger), and an air force of 364 combat planes, including 90 F-4EJs.⁸⁶ However, for some years Japan had been under growing pressure from the

United States to contribute still more. Offering a key concession, the Japanese cabinet in October 1976 had adopted a five-year defense plan calling for, among other things, improvements in logistic, air defense, and antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capabilities, as recommended by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁸⁷

To the incoming Carter administration in 1977, increasing Japan's defense effort even further seemed one way of possibly mitigating the effects of planned US withdrawals from East Asia—in effect, substituting Japanese for US forces to redress the strategic balance. However, it was not an idea that held much appeal to the Joint Chiefs, who were exceedingly leery of pushing the Japanese too hard, too fast. Advising the Secretary of Defense on this point in July 1977, the Chiefs warned that any overt linkage by the United States between proposed improvements in Japan's Self-Defense Forces and an expansion of Japan's strategic responsibilities in the Pacific ran the risk of “adverse Japanese reactions,” and that the same would likely be true should the withdrawal of US ground forces from the Western Pacific confront the Japanese with a “radical change” in their strategic planning assumptions. Bearing Japanese sensitivities in mind, the Chiefs cautioned against expecting too much, and advised instead that further consultations on upgrading Japan's military capabilities should focus on the rather narrow issue of Japan's contribution to the US-Japanese security relationship “for the direct defense of Japan.”⁸⁸

Though never officially incorporated into any statement of US policy, the Chiefs' advice seems nonetheless to have been convincing, since it was by and large the approach adopted for most of the remainder of the Carter administration. At the same time, US initiatives also tended to emphasize the need for closer bilateral cooperation and collaboration, especially at the planning level, something Japanese officials had resisted on a regular basis in the past. Despite the existence on paper of a variety of mechanisms for politico-military consultation, the most effective means of collaboration were through intermittent discussions between Joint Staff representatives and members of the Japan Joint Staff Office (JSO), initiated by JCS Chairman Brown in 1975, or at meetings of the Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation (SDC). Established only in the summer of 1976, with the Commander, US Forces, Japan (COMUSJ), serving as US representative, the SDC was the outgrowth of ministerial-level decisions a year earlier identifying the need for “studies and consultations” to help coordinate US and Japanese efforts “at the time of emergency.” However, in deference to known Japanese wishes, COMUSJ operated under political guidance instructing him to avoid such controversial subjects as bilateral contingency planning and to concentrate instead on nonsensitive areas such as mutually supporting logistics systems.⁸⁹

Despite initial limitations, the expansion of US-Japanese military planning collaboration seemed gradually to acquire its own momentum, as senior officials on both sides seemed confident would happen. Meeting in Washington in September 1977, Secretary of Defense Brown and Japanese Minister of Defense Mihara reviewed the progress made thus far between their two countries through the SDC and found it encouraging. Citing a greater commonality of purpose, increased awareness of defense issues among the

Japanese public, and a concerted effort on both sides to establish better rapport, the defense ministers agreed that the time was ripe to explore engaging in even closer collaborative efforts.⁹⁰ Asked for their comments and suggestions, the Joint Chiefs recommended a variety of small, but important, preparatory steps that should be taken first, such as ensuring that US officers received better Japanese language training, expanding translation/interpreter facilities, increasing the number of Japanese officers attending US Service schools, and initiating exchanges between SDF and US combat units.⁹¹

By the spring of 1978 all signs seemed to point to an imminent Japanese decision to undertake formal strategic planning with the United States. In anticipation, Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles W. Duncan, Jr., following a recent trip to Japan, asked the Joint Chiefs in April to take “a fresh look” at the US military organizational structure in Japan with a view toward enhancing “our capability to engage more actively and directly with the key players in defense cooperation.” Specifically, Deputy Secretary Duncan urged shifting the Headquarters, US Forces Japan (USFJ), from Yokota to downtown Tokyo; ending the “dual-hatting” of the COMUSJ as the Commander, 5th Air Force; and giving more prominence to Navy officers in order to underscore the importance of bilateral naval coordination.⁹² The Joint Chiefs reviewed the situation, in conjunction with CINCPAC, but they concluded on the advice of J-5 that the changes Deputy Secretary Duncan proposed would be too costly, disruptive, and impractical. Not only were the J-5 analysts dubious whether Congress would authorize an additional three-star appointment to fill the new billet that Mr. Duncan proposed but also they believed that giving one Service or another preferential treatment would undermine the “even-handed espousal of Service interests.” After weighing the pros and cons, the Chiefs notified Secretary of Defense Brown that they saw no need for immediate changes and were fully satisfied that the existing organization provided the means for “an effective dialogue on security issues” at all necessary levels.⁹³

Overall, however, the progress made between the United States and Japan on defense matters during the Carter years was quite considerable and impressive. Not only were the Japanese gradually accepting a greater share of their defense burden but also they were doing so under guidance provided for the first time ever through bilateral combined planning. This alone was a major breakthrough. Although these changes may have seemed slow in coming to some, they represented the culmination of years of patient effort and determination, a clear demonstration that, where the Japanese were concerned, the go-slow approach recommended and practiced by the Joint Chiefs was not without its virtues and rewards.

US Base Rights in the Philippines

Another Far Eastern issue that weighed heavily in JCS deliberations during the Carter years was that of renegotiating US base rights in the Philippines. The two longtime mainstays of the US presence there, home to some 13,700 US military

personnel, were Clark Air Base and the Subic Bay naval complex, both of which had provided invaluable logistic support during the Korean and Vietnam Wars and various contingencies. For strategic planning purposes, the Joint Chiefs regarded the retention of these bases as essential, both for the projection of US power into the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans and as concrete evidence that, despite cutbacks and withdrawals elsewhere, the United States intended to remain a major power in East Asia. But by the mid-1970s tensions in US-Philippine relations had raised serious questions as to how long and under what terms the United States would continue to have access to these facilities.

That the United States enjoyed a privileged position in the Philippines was beyond doubt, a fact that vexed even many pro-American Filipinos. Not only were the US bases rent-free under an agreement scheduled not to expire until 1991 (but which the Ford administration had agreed to renegotiate before then) but also US military personnel stationed there had what amounted to extraterritorial rights and privileges. Even so, the US bases supplied the Philippines with employment and foreign exchange that helped to support an otherwise struggling economy. Consequently, even though many Filipinos wanted to see the military base agreement (MBA) changed, few at this time wanted to go so far as to evict the US forces.⁹⁴

About the last thing the incoming Carter administration wanted in 1977 was a long, drawn-out negotiation of a new MBA with the Philippines, such as the previous administration had found itself becoming entangled in before talks broke off in December 1976. With the China recognition issue and US troop withdrawals from South Korea more on his mind, President Carter entered the White House hoping for a prompt and relatively easy resolution of the Philippine bases question as a means of reassuring US friends and allies in the region that the United States was there to stay. But he also strongly opposed making concessions that would further enhance what liberals in the United States considered the corrupt and authoritarian regime of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. Ostensibly to counter growing Muslim and communist insurgencies, Marcos had solidified his hold by declaring martial law in 1972. However, critics in Manila and the United States doubted Marcos' claims that his country was in serious danger of succumbing to insurgents and suspected instead that his motives were more personal and self-serving. In requesting that Secretary of Defense Brown oversee an interagency review of the base-rights question for the PRC, President Carter indicated that he was of two opinions. While preferring that the United States keep its bases, he said also that he was not averse to examining "alternative courses of action . . . including the option of terminating the agreement and relinquishing our bases."⁹⁵

Exactly how this last suggestion was received by the Joint Chiefs is unknown, though in following up on the President's request the DoD-chaired interagency review group made every effort to impress upon him the bases' strategic importance and the high cost (over \$5 billion) and inconvenience of trying to find alternative facilities. All in all, the study group, operating under obviously strong JCS influence, made a persuasive case for retaining the bases and convinced the Policy Review Committee,

meeting on 21 April 1977, to recommend to President Carter that he drop any immediate plans for relocation and focus instead on retaining access to US facilities at Clark and Subic Bay. With General Brown participating for the JCS, the PRC felt that what Marcos really wanted was to maximize the financial quid pro quo and elicit as strong as possible a reaffirmation of the American defense commitment. Operating on these assumptions, the committee saw no need for wholesale concessions, though it did agree, as a means of placating critics in Congress and in the Philippines, that some reductions and consolidation of functions at Clark appeared warranted. Beyond this, the PRC also endorsed turning over a larger share of base maintenance responsibilities to Philippine authorities, and discussed, albeit inconclusively, what might be included in a compensation package to address Philippine demands that the United States pay “rent” for its bases.⁹⁶

Although President Carter readily concurred in the overall approach recommended by the PRC, it was not until the following September that negotiations resumed. Acting on the advice of Admiral Maurice F. Weisner, Commander in Chief, Pacific, the Joint Chiefs secured the appointment of Rear Admiral William R. McClendon, USN (Ret.), former CINCPAC Director for Plans, as senior military adviser to the talks, replacing Rear Admiral D. B. Shelton.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, in August and again in November, the JCS reaffirmed their opposition to reductions in personnel strength at Clark and Subic Bay and succeeded in gaining Secretary of Defense Brown’s support for an indefinite delay for all but token curtailments of US operations. This action left no doubt that the Joint Chiefs hoped to preserve a military presence as large as possible in the Philippines for some time to come. But it was little help in clarifying what concessions the United States might offer in order to make US bases more palatable to Philippine preferences.⁹⁸

Toughest of all to resolve was the compensation issue. Despite their insistence on keeping the bases, the Joint Chiefs adamantly opposed any rental fees, as such, arguing that the Philippines were already adequately compensated with US economic and military assistance, not to mention the indirect revenues generated by the US presence. Moreover, since 1951 the Philippines had had a mutual defense treaty with the United States, and it was not generally within the scope of US policy in such circumstances to pay for access to facilities that might be used to defend the host country. As a concession to the US viewpoint, Marcos, at a meeting in September with US Assistant Secretary of State Richard C. Holbrooke, agreed to drop the request for rent and said he would be willing to accept arms, equipment, and training for his armed forces in lieu of direct compensation. Subsequently, Philippine First Lady Imelda Marcos personally conveyed a letter from her husband to President Carter indicating more specific requirements: improved radar and air defense coverage for the southern half of the Philippines; aircraft and naval patrol boats with increased range for missions of up to 300 miles (presumably to help support the Philippines’ claims to the Spratly Islands, which lay 250 miles to the west); and “a common integrated defense plan” augmenting the current mutual defense treaty.⁹⁹

Whether the United States would accede to any or all of these terms remained to be seen. While the Joint Chiefs agreed that upgrading radar and air defense capabilities would, in the long run, enhance the protection of US facilities, they urged caution in entering into any additional defense commitments with the Philippines and recommended that, should the administration decide to pursue the matter, it should seek a clarification of objectives through staff-level talks held in conjunction with the MBA negotiations.¹⁰⁰ This was, of course, eminently sound and practical advice, but as the Chiefs were aware, the key to reaching a breakthrough in the base negotiations lay increasingly in the scale and scope of military and related assistance the United States was prepared to offer. Consequently, it was with considerable astonishment that the Joint Chiefs learned in early December that the President's upcoming budget submission contemplated not only cuts in foreign military sales to the Philippines but also the entire elimination of \$18.1 million in grant Military Assistance Program (MAP) assistance. While acknowledging that such cuts would doubtless win applause among human rights activists in Congress, Secretary of Defense Brown cautioned President Carter to bear in mind the anticipated reaction in the Philippines as well. "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and I are concerned," he said, "that elimination of all MAP from the FY 79 budget request for the Philippines could have a serious and perhaps decisively negative impact on the present positive atmosphere of the negotiations."¹⁰¹ Although the President relented and restored the funds, he did so on condition that any grant assistance subsequently offered as *quid pro quo* for the bases be phased out over the life of the agreement.¹⁰²

The PRC, with Lieutenant General William Y. Smith, USAF, Assistant to the Chairman, representing the JCS, met again on 28 February 1978 to review the current status of the base negotiations. By then the Philippine Defense Ministry had submitted an extensive military equipment requirements list (MERL), valued at well over \$5 billion, which it apparently hoped to use for bargaining purposes.¹⁰³ However, the Policy Review Committee contemplated a considerably more modest offer, doled out over five years, of between \$380 and \$450 million: \$150 million in security supporting (i.e., economic) assistance; \$30 to 50 million in grant MAP; and \$200 to 250 million in Foreign Military Sales (FMS) credits. Adopting a tough line indicative of the US position throughout the negotiations, the committee agreed that the tender of this assistance should not be binding or specifically linked to amendment of the military bases agreement, but rather that it should be offered as a target subject to annual review and approval by Congress. In order to clear the way, State and Defense would start by briefing key congressional leaders, after which the US ambassador to the Philippines, David D. Newsom, would conduct further negotiations.¹⁰⁴

From this point on, until conclusion of an agreement late in the year, it was largely a matter of give-and-take, as negotiators on both sides labored to find common ground. A turning point was the visit to Manila in May 1978 of Vice President Walter Mondale, who convinced Marcos that further negotiations should be conducted on a military-to-military basis in order to address outstanding operational and jurisdictional issues.

Under the agreed procedure, General Romeo C. Espino, Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines, represented his government, while CINCPAC designate Rear Admiral McClendon (succeeded in August 1978 by Lieutenant General LeRoy Manor, USAF, Ret.) and the Commander of the 13th Air Force to represent the United States on the military panel. Once Marcos agreed to this approach, progress came relatively quickly on such controversial topics as the delineation of base areas, perimeter security, and the respective roles of the US and Philippine base commanders. Even so, it took the intercession of US Senator Daniel Inouye in October to persuade Marcos that he should give way on the compensation package. A US legal adviser to the talks later described the scene: "The Senator told Marcos the facts of life on what could and could not be approved by the US Congress in terms of compensation. As a result, Marcos backed off from what up until then had been fairly unrealistic demands for compensation." By year's end, a settlement was at hand.¹⁰⁵

Technically, the agreement reached and signed early in 1979 was an amendment to the original 1947 MBA and as such, being an executive agreement, did not require Senate approval. While the amendment preserved the fiction that the bases operated rent-free, it rested on the clear understanding that the US President would make his "best effort" to obtain up to \$500 million in assistance for the Philippines over the next five years: \$50 million in outright grant aid (MAP); \$250 million in FMS credits; and \$200 million in security supporting assistance.¹⁰⁶ The agreement also recognized Philippine sovereignty over Clark and Subic Bay, redefined base boundaries (thereby releasing large tracts of unused territory to Philippine control), and established a dual command system over both bases. Under the latter agreement, base security became a joint responsibility. The Philippine base commander exercised responsibility for all plans, policies, and implementing directives, subject to the concurrence of his US counterpart in all matters affecting US property and personnel. Military operations thus remained firmly under US control, but with due regard and respect for Philippine sovereignty.¹⁰⁷ Summing up, the Joint Chiefs believed that the amended MBA represented "major concessions" by the United States, but they supported it nonetheless. They pointed out that it was "a delicately balanced and interwoven package" which seemed to them to represent "the minimum provisions necessary to insure unhampered US military operations."¹⁰⁸

Outward appearances notwithstanding, there was little for either side to celebrate at the conclusion of the new accord. US officials, including the Joint Chiefs, were generally satisfied with what they had to begin with, and it was therefore with some reluctance that they had entered into negotiations at all. That the Philippines fared as well as they did was mainly attributable to two factors: the US need to bolster its reputation and credibility as a Far Eastern power; and the equally strong desire of the Joint Chiefs, in furtherance of this objective, to keep as much of a foothold in the region as they possibly could. Otherwise, given the Marcos regime's unfavorable image in the United States, especially among congressional liberals, and its declining popularity at home, it was entirely conceivable that President Carter might have chosen to abandon

the bases altogether. The outcome, taking the form of a temporary settlement, in fact did little more than extend the status quo, but at growing cost to the United States that made the bases less and less attractive. Although the Joint Chiefs felt that they could live with the newly amended agreement, the same could not be said with any high degree of certainty for the next time around.

Safeguarding US Interests in Micronesia

Concurrently with sorting out the future status of US bases in the Philippines, the Joint Chiefs found themselves facing a similar situation with respect to Micronesia, a vast expanse in the Central Pacific encompassing some 2,100 islands, which the United States had administered as a “strategic trusteeship” of the United Nations in 1947. Since then these islands, known collectively as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), had provided facilities for nuclear weapons testing (Bikini and Eniwetok), ballistic missile testing (Kwajalein), intermittent military training, and monitoring and surveillance functions. Following the reversion of Okinawa to Japan and the US withdrawal from Vietnam, the Joint Chiefs eyed bases in Micronesia for possible fallback positions, but largely gave up the idea owing to lack of interest on the part of the Services, limited funding for development, and emerging autonomy movements among the native islanders. Under growing pressure to find an alternative to the trusteeship arrangement, the United States had pursued negotiations with local representatives off and on since the late 1960s, but without significant success until the conclusion in 1975 of a “covenant” establishing a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, making them administratively separate from the rest of the TTPI and giving the United States long-term air and naval leases to facilities on Tinian and Saipan.¹⁰⁹

At the outset of the Carter administration, the future of the rest of Micronesia was still in doubt. In handing on the problem, the outgoing Ford administration urged the early resumption of negotiations and advised that a mutually satisfactory solution would likely hinge on two major issues: overcoming separatist tendencies in the Marshall and Palau Islands, based largely on fears that their current and prospective economic advantages would be diluted in a permanent union with the less advantaged Carolinas; and Micronesian demands for control over marine resources in an extensive economic zone extending 200 miles off their coasts, including the right to conclude bilateral and multilateral treaties for the exploitation of these resources—a significant exception to previous US demands that the United States retain control over Micronesia’s foreign and defense affairs.¹¹⁰ Eager to dispose of the problem, President Carter set a tentative date of 1981 for terminating the trusteeship, and in mid-February 1977 he turned the matter over to the Policy Review Committee for further study (PRM-19), asking it, among other things, to pay special attention to analyzing “US security requirements in Micronesia, including their relation to US interests in the East Asia and Pacific region.”¹¹¹

Although Micronesia was no longer a high priority on the JCS agenda, it was still important to US forces in the Western Pacific. The interdepartmental responses to PRM-19 said that, as part of the post-trusteeship settlement, US negotiators should seek access to ports, harbors, and airfields throughout Micronesia “on an occasional or emergency basis” and insist upon barriers denying potential adversaries a foothold in the area. Specific facilities the United States might need included the Kwajalein missile range in the Marshall Islands, the Palau district for the use and development of naval facilities, and the US Coast Guard station at Yap.¹¹² Debated and adopted by the PRC on 28 April, the PRM-19 report then became the basis for a presidential directive (PD-11) providing broad instructions to the US negotiating team, headed by Ambassador Peter Rosenblatt, who enjoyed the additional status of being designated the President’s “Special Representative.”¹¹³

Ambassador Rosenblatt soon found that, if he were to strike a deal, either the Services would have to pare some of their stated requirements or the United States would have to come up with considerable sums to meet Micronesian demands for rent and other compensation. Most troublesome was the Navy’s reluctance to give way on preserving various access and anchorage rights, especially in the Palau district. But with neither the funds nor immediate plans to follow through in developing these facilities, the Navy operated from a weak position, making concessions all the more likely.¹¹⁴ Finally, in April 1978, Ambassador Rosenblatt secured a breakthrough in the negotiations, producing an agreement in principle under which the islanders would have full internal self-government, as well as responsibility for foreign affairs, while the United States would exercise authority and responsibility for fifteen years over defense and security matters. Afforded time for but a cursory review, OSD legal advisers concluded that, while perhaps not perfect, the agreement did seem to satisfy basic JCS security criteria—i.e., it provided a means of denying entry to hostile powers, and it preserved US access to the Kwajalein missile test range, certain land areas in Palau, and occasional or emergency use of areas elsewhere. “So long as these rights are assured for a reasonable term,” the legal review surmised, “the form of the US relationship with Micronesia is of secondary importance.”¹¹⁵

Even with an agreement in principle, numerous details had yet to be resolved, raising the possibility that the United States might still end up having to pay the islanders heavy rents for any facilities. Asked by ISA for a clarification of their views, the Joint Chiefs in September 1978 advised that their security requirements in Micronesia remained unchanged from those set forth in the PRM-19 report, but that they opposed paying any more than the United States was already offering (about \$3 million) for access rights in the Palau. Adopting a position similar to that taken in the Philippine base negotiations, the Chiefs argued that a reasonable outcome should be a clearly identifiable quid pro quo for the American taxpayer, and that insofar as possible this should not include compensating the Micronesians while guaranteeing their security. In any case, the Chiefs added, rent or other subsidies should not be a charge against the Services’ budgets, but should instead be a “package DOD requirement.”¹¹⁶

As the negotiations dragged on, patience in Washington began to wear thin. As one indication of how the United States might proceed, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, suggested in April 1979 to his JCS colleagues that they undertake “a reappraisal of our near and long term security interests and objectives in Micronesia.”¹¹⁷ Although it was unclear what Admiral Hayward expected such a reappraisal to turn up, the gist of a companion memorandum, complaining of recent budget cuts, suggests that what he was really after was a fresh statement of JCS requirements to help strengthen the Navy’s case for funding of land leases and various planned developmental projects across Micronesia.¹¹⁸ However, a review by the Joint Staff, in collaboration with CINCPAC, found insufficient grounds for expending the time and energy on a reappraisal such as the CNO proposed, and the matter was dropped. Funding likewise remained in abeyance, and with negotiations on the future of the Trust Territories still continuing, the Navy seemed to lose interest, as though it would now prefer to wait until it had a fuller picture of what the post-trusteeship era would bring.¹¹⁹

Thus, in Micronesia, as elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific, the Carter years witnessed a steady diminution of the US presence, accompanied by the shedding of obligations and involvement. By and large, the Joint Chiefs found President Carter’s policies in the Far East uncomfortable to accept and difficult to understand in view of the large Soviet deployment in Northeast Asia, growing Soviet naval capabilities in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans, and continuing tensions in East Asia between Mainland China and Taiwan and between North and South Korea. Funding limitations, as the Joint Chiefs readily recognized, made cutbacks to some extent unavoidable. But it was also possible, they believed, to go too far. The principal case in point was the President’s planned withdrawal of US ground forces from Korea, where eventually pressure from the JCS and others caused a reversal of policy. But as a rule it was not easy to convince President Carter to alter course. The Far East remained a less-than-top priority in the administration’s scheme of things, and practically nothing the Joint Chiefs of Staff could do was able to change that.



82nd Airborne Division air traffic controllers coordinate on radio with C-141B Starlifter aircraft as the other members parachute from the aircraft during exercise Reforger '80.

Western Europe and NATO

A high priority throughout the Carter years, reaffirmed repeatedly by the President and the Joint Chiefs alike, was the security of Western Europe. As in years past, US objectives there included the maintenance of conventional and nuclear military capabilities necessary for deterrence and defense and the promotion of greater cohesion within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Believing that US leadership in NATO needed strengthening, the incoming Carter administration set out to reverse what the President and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski considered years of neglect owing to the Vietnam War, the inordinate attention it had drawn to the Far East, and the debilitating effects of the Watergate scandals. The previous administration had tried to forge closer alliance ties by declaring 1976 the “Year of Europe,” only to see little accomplished. President Carter and Dr. Brzezinski hoped to avoid a similar outcome.¹

While the Joint Chiefs applauded the increased attention that NATO seemed likely to receive, they remained somewhat skeptical of President Carter’s overall approach to NATO and European affairs. While President Carter wanted to strengthen NATO militarily, and politically as well, his approach bore the heavy influence of outside analysts and former government officials who believed that NATO’s problems were largely its own making and that solutions were readily available through improved management of resources. Infusions of large additional sums of money for new or additional forces, in other words, would not be needed. Through a combination of arms control measures and a stiffening of conventional capabilities, President Carter likewise believed it feasible to reduce NATO’s traditional reliance on nuclear weapons. Although willing to give the President’s approach the benefit of the doubt, the Joint Chiefs could not help but feel that it was rather naïve and bound to lead to disappointments.

This is not to suggest that President Carter and his military advisers were as often at odds on European defense and security issues as they were, say, on similar problems in Asia and the Pacific. On the contrary, their differences most of the time were matters of emphasis rather than basic policy or strategy. But in keeping with the general pattern

of influence during the Carter years, JCS advice played a secondary role in most key decisions affecting NATO Europe. Where new initiatives were involved, they were apt to receive their impetus not from the JCS but from the White House, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), or the State Department. President Carter in fact came into office with his NATO agenda already largely made up, and in implementing that agenda he found little need for consulting too closely with his uniformed advisers. Even later, as the issues changed, becoming more concerned with nuclear weapons matters than he initially wanted, he still kept his military advisers at arm's length.

Bolstering Conventional Deterrence

Number one on President Carter's list for NATO was to bolster its nonnuclear capabilities. Since the 1960s NATO's agreed strategy had been a combination forward defense and flexible response through which the United States had hoped to encourage greater emphasis on conventional options rather than early recourse to nuclear weapons, as NATO doctrine had dictated in the 1950s. But because of lukewarm support among the European allies, competing demands on US resources from the war in Vietnam, the energy crisis, rising costs, and other factors, progress toward creating a more viable conventional posture had been slow to materialize, the results disappointing to its supporters and proponents. By the mid-1970s, despite several well publicized efforts directed toward embellishing NATO's nonnuclear capabilities, its conventional force levels showed only modest overall change. Improvements in such key areas as readiness, fire-power, and reinforcement capabilities likewise lagged.²

In contrast, Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional forces in Europe had grown steadily in size and firepower and had improved significantly in quality since the mid-1960s. Some of the most dramatic improvements were in readiness, logistics, and mobility, which gave Soviet/Warsaw Pact units the capability of launching an unreinforced attack with forces already deployed in Eastern Europe. While there was no indication that the Soviets were planning a surprise attack, the evidence suggested that they were posturing their forces for a Blitzkrieg-style offensive once hostilities began.³ For two decades or more US defense planners, realizing that NATO forces in place might not be sufficient to stop a strong Soviet invasion, had counted on the so-called "swing strategy," involving the redeployment of significant naval and air capabilities from the Pacific to NATO areas in order to provide timely reinforcements. However, such movements could take weeks to complete, by which time the outcome of a war in Europe could well have been decided.

This change in the strategic environment did not go unnoticed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff or by others in the West. One result was a proliferation of studies and analyses examining what NATO needed in terms of ready forces and immediately available reinforcements to redress the apparent imbalance in capabilities. Among the more prominent of these analyses were a 1976 US Army study of conventional war-fighting

capabilities in Central Europe (the Hollingsworth report); a SHAPE review of NATO's readiness, rationalization, and reinforcement options conducted at the instigation of the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., USA; and a much-publicized congressional report cosponsored by Senators Sam Nunn and Dewey Bartlett, composed in 1976 but not released until early 1977.⁴

The studies destined to have the most impact on the incoming Carter administration were a series done by the RAND Corporation between 1973 and 1976. RAND's analysts found that, while NATO's manpower and resource inputs were roughly comparable to those of the Warsaw Pact, its return on investment left it relatively weaker and more vulnerable. Though higher manpower costs accounted for part of the disparity, the RAND studies also found that parochial national considerations tended to override collective defense needs in determining budget allocations; that balanced national, rather than NATO, forces were the order of the day; and that NATO's fourteen separate national force structures (including France but not Iceland, which had no military establishment) each had its own administrative overhead, weaponry, arsenals, research and development (R&D) programs, and training base, entailing wasteful overlap and duplication. The net result was that NATO was failing to allocate defense resources judiciously in support of flexible response objectives, i.e., adequate conventional forces.⁵

Soon after taking office, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown named one of the leading contributors to these RAND studies, former ambassador to Turkey Robert W. Komer, as his personal consultant (later, "adviser" with the equivalent rank of assistant secretary) for NATO affairs. An intelligence analyst during his early career, Ambassador Komer boasted a solid reputation as an expert on Middle Eastern and Asian affairs. By the mid-1960s he had left the Central Intelligence Agency for a job with the National Security Council (NSC), helping to design the rural pacification program in Vietnam. But with the ending of US involvement in Southeast Asia, he had turned his attention to European matters. During the 1976 election he had advised Jimmy Carter's campaign on NATO. As Ambassador Komer's first assignment under the new administration, Secretary Brown asked him to assist "in formulating a broad NATO action program and the program's implementation."⁶ About the same time, in early February 1977, President Carter requested a comprehensive reevaluation of European issues (PRM-9), including "a general examination of NATO's basic military posture and overall force structure and current strategy and tactics."⁷ Though initially separate, these studies gradually blended almost into one, with many of the ideas generated from Mr. Komer's project finding their way into the PRM-9 report to the President and ending up providing the framework for the Long Term Defense Program (LTDP).

Ambassador Komer approached his new job with his usual sense of vigor and commitment. According to one account, he "brought to the Pentagon not only a sense of strategy and programs, but also a well-earned reputation for being able to push his ideas through resistant bureaucracies."⁸ Known for his blunt, no-nonsense approach, he quickly concluded that "what's wrong with NATO" was that "the military . . . keep

proposing but then the nations never follow through.”⁹ Drawing on the RAND studies, he recommended a reallocation of resources to achieve greater readiness against short warning attack, quicker reinforcement and more reserves, rationalization and cost savings, and improved sealift capabilities. He identified a number of high priority functional areas and proposed that each “NATO-ized program package” (twelve in all) be assigned a specific NATO “program manager” in order to expedite results. Among the priority areas he singled out were readiness, training, and exercises; mobilization and reinforcement; command, control, and communications (C3); air defense; electronic warfare (EW); logistics; and modernization of theater nuclear weapons. Looking ahead, he urged Secretary of Defense Brown to propose development of a long-range plan at the upcoming NATO defense planning meeting in May 1977 and to offer, at the same time, several “quick fix” measures—an anti-armor package, a war reserve materiel package, and quicker allied reinforcement measures. For benchmark planning purposes, Ambassador Komer suggested that the United States aim for a capability by 1980 of being able to put six divisions and ninety tactical air squadrons in Europe in fifteen days.¹⁰

Although all concurred that a problem existed, there was no immediate consensus on how serious it was, how it should be addressed and handled, or how eventually it should be resolved. While the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George S. Brown, USAF, found himself in “general agreement” with Ambassador Komer’s analysis, others in his office were less enthusiastic, feeling that Mr. Komer’s report did little more than retrace old, familiar ground. “We do not need more listings of deficiencies,” one aide observed, “we have enough already.”¹¹ Even more skeptical was the SACEUR, General Haig, who had his own program of short-term measures he was trying to implement, chiefly to improve readiness and reinforcement capabilities. General Haig thought that Ambassador Komer exaggerated NATO’s difficulties. “We are on the verge of framing the imbalance in terms of such magnitude,” General Haig warned, “that we risk breeding despair rather than determination.” While General Haig concurred that, from a purely military standpoint, “force improvement is not progressing as rapidly as the developing conventional threat warrants,” he saw serious pitfalls in trying to push the allies too hard, too fast. Instead of wholesale programmatic changes such as Ambassador Komer proposed, General Haig favored a more piecemeal approach “following the case-by-case analysis I suggested, to restrict our initial proposal to a very few problem areas.”¹²

Joint Staff planners likewise had reservations about the Komer report. “How we approach implementing Ambassador Komer’s proposals,” they advised the Chairman, “is almost as important as the proposals themselves.” Rather than “spring surprises” at the Defense Planning Committee (DPC) meeting, they urged advanced consultations in order to pave the way for agreement, especially in the quick-fix categories that Ambassador Komer identified. Also, they were skeptical of Ambassador Komer’s suggestion to appoint independent program managers, a concept that worked well in the United States, but which in NATO’s hands could mean “greatly expanding the bureaucracy.”

And finally, they recommended that strengthening the report Ambassador Komer proposed should be an all-inclusive effort, not just on the Central Front but on NATO's flanks as well; that NATO's members should be reminded that logistics was a multinational responsibility; and that reinforcement/resupply plans were directly dependent on the availability of shipping, something that Mr. Komer seemed to take for granted.¹³

This advice as to how the initiative should be handled went largely unheeded. Instead of the Secretary of Defense going before the NATO Defense Planning Committee to present the American proposals, President Carter performed that task himself before a plenary session of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) meeting in London on 10 May. Although it is not fully clear why President Carter, rather than Secretary Brown, initiated the proposals, scattered evidence in the JCS files suggests that it was a decision reached between the White House and the State Department during the preparation of the PRM-9 report, ostensibly to highlight the importance the United States attached to revitalizing NATO and so improve the chances of the allies' acceptance.¹⁴ Others have also suggested it was an effort to assert President Carter's leadership within the Western alliance in order to counter criticism from West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and others that the President's policies, starting with his arms control initiatives, paid insufficient attention to European interests.¹⁵ The NAC meeting had been scheduled to coincide with an economic summit, thus making economic matters, rather than military planning, the NAC's main concern. But because of President Carter's speech, the agenda underwent a hurried modification, leaving little time for the detailed prior consultations which the Joint Staff had recommended.

All the same, President Carter's speech received a generally favorable reception from the NATO allies. Its principal purpose was to breathe new life into the forward defense and flexible response policies adopted, but never fully implemented, in the 1960s. To revitalize this process, President Carter called for "a long-term defense program to strengthen the Alliance's deterrence and defense in the 1980's" and to promote "genuinely two-way trans-atlantic [sic] trade in defense equipment."¹⁶ The council's adoption and approval of the President's proposal followed quickly amid little debate, with the job of tidying up the details referred to the NATO defense ministers. Subsequently, the DPC selected ten long-term (nine conventional and one nuclear) and three short-term objectives and established separate task forces to develop programs for each. In the short-term category, as Ambassador Komer had recommended earlier, were the areas of anti-armor, war reserve stocks, and readiness/reinforcement.¹⁷

To complement these various efforts, the NAC also adopted a resolution urging NATO members to strive to increase their defense spending "in the region of" 3 percent annually, after inflation. This "three percent solution" was a carry-over from NATO discussions of the year before and actually had little support within the Carter administration, which entered office seeking to cut—not increase—defense expenditures. But since the 3 percent increase had strong public relations appeal, making it appear that the allies were indeed serious about strengthening NATO, and

since it was a non-binding target figure only, President Carter saw no immediate reason to oppose it. Nor is it likely that he could have done so without damaging US prestige and credibility.¹⁸

Despite the Long Term Defense Program's (LTDP) auspicious start, the Joint Chiefs remained somewhat dubious of the whole idea. Knowing that similar initiatives in the past had fallen short of expectations, they could not help but wonder how supportive the Carter administration would continue to be if it turned out that bolstering NATO through the LTDP would require substantial (or even not-so-substantial) increases in US defense spending. Indeed, the LTDP's underlying appeal, both at home and abroad, was that it would cost little or nothing to implement and that its goals were attainable by and large through a reallocation and more concerted use of existing resources. As one indication of the problems this approach would encounter, the Joint Chiefs in late May 1977 notified Secretary of Defense Brown of conceptual differences that had arisen between themselves and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation (ASD/PA&E). While PA&E's estimates came from "fiscally constrained program goals," tailored to fit within the administration's budget policies, JCS estimates rested on what the Chiefs described as "a prudent level of risk"—a mix of factors in which military considerations, some involving subjective professional judgments, predominated. As a result, PA&E's reinforcement estimates tended to be lower, but with a higher attendant degree of risk than the JCS figures. Moreover, the calculations done thus far took into account only ground force and tactical fighter squadron requirements. They made no allowance for reinforcements that might be needed on NATO's flanks; for meeting Navy, Marine Corps, and other Air Force requirements; or for the availability of sea- and air-lift capabilities. In other words, the Chiefs wanted the Secretary to be aware that the PA&E figures addressed only a part of the problem, and that the true costs of developing a mobilization base for reinforcing NATO were likely to be considerably greater than PA&E's computer models projected.¹⁹

Although the Chiefs' comments did not go unnoticed in OSD,²⁰ Secretary Brown had his mind on other matters. Determined to make the most of the momentum generated by the allies' recent endorsement of the LTDP, he notified the JCS on 27 May that he had asked Ambassador Komer to help organize and oversee the effort, and that he expected them to assist by providing program managers, on the US side, for five of the long-term program packages (readiness, reinforcement, maritime posture, air defense, and electronic warfare) and all three of the short-term initiatives (antitank capability, war reserves munitions, and readiness/reinforcement), as well as project officers to assist in developing the rest—i.e., standardization and interoperability (S/I), C3, logistics, and theater nuclear modernization. Secretary Brown emphasized that the President deemed the LTDP to have the "highest priority" and that every effort should be made to develop "a genuine two-way street on Defense procurement and on early short-term measures to strengthen Alliance defenses."²¹

Turning this policy into reality was easier said than done. In trying to develop the S/I program, for example, some of the most formidable obstacles were those stemming

from congressionally mandated restrictions and the Carter administration's own self-imposed curbs on arms transfers, especially those involving sensitive technologies. Although NATO countries were generally exempt from the prohibitions and limitations the President imposed (PD-13), the principle of restraint, implicit throughout his policy, exercised a pervasive influence. A case in point was the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) interest in acquiring, both for purchase and coproduction, the Stinger hand-held ground-to-air missile system, a transfer the State Department initially opposed on policy and legal grounds. Faced with complaints from the West Germans that this was yet another instance of "unequal partnership," Secretary Brown took the matter up directly with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and won a partial concession allowing talks on sales, but not coproduction.²² Even so, it was an unfortunate precedent for inaugurating an exchange program to which the United States professed to be so deeply committed. To head off the possibility of further misunderstandings, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended S/I guidelines, subsequently adopted, that side-stepped the issue of sharing sensitive technologies by suggesting that priority be given to exchanges in existing technologies and services, but with closer R&D collaboration in the future.²³

Meanwhile, the NATO task forces went about their work in business-like fashion, with few of the bureaucratic complications that the Joint Staff had originally feared. For substantive program proposals, they looked initially to the three Major NATO Commands (MNCs)—Allied Command Europe (ACE), Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT), and Allied Command Channel (ACCHAN)—and their subordinate components. By late November 1977 the task forces had cobbled together the outlines of a short-term program and parts of the long-term plan, all of which the Defense Planning Committee reviewed at its semiannual ministerial-level meeting in early December.²⁴ Among the agreed list of short-term goals were an increase by one-third in the NATO inventory of antitank guided missiles, making for an arsenal of 45,000 weapons by the end of 1978; an increase in stocks of war reserve munitions, with emphasis on 105 mm tank gun and 155 mm howitzer ammunition, air-to-air missiles, cluster bombs, and some naval munitions; and a series of enhancement measures directed at improving NATO's readiness to counter an attack launched with little warning, its antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capabilities, and the reception and deployment of reinforcements.²⁵

Reporting the DPC meeting results to President Carter, Secretary of Defense Brown was cautiously optimistic about NATO's prospects for fulfilling both its long- and short-term plans, providing its members continued to make "a sustained effort," including "a gradual increase in real defense spending" commensurate with the 3 percent annual increase to which the NATO ministers had agreed the previous May.²⁶ Although apparently Secretary Brown reached these judgments on his own, there was no doubt that they reflected JCS sentiments as well. The Joint Chiefs had never believed that a mere re-juggling of resources would solve NATO's problems and, as more and more details of the LTDP came to light, they had increased reason to be skeptical. By now it was becoming clear also that the administration's strategy of relying on cutbacks and troop withdrawals from Korea, the Philippines, and elsewhere in the Far East to

help offset the cost of NATO improvements would pay considerably fewer dividends than President Carter had expected. With Far East troop reductions hitting one snag after another, it was hard to say if or when the expected savings would materialize. As a consequence, the costs associated with the LTDP loomed all the greater, creating a far more difficult problem than the administration had anticipated at the time NATO adopted the 3 percent solution.

Despite these difficulties, President Carter assured the NATO allies at their January 1978 meeting that US defense spending would indeed show “real increases” for NATO, meeting the 3 percent objective, and further, that the United States would add eight thousand troops to its forces in Europe over the next year and a half and “substantially improve” its reinforcement capability.²⁷ While the President’s defense budget for FY 1979, forwarded to Congress later that same month, seemed to live up to these promises, the means adopted were largely through a reallocation of resources and curbs in ship construction, rather than through increased funding.²⁸ The Office of Management and Budget had wanted to limit the 3 percent increase to NATO-related programs only, but dropped the idea at the insistence of Secretary of Defense Brown and others who thought it would set a poor example and damage US credibility.²⁹ Even so, the President’s overall defense budget was still some \$8 billion below the previous administration’s projected expenditures, with the 3 percent increase for NATO at the expense of other programs. Whether future improvements could be sustained on this basis remained to be seen.³⁰

Meanwhile, the NATO task forces resumed their work of preparing specific program recommendations in time for the May 1978 summit. Out of these deliberations it became increasingly evident that none of the participants, as one put it, regarded the results as “immutable” and that time constraints, along with other factors, created pressures to water down certain measures in order to expedite adoption and approval. All involved seemed to recognize and concur that further refinements beyond the May summit would be unavoidable.³¹ Accorded a preliminary review by US authorities, including the Joint Chiefs, in early March 1978, the task forces’ final reports then went to the NATO Executive Working Group, which met in reinforced session 21 to 23 March to determine tentative commitments from NATO nations. Afterwards, NATO’s International Staff prepared the first draft of a comprehensive report, which the Joint Chiefs reviewed and approved, subject to minor revisions, in late April.³²

There can be no doubt that the LTDP was from start to finish a US-orchestrated initiative. Assembling in Washington in late May 1978, NATO leaders found themselves under heavy American pressure to approve the task forces’ comprehensive report, containing 123 individual defense improvement measures, and to move ahead quickly on refining and implementing its recommendations. Most of the proposed measures were of a qualitative nature, but there were several, including the acquisition of additional ships and aircraft for ASW, improved surface-to-air weaponry, and the pre-positioning by 1982 of the heavy equipment for three more US division sets (making for a total of six), that also would require significant new procurement funding.³³ National Security

Adviser Brzezinski estimated that the program carried a price tag of between \$60 and \$80 billion.³⁴ Even so, few of the allies expressed any overt objections, and in their final communiqué they offered assurances that “almost all” (Britain and Canada being the leading hold-outs) would adjust their financial plans in order to meet the goal of a 3 percent annual increase in defense expenditures. At the same time, all agreed to try harder to achieve greater economic savings and enhanced military efficiency through increase standardization and interoperability, i.e., rationalization.³⁵ According to Secretary of Defense Brown, President Carter considered the NATO summit “a solid success” and the adoption of the LTDP “a major step forward” toward improving alliance solidarity. Determined to keep the momentum going, Secretary Brown advised the Joint Chiefs in July 1978 that he expected “vigorous and effective follow-through” and that he was leaving it up to Ambassador Komer to handle the details.³⁶

From this point on, until the end of the Carter administration, JCS involvement in the LTDP did not extend much beyond monitoring US compliance with the goals and agenda set by NATO leaders. The Chiefs’ means of doing so was the annual NATO Defense Planning Questionnaire (DPQ), through which all alliance members who were part of the integrated command structure regularly updated their commitments. The first JCS response to incorporate an estimate of US compliance with the LTDP was the DPQ for Fiscal Year (FY) 1979, which the Joint Chiefs forwarded to the Secretary of Defense in May 1979. Of the sixty-four LTDP measures then requiring US reporting in the DPQ, the Chiefs offered assurances that forty-six would be fully implemented by the end of 1980 and that, of the rest, all but two would undergo some degree of implementation.³⁷ However, as soon became evident, these assurances, and similar ones offered by other NATO members, tended to be misleading. A recurring difficulty, discussed at length at high-level NATO meetings in 1979 and 1980, was the tendency of all involved to tackle the subsidiary and no cost/low cost recommendations first, leaving the difficult and more expensive ones for later. As a result, although the progress may have appeared substantial on paper, it was in fact less than numbers alone suggested.³⁸

At the same time, increased instability and a crisis atmosphere in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region, combined with limitations on US military resources that could not be overcome quickly, detracted significantly from the US contribution. US policy and strategy in the past had been to rely on air and naval support from the Pacific Command (PACOM) to reinforce Europe in an emergency. But by the autumn of 1979, as planning for Middle East contingencies intensified, the Joint Chiefs were becoming increasingly skeptical of being able to adhere to this strategy for very much longer. Instead of “swinging” PACOM forces to reinforce Europe, JCS planners were finding that it might have to be the other way around, using NATO-dedicated units and war reserve stockpiles to reinforce Persian Gulf/Middle East operations. While the Joint Chiefs earnestly hoped to avoid such a possibility, knowing that it would encounter strong opposition from the NATO allies, they advised Secretary of Defense Brown in November 1979 that, were the Rapid Deployment Force to go up against Soviet forces,

there would be no choice but to call on reinforcements from US units assigned to or earmarked for Europe.³⁹

By the following spring it was clear that growing requirements for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) necessitated a reassessment of US strategy and commitments to Europe under the LTDP. As part of this reassessment, Ambassador Komer (now Under Secretary of Defense for Policy) urged the immediate withdrawal of PACOM carrier support for NATO, along with other measures that would remove both the 101st Airmobile Division and the 82nd Airborne Division from the list of ready reinforcements, and the postponement indefinitely of the pre-positioning of equipment and munitions for up to three US divisions in Europe under the LTDP.⁴⁰ The Joint Chiefs concurred that NATO would probably have to get along without the PACOM carriers (three in all), but they believed it premature to make any reassignment of ground and air forces, pending further planning for a Persian Gulf contingency. Indeed, in the Chiefs' estimate of the situation, so much of the US general purpose combat force had become NATO-oriented over the years that the exclusion of NATO-assigned or earmarked units from a non-NATO contingency would be practically impossible. As a result, other NATO countries might have to carry proportionately more of the burden within the NATO area.⁴¹

By their December 1980 meeting, the NATO defense ministers saw reason for concern that, with the impending cutbacks in previously pledged US support and other signs of flagging interest, the LTDP was running out of steam. Despite gains in some areas, the ministers found that "the rate at which improvements were being made was not commensurate with the sustained growth in the Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces."⁴² During closed session meetings, NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns cited "a number of areas where progress had been unsatisfactory." Among these were electronic warfare and war reserve stocks of ammunition and fuel. Endeavoring to defend the program, Secretary Brown acknowledged that "the LTDP is lagging in most of its key areas," and he went even further to suggest that NATO members were "not meeting even their highest priority force goals." But he disagreed with critics who thought the United States was over-reacting to potential developments in Southwest Asia and insisted instead that the "radically changed strategic situation" in that part of the world only confirmed the need for achieving LTDP goals in Europe.⁴³

All the same, it was apparent by the end of the Carter administration that NATO's progress toward achieving a credible conventional alternative left much to be desired. This was not what President Carter had intended when he became President, nor was it the legacy he wanted to pass on to his successor. But as the Joint Chiefs had correctly warned all along, the United States was on the verge of over-extending itself because of limited resources and escalating obligations outside Europe. At some point something had to give, and it was the LTDP that offered the greatest flexibility.

NATO's Nuclear Posture

Coinciding with efforts to develop and implement the LTDP, the Joint Chiefs found themselves unexpectedly involved in two controversies over NATO's nuclear posture—one dealing with the so-called “neutron bomb” issue, the other concerning the modernization of theater nuclear forces. Least expected was the neutron bomb controversy, which erupted in mid-1977 and dragged on until the next spring. Under the Ford administration, the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA), the agency then responsible for overseeing the nation's nuclear matters, had revived a program to produce an assortment of enhanced radiation warhead (ERW) weapons for tactical-battlefield purposes. Intended as replacements for aging atomic artillery shells and short-range missile warheads dating from the 1950s, these new high-energy warheads, commonly referred to as “neutron bombs,” were best described as tactical nuclear warheads capable of generating high levels of radiation with a small explosive.

The existence of the ERW program became public in June 1977 when a Washington Post reporter, Walter Pincus, noticed the still-classified term “enhanced radiation,” which ERDA had neglected to delete from published testimony on its FY 1978 budget submission. A frequent critic of US defense policy, Pincus characterized ERWs as “killer weapons” whose sole purpose was “to kill people through the release of neutrons” and spare property.⁴⁴ The ensuing press coverage in the United States and Europe caused a growing division of opinion over the morality of such weapons and led to considerable speculation, especially in Europe, that these weapons would weaken deterrence because they were eminently more usable than those currently stockpiled. President Carter eventually persuaded a reluctant Congress to keep research funding for the program alive, but by the time the issue began to settle down toward the end of the summer, it was apparent that the political damage, both at home and abroad, had been considerable.⁴⁵

Thus, what had started out as a more or less routine weapons modernization program almost overnight became the rallying point for a rejuvenated antinuclear movement in Europe, egged on by Soviet propaganda. Taken aback by the whole affair, President Carter ordered an informal review, prior to a decision on whether to move ahead with production and deployment.⁴⁶ Relying on the arguments of the Army managers of the neutron bomb project, the JCS recommended that the United States proceed as planned with production and deployment. Among the reasons they cited were the increased credibility of ERWs, their contribution to deterrence and, should deterrence fail, the lower collateral damage and reduced numbers of civilian and friendly troop casualties.⁴⁷ Agreeing that the project had merit, President Carter let it continue, but only through the R&D phase. Thereafter, the program languished until President Ronald Reagan revived it in 1981.

The neutron bomb episode, though not as significant militarily as it might have been, had proved something of a political and diplomatic embarrassment for the Carter administration and suggested to many observers a faltering of US leadership within the alliance. More important, taken in the light of other developments—the

appearance of the Soviet “Backfire” bomber, the testing of a new Soviet intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM), the SS-20, and the Carter administration’s abortive “deep cuts” strategic arms control proposal—it seemed to point to a steady erosion in the credibility of the West’s nuclear deterrent. President Carter, through the LTDP, had hoped to refocus NATO’s energies on improving its conventional capabilities and, in the process, to convince the allies that his administration was indeed serious about preserving their security. But having stumbled badly in his handling of the neutron bomb, he sought to undo the damage by paying closer attention than he had planned to NATO’s nuclear posture. The result was a new nuclear arms proposal, tailored to giving NATO more flexible nuclear options but with greater emphasis than the neutron bomb on upholding and strengthening deterrence.

What convinced President Carter that he had to act was a speech by West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt before the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) meeting in London in late October 1977. Having followed closely the ongoing SALT II negotiations, Chancellor Schmidt was convinced that the United States and the Soviet Union were moving toward an agreement that would suit the two superpowers but do little to reassure Europe that it could continue to count on the protection of US-extended deterrence. The problem arose, as Chancellor Schmidt saw it, from the Soviet deployment, starting in 1976, of the SS-20 mobile IRBM. Though technically a replacement for the Soviet Union’s aging arsenal of SS-4s and SS-5s, the SS-20 (derived from the SS-X-16 ICBM) incorporated design improvements that gave it three independently targeted warheads (MIRVs) and an increased range that put all of Western Europe at risk. Yet as long as the SS-20 showed no capability of reaching beyond 5,500 kilometers, it fell outside SALT limitations and could be deployed in any number the Soviets might choose. Once this threat became fully operational, Chancellor Schmidt believed, Europe would be defenseless against Soviet military and political pressure, no matter how strong its conventional forces might be, unless it had offsetting forces of its own. Accordingly, in his speech to the IISS he called for preserving “the full range of deterrence strategy,” but implied that the United States was not doing enough either to curb the SS-20 threat through arms control or, failing that, to provide NATO with credible theater nuclear forces (TNF).⁴⁸

At this stage, JCS and NATO planners were still unsure how to assess the threat posed by the SS-20, since deployment was just beginning. However, at their London summit in May 1977, NATO leaders had taken steps to address this problem by authorizing a routine review of nuclear modernization plans as the tenth—and last—item on the list of initiatives under the LTDP. According to Ambassador Robert Komer, the United States agreed to this approach because “we wanted the Carter initiatives to have just enough nuclear content to prevent the allies from accusing us of neglecting or abandoning that side before anything else had been put in its place.” As a further reflection of US preferences, the NAC remanded study of the nuclear review not to an independent task force but to the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), the alliance’s senior consultative body on such matters since the mid-1960s. Rather than showcase nuclear

matters as part of the LTDP, the Carter administration initially wanted them kept as far as possible in the background in order not to compete with conventional forces for attention and resources.⁴⁹

Chancellor Schmidt, meanwhile, was quite correct that the United States had yet to face up fully to the problems the SS-20 created for European security. But the reasons had nothing to do, as he seemed to imply, with any blatant disregard on the part of the United States for its allies' interests. Rather, they reflected a combination of factors, some having to do with the internal politics in Washington of the arms control process, others with logistical difficulties arising from the impending relocation of the Rota-based nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) to Kings Bay, Georgia, pursuant to the 1976 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Spain.⁵⁰ Though committed to preserving a US presence in the area, the Joint Chiefs had advised the Secretary of Defense as early as 1975 that the Navy would need greater flexibility in maintaining SSBN patrols in the Mediterranean and that boats operating in the Atlantic would have to share some of the responsibility. With the advent of the Carter administration, the Chiefs renewed earlier suggestions—circulated by the State Department among NATO members in August 1977—that discussed a change to the Navy's policy of maintaining a minimum of three SSBNs on patrol in the Mediterranean.⁵¹ Chancellor Schmidt undoubtedly knew of this proposal, and he probably knew also that General Haig and his NATO planning staff, alarmed that the United States would be diluting its commitment, had strongly advised against it. But as all involved by now realized, adjustments of one kind or another would become unavoidable once the SSBNs were relocated.⁵²

At the same time, having failed to interest the Soviet Union in its "deep cuts" arms control offer, the Carter administration found itself increasingly divided over what to do next. As described by one participant, this question provoked "a good deal of internal wrangling between State and Defense Departments" and soon became enmeshed in NATO politics as well, mainly over the issue of whether to include long-range ground- and sea-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs and SLCMs), along with air-launched versions, in future arms control negotiations.⁵³ The GLCM was a subsonic missile powered by a high performance turbofan engine that "provided a highly mobile and therefore survivable nuclear deterrent capability, attained through a sound concept of operations."⁵⁴ However, the GLCM was slow enough that there was no danger the Soviets would confuse it for a first-strike weapon. Given these various characteristics, it seemed the ideal system for theater deterrence.⁵⁵

Intrigued by the possibilities, the British and West German governments made known their preference for excluding GLCMs for the time being from any arms control accord, insisting that these weapons might hold the key to countering the Soviet SS-20.⁵⁶ Yet if so, it would mean introducing a whole new family of weapons systems into Europe, something President Carter hoped to avoid in the interests of nuclear nonproliferation. The Joint Chiefs seriously doubted whether US restraint would make any difference, but in the face of strong State Department support for the President's nonproliferation policy, they chose not to argue. The upshot was a position paper,

tailored to State's specifications and grudgingly concurred in by the JCS, outlining a supposedly "evenhanded" approach—one that acknowledged NATO's long-term need for nuclear modernization, but which downplayed the urgency of immediate decisions, noting that conventional improvements had priority and that resources should be allocated accordingly.⁵⁷

This approach received a tepid response from the European allies, whom General Haig described as increasingly apt to go it alone with the development of their own cruise missiles or other systems unless the United States came up with new ideas.⁵⁸ Hoping to preserve alliance unity, the United States agreed, at the next Nuclear Planning Group ministerial meeting held in Bari, Italy, 11 and 12 October 1977, to chair an ad hoc committee, designated the High Level Group (HLG), that would examine NATO's nuclear options in further detail.⁵⁹ Two weeks later, as if to spur matters along, Chancellor Schmidt gave his speech to the IISS, effectively putting the United States on notice that modernizing NATO's nuclear deterrent should go hand in hand with solving its conventional force problems through the LTDP. Chaired by US Assistant Secretary of Defense David McGiffert, the HLG met three times during the winter of 1977-1978 and recommended that NATO proceed with "an evolutionary adjustment" toward greater capabilities in long-range theater nuclear forces. It then suspended its activities in order to give the defense ministers time for reflection. The HLG resumed deliberations in the fall of 1978, holding a steady round of meetings that culminated in NATO's decision of December 1979 to modernize its long-range theater nuclear forces (LRTNF), while seeking Soviet cooperation through arms control in restraining the deployment of such systems.⁶⁰

Throughout these deliberations, the Joint Chiefs exhibited a cautious, yet supportive, attitude toward nuclear modernization. Despite the military applications that nuclear modernization involved, senior policymakers in Washington, from the President on down, preferred to treat such matters as more political than military on the grounds that it was more important to reestablish a sense of mutual confidence and trust within the alliance than to counter Soviet deployments per se.⁶¹ But to the JCS the bolstering of NATO's nuclear capabilities represented "a logical extension of the force modernization process." Looking at possible TNF deployment options, the Chiefs advised Secretary of Defense Brown that, in addition to the GLCMs favored by most Europeans, NATO might also want to consider either a stand-off air-delivered weapon or the Pershing II (P-II), a ground-launched ballistic missile which the Army was developing as a replacement for its existing arsenal of aging Pershing I-As. But since the initial deployment date for the P-II had slipped to 1984, the JCS cautioned against any firm acquisition decision pending further reports on its developmental progress.

To help clarify the US position, President Carter ordered a review of the Euromissile problem (PRM-38), which Dr. Brzezinski organized under the auspices of the Special Coordination Committee (SCC).⁶² Completed in August, the PRM-38 review drew no firm conclusions other than to acknowledge that the choices facing the United States at this point were exceedingly limited owing to the preferences already made known

by the HLG. Pursuing a twin strategy of arms control and hardware modernization, the report acknowledged that a “hardware” solution could induce the Soviets to react in kind with further SS-20 deployments and that it might encounter strong popular opposition in Europe. But on balance, if coupled with a serious arms control initiative, it seemed the most likely course to succeed, both in reassuring the Europeans and in preserving, one way or another, a credible posture of deterrence.

Meeting on 23 August 1978, the SCC agreed to recommend to President Carter a policy strategy drawn from the hardware/arms control approach outlined in the PRM-38 report. This solution appealed to Secretary Brown and to JCS Chairman Jones, for it allowed the United States to “join” the HLG consensus in favor of TNF modernization with a free hand.⁶³ While agreeing that there should be a strengthening of NATO’s long-range nuclear capabilities, the committee specifically ruled out “a massive increase” that would attempt to match Soviet deployments on a one-for-one basis. Instead, the goal should be to enhance deterrence by eliminating what many Europeans perceived to be a gap in nuclear options, a problem generally regarded to be more political than military in character. The committee also agreed that SALT, rather than the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks, would be the best place to handle the LRTNF/arms control issue, but they deferred any further decisions pending the outcome of more detailed studies examining deployment options, arms control possibilities, and alternative defense improvements that the United States might suggest in lieu of TNF modernization, should the opportunity arise.⁶⁴

Immediately following President Carter’s acceptance of the hardware solution, attention within the JCS turned to developing a military rationale for deployment options, which now focused increasingly on a combination of two systems—ground-launched cruise missiles and ballistic missiles.⁶⁵ “A mix of systems,” General Jones later explained, “would be more effective, provide greater flexibility, and complicate Soviet planning.” It would also, in the case of the GLCM, free nuclear strike aircraft for conventional operations.⁶⁶ Other systems still under consideration included an air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) carried aboard modified FB-111 planes; a medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) derived from a truncated Minuteman III Intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM); and a sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM). Two additional attractions of the P-II were that it was farther along in development than the scaled-down Minuteman and that it would extend NATO’s reach to threaten a wider range of Warsaw Pact targets, a capability long sought by SACEUR.

Meanwhile, in early January 1979 Secretary of Defense Brown reminded President Carter of the impending relocation of the SSBNs and presented options to adjust requirements for SSBN patrols in the Mediterranean. Secretary Brown insisted that the Joint Chiefs would do what they could to maintain an SSBN presence in the Mediterranean, but he acknowledged that “operational necessities” would at times see the figures fluctuate.

Taking Secretary Brown’s proposed directive under advisement, President Carter flew off to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe for meetings with West German Chan-

cellor Schmidt, British Prime Minister James Callaghan, and French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Out of these discussions emerged confirmation that SACEUR's targeting problems might be on their way to being solved. The approach adopted was the "two-track formula" setting forth the allies' intention to proceed with plans for Euromissile deployment, starting in 1983, in tandem with an offer to the Soviets to constrain deployment on both sides by means of arms control negotiations. Following up on the Guadeloupe discussions, the High Level Group, meeting in February and again in April, recommended to its parent body, the Nuclear Planning Group, that the deployment in question consist of a mix of Pershing IIs and GLCMs and that NATO members show a "broad Alliance consensus on LRTNF modernization through their public commitment to the program . . ." ⁶⁷

Satisfied that NATO was taking matters in hand, President Carter on 4 April relaxed SSBN support requirements for SACEUR. ⁶⁸ Yet to be resolved was whether NATO would begin P-II and GLCM deployment immediately once alliance leaders reached a final decision or hold such action in abeyance pending the outcome of the proposed arms control initiative. Believing that Army planners should have better guidance, General Frederick J. Kroesen, the Army Vice Chief of Staff, asked the Joint Staff and Service staffs for a systematic examination of the exact number of warheads, reentry vehicle commitments, and tradeoffs of short-range for long-range systems. ⁶⁹ Trying to be reassuring, General Jones reminded General Kroesen that the National Security Council (NSC) had directed an integrated approach to LRTNF matters and that movement on arms control was not to inhibit whatever nuclear modernization the alliance determined eventually to be necessary. In approaching these complex issues, General Jones further pointed out that the Joint Staff intended to develop, in conjunction with the Service staffs, terms of reference for an ongoing and continuing Strategic Net Assessment being conducted by the Studies, Analysis, and Gaming Agency (SAGA). ⁷⁰

Still, as the Chairman was fully aware, General Kroesen's memorandum had raised several pertinent issues, not the least of which was the increasingly unavoidable need to decide the size and character of the LRTNF deployment. Dr. Brzezinski was aware of this problem, too, and on 5 July 1979 he convened the SCC to try to resolve it. For discussion purposes, the Joint Chiefs offered a choice of four options for LRTNF modernization, all designed to fit within the HLG's recommended ceiling on the number of warheads. According to the report, Options A, B, and C would be comprised of a mixed force of Pershing IIs and GLCMs, while Option D would be a pure force of Pershing IIs. ⁷¹ According to Dr. Brzezinski's retrospective account, he and the Joint Chiefs were the only ones who supported the upper-limit figure, but they apparently had President Carter and several strong arguments on their side. Not only did the higher number offer greater flexibility for negotiating purposes but also it provided a degree of built-in resilience should one or more countries opt out of the program. And, as a practical matter, it made life-cycle costs per warhead somewhat cheaper. ⁷²

With the decision to go forward, the Army at last received the guidance it had been seeking from OSD and the Joint Chiefs and could now assign the highest priority for funding and resources to the P-II and GLCM programs.⁷³ As word leaked out, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev in October 1979 offered the unilateral withdrawal of 20,000 Soviet troops and 1,000 tanks from East Germany if, in exchange, NATO would accept what amounted to a freeze on new missile deployments. The effect would be to leave SS-20 deployments in place but deny NATO any chance of offsetting deployments. Not surprisingly, Brezhnev's initiative fell on deaf ears, and on 12 December 1979, the NATO ministers approved the proposed missile modernization plan, while offering at the same time to negotiate limitations on theater nuclear forces within SALT III.⁷⁴

Also at their December meeting, NATO announced unilateral plans to reduce its nuclear arsenal and extended an offer to scale back or cancel its INF modernization program if the Soviets would do likewise.⁷⁵ American negotiators in the MBFR talks had been trying for nearly four years to arrange a trade of US nuclear warheads for Soviet tanks, but in light of Brezhnev's unilateral withdrawal offer, this no longer seemed a negotiable position. Once NATO ordered these weapons unilaterally withdrawn, the problem seemed to solve itself and, in the process, gave NATO the opportunity to counter Soviet propaganda.

NATO's adoption of the two-track decision was only the first step toward eventual settlement of the LRTNF problem. Most of the arguments put forth at the time in support of deployment addressed political and diplomatic concerns arising for the most part from the Soviet SS-20 deployment. But there were also, as JCS inputs made clear, strong military arguments for LRTNF modernization. Foremost among these were the need to ensure adequate SSBN support for NATO, owing to the relocation in 1979 of the submarines to the United States. Though not as large a deployment as the JCS would have preferred to see, it seemed the logically and militarily prudent thing to do.

The MBFR and CSCE Negotiations

One of the enduring ironies of the Cold War years, no less true during Jimmy Carter's presidency than during others, was that while the United States and its NATO allies were taking steps to strengthen their conventional and nuclear force postures, they were also engaged in serious arms control efforts directed at curbing any further theater buildups. Initiated in January 1973, the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks sought a comprehensive agreement on force reductions within Central Europe (the two German states, the Low Countries, Czechoslovakia, and Poland). Soviet participation was in exchange for a separate set of negotiations, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), held in Helsinki, which Moscow leaders hoped would recognize and legitimate their hegemony in Eastern Europe.⁷⁶

From the outset, the JCS approached the MBFR talks with caution and extreme skepticism. Although they supported modest and asymmetrical reductions as initial

steps toward eliminating the disparity in ground forces and urged non-circumvention measures as being more advantageous to the West, the Chiefs opposed explicit, reciprocal equipment ceilings and believed that agreed definitions and equipment levels would be difficult, if not impossible, to negotiate. Initially, the Joint Chiefs opposed a Ford administration proposal, known as Option III, which “calls for the withdrawal of 1,000 United States tactical nuclear weapons from Western Europe in return for the retirement from Central Europe of a Soviet tank army, normally 1,700 tanks and 65,000 men.”⁷⁷ However, their stance would soften over time.

With the advent of the Carter administration, new initiatives in the MBFR field became only a matter of time. President Carter favored a broad improvement in US-Soviet relations, and toward this end he attached high importance to progress, not only in SALT but in MBFR as well.⁷⁸ As an indication of his interest in the latter, the day after taking office he requested an immediate interagency update (PRM-6), knowing that talks were scheduled to resume in Vienna in February 1977.⁷⁹ The result was a hastily compiled and rather rambling report summarizing the negotiations to date and proposals tabled thus far, omitting any mention of possible new offers.⁸⁰ Meeting on 7 February 1977, with General Brown and his assistant, Lieutenant General W. Y. Smith, USAF, representing the JCS, the Special Coordination Committee devoted considerable time to discussing whether the West’s MBFR goals were still relevant. All participants agreed that the talks served a useful purpose in that they eased budgetary pressures on the European allies to make unilateral cuts in their armed forces. However, there was some doubt as to whether an agreement would be likely without modifications in the West’s negotiating position, especially its demand for a common ceiling on ground force manpower, which would involve Eastern bloc force reductions two or three times the size of those reduced by the West. Moreover, while it remained important to seek numerical reductions, all concurred that recent qualitative improvements in Warsaw Pact capabilities had interjected a wholly new factor that needed to be addressed further. In view of these various considerations, the SCC called for a follow-up study to reexamine overall MBFR objectives and to identify modifications in the basic negotiating position that might move the talks closer to the desired outcome.⁸¹

Throughout subsequent interagency discussions, the Joint Chiefs adopted a typically wary attitude toward any modification in the US negotiating position.⁸² Even so, they offered no immediate objections when on 15 September 1977 the SCC endorsed a somewhat new position growing out of recent bilateral talks with FRG officials, including an exchange of views in July between President Carter and West German Chancellor Schmidt. Once again, General Brown and his assistant, Lieutenant General Smith, represented the JCS at the meeting. Instead of holding out for withdrawal of a complete Soviet tank army, as NATO had insisted in the past, the West Germans proposed offering voluntary US unit withdrawals in exchange for phased Soviet reductions totaling the equivalent of a tank army, or roughly five divisions comprising 68,000 troops and 1,700 tanks. Hearing no advice to the contrary, the meeting agreed to forward such a proposal to the other NATO allies for their review.⁸³

Despite the Chairman's concurrence in the SCC's action, Army planners took exception, and in November 1977 and again in February 1978, they urged the Joint Chiefs to seek a reopening of the matter with a view toward forestalling the introduction of any new proposals in Vienna. Citing the many political and military changes since MBFR started, coupled with verification difficulties, the Army sought an NSC-level review that would produce "an alternative approach to Arms Control in Europe."⁸⁴ The Joint Chiefs, endeavoring to preserve a unified front, notified Secretary of Defense Brown that they concurred with the Army that the pending offer contained "serious deficiencies," not the least of which would be policing it in the post-reduction period against the reintroduction or reconstitution of Soviet divisions. The Chiefs agreed that the SCC should think again before introducing any new formula for troop or equipment withdrawals.⁸⁵ However, an informal canvassing of other agencies revealed no support whatsoever for the Army's idea of a wholesale MBFR review. Biding their time, the Chiefs authorized the Joint Staff to proceed on its own with an internal review and to be ready with ideas and suggestions should the opportunity arise.⁸⁶

As it turned out, it was a Soviet initiative, not anything put forth by the NATO powers, that caused the biggest stir. On 8 June 1978 the Soviet Union tendered a new reductions package, which Western journalists promptly hailed as "an important breakthrough." Heretofore the Soviets had only responded to Western initiatives, without suggesting any of their own. Instead of the piecemeal reductions proposed by the West, the Soviets offered what purported to be a more comprehensive solution in the form of a common ceiling of 700,000 on ground force personnel and a combined ground and air personnel ceiling of 900,000.⁸⁷ This was, on the face of it, an encouraging sign that the Soviets were indeed prepared to engage in serious negotiations. But upon close inspection, JCS planners had reason to be skeptical. Not only did the Soviet proposal use force-level data they deemed highly suspect but also it made no attempt to respond to the West's demands that the only way to achieve genuine parity was through asymmetrical reductions. Appearances notwithstanding, it seemed to JCS planners that the ceiling the Soviets were proposing would be lower on the West than on the East.⁸⁸

Hoping to forestall any rush to agreement, the Joint Chiefs advised the Secretary of Defense of their misgivings and urged that future negotiations concentrate on resolving "those data issues central to a satisfactory agreement which would insure stability and not diminish NATO security."⁸⁹ Referred to the SCC for further study, the Chiefs' views received a generally favorable reception, and on 9 August 1978, at a meeting attended by Lieutenant General Smith and Major General Charles Sniffen, the JCS MBFR representative, the committee agreed that the West need offer no "radical changes" in its position but should work instead, as the JCS suggested, on clearing up discrepancies in the data base. The only disagreement was over how to go about doing so. The State Department, OSD, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) favored the selective release of Western intelligence estimates as a way of drawing out the Soviet side, while the JCS and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) representatives thought it should be up to the East to provide further data on its forces. Dr. Brzezinski, who had

not attended the meeting, afterwards opted for the State-OSD-ACDA approach, provided the West Germans and British agreed. But despite Dr. Brzezinski's ruling, it was clear that on the larger issue of what the negotiations should include, JCS views had prevailed. Certainly this was the sentiment in the Chairman's office.⁹⁰

This was to prove the high-water mark of JCS influence on MBFR policy during the Carter years. Having achieved a modest victory on the data question, the Chiefs now turned their attention to probing the possibilities of an NSC-level reassessment of the entire MBFR issue, using the internal review they had ordered earlier as a basis for discussion. Completed in December 1978, the JCS review raised serious questions as to whether the MBFR talks should continue. Not only had budgetary pressures for troop reductions abated in recent years, both here in the United States and in Europe, but also NATO had reversed course and was now fully committed to making long-term improvements in its military posture. Throughout the alliance, the Chiefs found, there was deepening concern over Soviet motives, the future of détente policy, and NATO's deteriorating military situation vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact. In other words, the political and strategic climate had changed, making the usefulness of the talks doubtful. The Chiefs were also increasingly dubious of ever being able to reach an agreement that would be in the West's interests. Even if the data problem could be resolved to NATO's full satisfaction, the Joint Chiefs believed it unlikely that the West could negotiate significant reductions in Warsaw Pact offensive capability at an acceptable cost to NATO. While acknowledging that the Soviet Union's proposal of the previous June represented a "major conceptual change" in the East's position, the Chiefs insisted that numerous "substantive differences" still remained. Since the talks began, the JCS pointed out, revised intelligence estimates indicated that the Soviet Union had significantly reduced the time it would need to mount an effective attack on the West; and there was ample analytical evidence showing that withdrawn Soviet forces could be reintroduced faster than withdrawn US forces. From this the Chiefs concluded that the net effect under any of the reduction plans currently on the table would be to weaken NATO and increase the danger of a Soviet invasion. Accordingly, it seemed to the Chiefs imperative that the United States and NATO waste no time initiating "a fundamental review" looking toward the development of a whole new negotiating position, one better suited for safeguarding the West's position. Meanwhile, recognizing that it would be politically imprudent should the talks be broken off, the JCS urged maintaining a flexible but noncommittal attitude.⁹¹

Reactions within the Pentagon suggested limited support for the Chiefs' views. Summing up the general feeling in OSD, Stanley R. Resor, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, advised the Secretary of Defense in March 1979 to forego seeking formal action through the NSC and to opt instead for "an informal review of MBFR in the context of the ongoing discussions on TNF modernization and gray-area arms control." A major advantage was that this approach would avoid a confrontation with the State Department, which remained committed to the current negotiating package. But at the same time it would lay the groundwork for changing negotiating tactics later,

should the opportunity present itself. As a concession to the JCS viewpoint, Under Secretary Resor suggested that the Defense Department look into modifying its stand on Option III, the Ford administration proposal that called for the withdrawal of 1,000 US tactical nuclear weapons from NATO in exchange for a Soviet tank army.⁹² Under Secretary Resor believed that complete withdrawal of this offer, as the Joint Chiefs favored, would damage US negotiating credibility; however, a modification that left something on the table might be more acceptable to NATO and would raise fewer difficulties with the Soviets.⁹³

Despite various endorsements of an in-house review, it was not until late May 1979 that Secretary of Defense Brown created an MBFR Task Force, chaired by the Assistance Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs (ISA), with Joint Staff participation, for that purpose.⁹⁴ Part of the reason for the delay was the need to respond to an unexpected Soviet initiative, known as the "Tarasov proposal," put forth informally in February by Ambassador Nikolai Tarasov, chief Soviet negotiator at the MBFR talks, essentially sounding out the Western powers on whether they were still interested in pursuing the Soviet troop ceiling proposal of the previous year. General Jones, acting on his colleagues' behalf, reported to the Secretary that he could find little new in this initiative, and in fact nothing came of it.⁹⁵ But the feeling in ISA was that it would be pointless to conduct a review, even one limited to the Defense Department, until diplomatic exchanges disposing of the Tarasov proposal had run their course.⁹⁶

As a result, the review Secretary Brown had authorized failed to materialize until that summer, by which time the United States and the Soviet Union had reached agreement on a SALT II Treaty (see chapter 9). Critics promptly assailed the treaty on a variety of technical and strategic grounds. With a battle over ratification looming in the Senate, the White House sought to blunt further criticism by issuing new, ostensibly tougher, guidelines (PD-50) on future arms control agreements, including MBFR, stipulating that any new accord should contribute to US security, be constructive in terms of strengthening deterrence and providing support for US allies, and show concrete evidence of limiting the arms race and reducing the risk of war.⁹⁷ These were, all things considered, rather vague and unobjectionable criteria. What remained to be seen was how they would be interpreted and applied.

It was against this background of growing political controversy over arms control that ISA in early August circulated a draft paper on MBFR principles and objectives for examination by the other members of the DoD task force. The author, Lynn Davis, in the past had not shown as much sympathy or support for JCS positions as Joint Staff planners would have liked. So it was with considerable surprise and pleasure that they found her paper endorsing several key JCS positions: (1) that the West's current negotiating position contained serious deficiencies and was not viable in light of recent improvements in the East's military posture; (2) that MBFR should focus exclusively on conventional forces and leave theater nuclear matters to be addressed in SALT III; and (3) that a comprehensive and effective package of "associated measures" (i.e., verification procedures) should accompany any agreement. As one aide to the Chair-

man remarked after reading the paper, “We should rightfully be pleased that the ISA views track so closely with those of the JCS.”⁹⁸

Encouraged by the tone and content of Davis’ paper, Joint Staff planners hoped to use it in interagency discussions to curb what seemed to be a resurgence of interest at the State Department in a near-term MBFR agreement within the current negotiating framework. The FRG was also said to be developing similar proposals and wanted to discuss them with US and British representatives at a trilateral meeting in late September. This was the first test of US arms control policy under the President’s new PD-50 guidelines, and as such it was likely to set precedents, especially in deciding what the Chiefs considered the most urgent MBFR issue—the fate of Option III. Matters came to a head at an SCC meeting on 18 September 1979.⁹⁹

Going into the SCC meeting the Joint Chiefs provided Secretary of Defense Brown with a fresh statement of their views. Generally speaking, they had two objectives: to forestall any near-term MBFR agreement involving equal reductions or some similar formula; and to obtain the withdrawal of Option III, thereby decoupling nuclear reductions from MBFR. Unfortunately, the Chiefs weakened their case by offering a split opinion on one key point. Standing alone, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, the Navy chief, took issue with his colleagues’ assertion that there were no near-term conventional force reductions that could be made without damaging NATO. Even so, he declined to offer any specific examples. More important, he concurred with his colleagues that a way around this problem might be found in establishing a cap at equal levels accompanied by sound associated measures to create a more favorable climate for reductions leading to a common ceiling. Reductions would then be contingent upon each side being satisfied that the other was in compliance with the cap, a solution to the data issue for the forces to be reduced, and agreement on any additional associated measures (e.g., inspections) that might be required to monitor the reductions.¹⁰⁰

From the JCS standpoint, the SCC meeting on 18 September was something of a setback. While it made gestures toward incorporating JCS suggestions, it wound up essentially reconfirming existing policy on most key points. Representing the Joint Chiefs at the meeting were Admiral Hayward and the Chairman’s new assistant, Lieutenant General John Pustay, USAF. All agreed in principle that progress on MBFR would be desirable, especially in resolving data discrepancies; however, beyond this there were sharp divisions of opinion. Admiral Hayward, speaking for the JCS, said he preferred that the negotiations avoid manpower reductions. Secretary Brown basically agreed. He thought that manpower reductions would disrupt the force improvement programs envisioned in the LTDP. But recognizing that they might be necessary, he hoped they could be held to under 10,000. Taking exception, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, supported by the senior ACDA representative, Spurgeon Keeny, and Ambassador Jonathan Dean, the US MBFR negotiator, argued for reductions as large as possible in order to obtain the maximum Soviet withdrawals. After further discussion, National Security Adviser Brzezinski persuaded the committee to accept a compromise under which the United States would offer first phase reductions of

13,000 US soldiers in exchange for 30,000 Soviet soldiers, with the Soviet reductions to be taken in the form of three divisions. In a related action, the committee also agreed to continue US support for Option III, seeking further reductions from the Soviets in return for additional US concessions.

As it turned out, the breakthrough that US negotiators hoped to see failed to materialize. The net effect was to spell the demise of Option III, removing it not only from the negotiating table but also as a source of friction between the State Department and the JCS.¹⁰¹ Even so, the talks in Vienna dragged on, with scant prospect of an end in sight. The Soviets wanted credit toward an overall agreement for Brezhnev's unilateral troop and tank withdrawal offer and this, coupled with continuing friction over data and verification issues, spelled deadlock through the remainder of Jimmy Carter's presidency.¹⁰² Although the Joint Chiefs failed to obtain all the changes in the US negotiating position they wanted, neither did they have to confront a European arms control agreement they might have felt compelled to oppose.

Broadly speaking, the political counterpart to the MBFR negotiations was the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), initiated in 1973 at Soviet instigation. The major accomplishment of these negotiations was the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, which in effect legitimized the frontiers and political arrangements imposed by the Soviet Union on Eastern Europe after World War II. Additionally, the act renounced the threat or use of force and pledged the signatories (thirty-five in all, including the United States and the Soviet Union) to respect "human rights and fundamental freedoms."¹⁰³ Though not of great importance to the Joint Chiefs, the CSCE did attract considerable attention in diplomatic circles and gave the Carter administration what some State Department analysts considered an excellent vehicle for pursuing its human rights agenda toward the East.¹⁰⁴

The first CSCE follow-on meeting was scheduled for Belgrade in the autumn of 1977. As the date for that session neared, the Joint Chiefs found themselves receiving requests from the State Department and the NSC for their comments on pertinent papers, including several dealing with security matters and related confidence-building measures (CBMs). During a courtesy call on General Brown in September, the chairman of the US CSCE delegation, Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg, mentioned his interest in securing JCS views on a "major military problem" regarding the possible proposal of a CBM on military movements. General Brown agreed to bring the matter to his colleagues' attention but appeared confident that "the JCS could probably live with such a CBM." He added that the ambassador should also discuss this question further with General Haig in Brussels, implying that whatever the SACEUR advised would weigh heavily in any JCS recommendation.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently, though, without consulting General Haig, the JCS endorsed a short list of CBMs they deemed acceptable. These included possible agreements on prior notification of maneuvers smaller than the current mandatory notification level of 25,000; on improved treatment of observers; on the release of military budget data; and on large-scale military movements.¹⁰⁶

In contrast to the friction so often evident between the State Department and the JCS over MBFR, the two organizations worked rather well together on CSCE. A large part of the explanation, from all indications, was Ambassador Goldberg's urbane manner and deferential attitude in seeking military advice. A Reserve Army colonel and former Supreme Court justice, he went out of his way to establish and maintain favorable rapport with the Pentagon and made a practice of calling on the JCS Chairman whenever he was back in town during breaks in the negotiations. These efforts, it seems, paid off. Even though the Joint Chiefs remained skeptical of the CSCE and often disagreed with the ambassador's positions, they respected his integrity and made every effort to provide prompt responses and full cooperation and support for him and his negotiating team.¹⁰⁷

All the same, closer State-JCS cooperation did not automatically translate into progress at the negotiating table. At the Belgrade CSCE meeting, held from October 1977 to March 1978, the NATO powers tabled a package of CBM improvements identical to those recommended by the Joint Chiefs, while the US delegation pressed human rights issues. The Soviets responded with delaying tactics and evasions. Instead of signed agreements, they sought declarations of intent, such as a no-first-use of nuclear weapons pledge. Another conference was scheduled for Madrid in late 1980, but in view of the lack of progress at Belgrade, the prospects were not overly encouraging.¹⁰⁸

Problems on NATO's Southern Flank: Greece and Turkey

NATO-related problems during the Carter years came in a variety of forms, with some of the most difficult involving quarrels among the allies themselves. Here, probably the most frustrating the Joint Chiefs encountered was the continuing friction between Greece and Turkey. Centuries of animosities, bolstered more recently by rival claims in the Aegean, had finally spilled over to create the Cyprus crisis of 1974, which had brought Greece and Turkey to the brink of war. In attempting to avert a conflict, the United States had wound up earning the distrust of both sides. Probably the most positive outcome of the whole affair was the collapse of the right-wing military junta that had ruled Greece since 1967 and the installation of a civilian regime committed to restoring democracy. Even so, the new Greek government, dominated by leftists, blamed the United States for having supported the junta; in retaliation, it withdrew from NATO's integrated military command structure and terminated its home-porting agreement with the United States. Meanwhile, the Turks, smarting from a congressionally mandated arms embargo, voided their US security agreements and placed American bases in Turkey on a provisional status, suspending all but NATO-related operations at Incirlik, the main operating base in Turkey.¹⁰⁹

With the advent of the Carter administration came renewed initiatives from Washington to bring the Greco-Turkish imbroglio to an early end. During his campaign for

the White House, President Carter had assiduously courted the Greek-American vote, leaving authorities in Athens with the impression that, once in office, he would lean in their favor.¹¹⁰ But after a review of the situation by the Policy Review Committee (PRC), he threw his support instead behind efforts to convince Congress to lift the arms embargo on Turkey. At the same time, he named former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford as his special emissary to try to break the Cyprus impasse. The decision to seek an end to the arms embargo was obviously at odds with the President's avowed policy of curbing foreign transfers of weapons, yet it seemed unavoidable if the United States were to regain access to its bases in Turkey, including locations the administration needed in order to convince Senate skeptics that it could adequately verify the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union. In this instance, President Carter felt he could make an exception.¹¹¹

The Joint Chiefs saw two additional reasons for bringing the Cyprus issue to a speedy resolution. The first and most obvious was their growing concern, and that of General Haig, that the longer the dispute dragged on, the more it would degrade NATO's strategic posture in the eastern Mediterranean and risk a possibly permanent rupture there in the alliance.¹¹² Together, Greece and Turkey served as a barrier against Warsaw Pact forces opposite NATO's southern flank, while the bases there provided convenient transit and jumping-off points for operations either against the Soviet Union or in the Middle East. "These bases play an important role in the US strategic position," the Chiefs insisted. "Continuing strong US defense ties with Greece and Turkey are important for the fundamental security interests of both countries and the entire Western Alliance."¹¹³

While the Joint Chiefs welcomed a rapprochement with both countries, it was the situation in Turkey that worried them the most. Not only had the US arms embargo exacerbated anti-American sentiments among the Turks but also it had severely reduced Turkey's combat readiness and effectiveness vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact. Between 25 and 60 percent of their major weapons systems were inoperative, and less than 50 percent of their 350 NATO-dedicated aircraft were flyable. A resentful Turkey, the JCS feared, might withdraw from NATO and seek closer ties with the Soviet Union, in which case the Soviets might feel free to redeploy some or all of the twenty-five Warsaw Pact divisions and 800 combat aircraft they currently had committed opposite Turkey. Moreover, major communication centers, navigational aids, and wartime bases in Turkey would be lost. The Chiefs concluded that the immediate need lay in reversing the accelerating deterioration of the Turkish armed forces, which could only be achieved through a lifting of the arms embargo and the approval by Congress of a new Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA).¹¹⁴

To underscore the seriousness of this situation, Secretary of Defense Brown advised President Carter in January 1978 of his growing concern, shared by the Joint Chiefs and General Haig, that Turkey might soon withdraw from NATO unless the United States resumed military assistance.¹¹⁵ By this time, Clark Clifford's mediation efforts had reached an impasse, and while not in favor of lifting the embargo totally,

he urged the President to begin moving in that direction as a means of regaining both a measure of leverage and Turkey's confidence.¹¹⁶ Convinced that he had to act, President Carter began pressuring Congress, using the argument that once the embargo ended, Turkey would show greater flexibility and make a settlement of the Cyprus situation that much easier. Congress remained skeptical, but over the summer of 1978 the House and Senate grudgingly approved legislation repealing the embargo, thereby giving the administration a freer hand. The Government of Turkey reciprocated promptly by amending the provisional status it had imposed on US forces and by allowing US installations to remain open until negotiation of a new Defense Cooperation Agreement. But as many observers predicted, the Cyprus question remained unresolved.¹¹⁷

Despite having lifted the embargo, Congress hesitated to sanction the resumption of grant aid, along with other assistance, until Turkey offered concrete evidence of being willing to work toward a settlement on Cyprus. In fact, lack of progress on the Cyprus question remained a major stumbling block for the duration of the Carter administration. Meanwhile, among JCS planners, worries grew over how to provide Turkey with new supplies and equipment. According to one set of Joint Staff projections, Turkey would need \$1 billion a year for ten years in order to bring its armed forces up to minimum NATO standards.¹¹⁸ Realizing that Turkey would have to settle for less, the Joint Chiefs supported a security assistance package totaling \$300 million annually, including \$30 million in military (MAP) grant aid.¹¹⁹ However, resistance in Congress convinced the State Department that it would be pointless to make any new requests for grant assistance until there was a breakthrough in the Cyprus negotiations; and in the administration's FY 1981 Security Assistance Program submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the State Department eliminated grant aid entirely. The Joint Chiefs pleaded for reconsideration, arguing that grant aid was essential both to help rebuild Turkey's armed forces and as "a measure of US resolve and commitment."¹²⁰ But after reviewing the matter among themselves, Secretaries Vance and Brown and National Security Adviser Brzezinski decided not to risk a run-in with Congress that might embarrass the Turks and to concentrate instead on finding ways of providing Turkey with liberal amounts of foreign military sales (FMS) credits under the most favorable circumstances.¹²¹

Throughout what remained of the Carter administration, the Joint Chiefs continued to urge stepped-up assistance to repair the damage of the arms embargo and to help restore closer collaboration with Turkey's armed forces.¹²² By early 1980 an added factor in this beleaguered picture was the mounting level of political unrest and sectarian violence which threatened to incapacitate the country. Despite the growing crisis, however, the Joint Chiefs resisted suggestions from the State Department and ISA that the time had come to withdraw nonessential US personnel.¹²³ Finally, in September 1980 the Turkish armed forces staged a coup d'état that overthrew the shaky civilian government and restored order under military rule. In doing so, however, it further alienated sentiment in Congress and cast in doubt whether grant assistance would ever be resumed. The Joint Chiefs had done what they could to help Turkey, but with

US access to its bases finally restored, and with the Cyprus questions still unresolved, President Carter had little incentive to go all-out on Turkey's behalf.

In contrast to the time and energy the Joint Chiefs devoted to Turkish matters, the resolution of problems with Greece, culminating in Greece's reentry into NATO in 1980, seemed relatively easy and straightforward. Congress was more sympathetic toward Greece than toward Turkey, and as a result, the Joint Chiefs encountered far fewer legislative hurdles in restoring military collaboration and assistance programs, both of which resumed promptly following the initialing of a new Defense Cooperation Agreement in July 1977.¹²⁴ At the same time, pending the outcome of further negotiations, Greece allowed the United States to continue using its base facilities under a 1976 interim accord on terms that would prove as good as, if not better, than those that would emerge in a permanent agreement. The Greek government was still optimistic at this stage that the new Carter administration would take its side in the Cyprus affair and put pressure on Turkey to make concessions. However, as this proved not to be the case, stresses and strains began to reappear in Greek-American relations.¹²⁵

Most important of all, from the JCS standpoint, was to secure Greece's reentry into the NATO integrated command structure.¹²⁶ Yet judging from what little appears on this matter in the JCS files, the conclusion is inescapable that JCS advice played little part in the outcome. It was instead the outcome itself that engaged the Chiefs' attention, and for this purpose they followed the recommendation of NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns and deferred to the SACEUR, General Haig, to broker a deal. Success eluded General Haig before he had to step down, and it fell to his successor, General Bernard W. Rogers, USA, to complete the mission.

The outlook, as the negotiations began, was genuinely auspicious. Having withdrawn from NATO in 1974, the Greek government now found it prudent to return to the fold, partly to counter Turkey's unchecked influence within the alliance and also to help protect its claims in the Aegean Sea. Thus it was in Greece's interest, as much as NATO's, that the two should get back together. However, a tentative agreement reached in May 1978 between General Haig and General Ioanis Davos, Chief of Staff of the Greek Armed Forces, fell through, owing to Turkish opposition in NATO's Military Committee to Greek demands for restoration of pre-1974 arrangements that had placed the bulk of the Aegean area under Greek command and control.¹²⁷

Protracted negotiations followed, but by late 1979 the lack of progress was beginning to show in the growing impatience of all involved. Taking over from General Haig, General Rogers continued to seek a solution based on the Haig-Davos formula, only to find himself having to fend off thinly veiled criticism from the US embassy in Athens that he was pursuing the wrong approach. The Joint Chiefs, noting that Secretary General Luns had asked specifically for the SACEUR to head up the negotiations, reaffirmed their support for General Rogers' efforts, as did a review of the situation conducted by the PRC in March 1980.¹²⁸ But within the Joint Staff, the action officer most familiar with the negotiations was beginning to have second thoughts as to whether it might not be advisable to turn the matter over to someone else, since "SACEUR has had

several chances at bat and has struck out every time.”¹²⁹ Nonetheless, General Rogers pressed on, and through dint of perseverance he arranged a broad compromise, acceptable to Greeks and Turks alike, in October 1980. Greece thus resumed its participation in NATO’s integrated command structure, but with numerous details yet to be resolved.

Conclusion

In NATO matters, the Carter years were some of the busiest the Joint Chiefs of Staff had experienced since the alliance was founded. Convinced that NATO needed strengthening, the Carter administration launched two major initiatives, one to give the alliance a more viable conventional military posture, the other to improve the credibility of its nuclear deterrent. At the same time, negotiations progressed on relaxing tensions in Europe through the CSCE and on framing an agreement on the mutual and balanced reduction of forces on the Central Front. Through American mediation, Greece and Turkey moved closer to reconciling their differences over Cyprus and the Aegean, and Greece reentered the NATO integrated command structure.

Yet for all the activity during these years, the results did little to change the military balance in Europe. Least effective of all was the centerpiece of President Carter’s NATO policy, the Long Term Defense Program which, by the NATO defense ministers’ own calculations, fell short of even keeping up with the growth in Warsaw Pact capabilities. As the Joint Chiefs consistently cautioned, elaborate plans for strengthening NATO’s conventional capabilities were pointless unless backed by a credible commitment of resources. And while President Carter was doubtless sincere in pledging American support, he eventually found himself trapped between his promises to NATO and growing US commitments in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region. By the end of the Carter administration, the consensus among US defense planners was that Persian Gulf contingencies should have priority, and that the NATO allies would have to do more on their own.

A further complication toward realizing LTDP goals was the reemergence of debate over NATO’s nuclear posture during the Carter administration’s last two years. The Joint Chiefs regarded the modernization of NATO’s nuclear forces as a routine military matter but found it difficult to proceed in what became a highly charged political atmosphere dominated by the MBFR talks, the mini-crisis over the neutron bomb, and eventually the TNF controversy. From President Carter’s standpoint, the aim of nuclear modernization was never as much military as it was political—to bolster confidence in US leadership within the alliance and to counter the perception of growing Soviet power. Although JCS advice played a part in sorting out and solving these problems, rarely did it exercise a fundamental influence in shaping US policy.

The Carter legacy in NATO affairs was, then, a mixed one of progress on some fronts, but less so on others. All in all, though, NATO was probably a stronger and healthier alliance by the end of 1980 than in 1977. As the Joint Chiefs readily recog-

nized, NATO's real strength was in its political cohesion, more so than in its military muscle. That NATO could eventually present as united a front as it did on the divisive TNF question testified to its members underlying commitment to a common purpose. Managing collective security, as the Chiefs knew from experience, was difficult in the best of times. An ongoing enterprise, it required compromise and concessions from all involved. Nor was that task made any easier by having to work with a president whose skepticism of military advice was all too apparent. Ever mindful of the limitations under which they operated, the Chiefs did what they could in offering counsel which, from their standpoint, would best bolster NATO's capabilities.



A view of the fifth launch of a Trident I (C-4) fleet ballistic missile (FBM) from the submerged nuclear-powered strategic ballistic missile submarine USS FRANCIS SCOTT KEY (SSBN-657).

Strategic Arms Control

Of all the defense and security issues that came before the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Carter years, none received more attention or higher priority than the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) between the United States and the Soviet Union. By the time the Carter administration took office, the SALT process was a well-established part of the Soviet-American dialogue and was viewed by many, including President Carter, as the key to preserving and furthering détente.¹ Begun in 1969, SALT thus far had yielded two major agreements: the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which imposed major constraints on the research, development, testing, and deployment of strategic antimissile systems; and an accompanying five-year Interim Agreement, which froze the size of each side's offensive strategic nuclear arsenals of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). In presenting these agreements to Congress, the Nixon administration portrayed them as contributing to stabilization of the arms race and as paving the way for future reductions. However, as time passed, it became clear that their net effect was not so much to contain the East-West rivalry in strategic weaponry as it was to shift it into new areas. By the mid-1970s competition in such areas as cruise missiles (CM), bombers, mobile ICBMs, and MIRVs (multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles) had emerged as the new topics around which the negotiations revolved.

SALT II, the search for a permanent replacement treaty for the Interim Agreement, began late in 1972. A basic problem, carried over from SALT I into SALT II, was the historic asymmetrical pattern of development in the two sides' respective strategic arsenals. Over the years, while the weapons systems they had acquired were roughly similar, their missions had been different. The United States had elected to develop a "triad" organized around three key components: silo-based ICBMs, long-range bombers, and SLBMs. The Soviet arsenal, on the other hand, emphasized land-based missiles, with considerably fewer long-range bombers and SLBMs. During the SALT I years (1969-1972) the Soviets had increased their ICBM force from around 1,000 to 1,500 launchers, adding some 200 missiles annually. By comparison, the US ICBM force remained stable at 1,054 launchers.

Most of the Soviet ICBMs also carried much heavier payloads than their US counterparts. By the mid-1970s, as the Soviets became more proficient in MIRV technology, they stood poised to acquire around the middle of the next decade the theoretical capacity to inflict a crippling first strike against the entire US silo-based ICBM force. Reducing this danger became the number one US objective during SALT II negotiations in the Nixon-Ford years. But because of the asymmetrical nature of the two sides' arsenals, the Soviets invariably demanded offsetting cuts in US air- and sea-based capabilities.²

With the signing of the Vladivostok accord in November 1974, it seemed for a while that the two sides were on the verge of bridging their differences. Under the Vladivostok formula, each side would limit itself to an aggregate of 2,400 central system launchers (ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers), including 1,320 MIRVed launchers. However, a dispute over counting rules for US cruise missiles and a brewing controversy over the capabilities of a new Soviet bomber, the Tu-22M (known in the West as the "Backfire"), effectively derailed the negotiations. In an effort to restart the talks, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in January 1976 offered new proposals based on a modification of the Vladivostok formula. But when the Soviets balked at restrictions the United States proposed for the Backfire, President Gerald Ford called a halt to further negotiations. As he did so, he served notice that there would be no new initiatives from Washington until after the US presidential campaign.³

Throughout these negotiations, the Joint Chiefs offered consistent but cautious support for strategic arms control. Deeply worried by the Soviet strategic buildup that had started in the 1960s, they saw arms control doing little or nothing to contain the growth of the Soviet arsenal. Nor in the aftermath of Vietnam did they find US political leaders particularly receptive to their pleas that the United States needed to take more vigorous unilateral steps to improve and modernize its central strategic systems, lest it lose further ground to the Soviets. Instead, US policymakers seemed more intent on pursuing a "freeze and reduce" approach to arms control that allowed limited latitude for strategic modernization. They found the advent of the Backfire especially troubling because of its potential for intercontinental missions. Accordingly, the JCS wanted it treated like American strategic bombers and controlled under SALT II, but they strongly opposed Soviet efforts to curb the US cruise missile program, which the JCS saw at the time as having limited strategic potential. Though well aware that arms control was an exceedingly sensitive political issue, both at home and abroad, the Chiefs rejected the notion, popular among some détente advocates, that progress on SALT should have top priority. Short of complete disarmament, they did not see how arms control by itself could assure effective security. The goal in SALT, they believed, should be to preserve "essential equivalence," so that neither side would gain a significant advantage over the other. Strategic stability, in other words, was their first concern. But with the advent of the Carter administration they found their views increasingly at odds with those in the White House, where reducing the size of each side's nuclear arsenal and encouraging a closer dialogue with the Soviets on arms control ranked above all else in foreign and defense affairs.

The “Deep Cuts” Proposal

The first problem the Joint Chiefs faced in 1977 was a new president who passionately hated nuclear weapons, but whose thinking on strategic arms control had yet to mature. While campaigning for the White House and immediately after the election, President-elect Carter had indicated that he would seek first to wrap up the SALT II negotiations, based on the Vladivostok formula and incorporating compromises on the Backfire bomber and cruise missile restraints, and then move on to SALT III, where he expected to achieve significant reductions. In addition to his public statements, he conveyed private assurances to this effect to Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in September 1976, using former Ambassador to Moscow W. Averell Harriman as his intermediary.⁴ However, as the weeks passed following the election, President Carter reassessed his position, with an eye toward seeking major reductions in both sides’ strategic arsenals as soon as possible. Indicative of the direction he seemed headed was the sweeping statement in his inaugural address that he intended to move promptly toward his “ultimate goal,” which was nothing less than “the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this Earth.”⁵

The earliest inkling the Joint Chiefs had that President Carter was revising his position came in private meetings they had with him just prior to his inauguration. At one of these sessions President Carter told the Chiefs that he was thinking of eventually seeking deep cuts in the US and Soviet strategic arsenals, possibly reducing both sides to as few as 200 ICBM launchers. The Joint Chiefs had not previously envisioned reductions on this scale, and at a JCS meeting on 19 January 1977, General George S. Brown, the JCS Chairman, reassured his colleagues that he would do all he could to change the President’s mind on deep cuts. General Brown believed that the primary military objective of the SALT negotiations was to achieve a rough equivalence, preferably at lower force levels, between the US and the USSR strategic nuclear forces and that, as he and his colleagues agreed, should remain the governing criteria.⁶

The Chairman’s apparent determination to oppose President Carter’s deep cuts idea was only the beginning of larger battles over SALT yet to come. On 24 January 1977 President Carter ordered the Special Coordination Committee (SCC), chaired by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, to review SALT negotiations and to identify and analyze alternative approaches.⁷ Henceforth the SCC would have almost exclusive jurisdiction over SALT and other arms control matters. To help develop ideas, the SCC held its first SALT meeting on 3 February. Representing the Joint Chiefs were General Brown and Lieutenant General Edward L. Rowny, USA, the JCS Representative for Strategic Arms Limitation Talks since March 1973. Known as a formidable negotiator, Lieutenant General Rowny was also a close personal friend of Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson (D-WA), a pivotal figure on the Senate Armed Services Committee, whose endorsement of a SALT II treaty was apt to be of crucial importance in securing Senate approval for ratification. Others attending the meeting included President Carter, who put in a brief appearance at the outset, Dr. Brzezinski, the Secretaries of

State and Defense (Mr. Vance and Dr. Brown), Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles W. Duncan, and Office of Management and Budget Director Burt Lance.

Immediately prior to the meeting, Defense and JCS representatives agreed among themselves that they should try to steer the discussion toward broad issues, leaving the development of specific negotiating packages for later.⁸ However, once the meeting got under way, it became clear that President Carter was eager to move beyond generalities and develop concrete proposals that would cut the nuclear arsenals on both sides. In opening the meeting he declared that his “most cherished hope” was to “go out of office with substantial mutual reductions in the common threat.” While acknowledging that, as a first step, one option might be to seek “a Vladivostok-type agreement without cruise missiles and Backfire,” he indicated that he would like the cruise missile and Backfire issues settled now. Beyond that, he was open to any and all ideas that would lead to real reductions at the same time. “I want the level of our capability as low as possible,” President Carter said, “but I’m not naïve. In any case, President Carter added, “we should work for dramatic reductions, carefully monitored and not unfavorable to either side.”⁹

While the President’s remarks came not without prior notice, the boldness of his ideas seems to have caught some of his listeners—the Defense and JCS representatives, for sure—somewhat off guard. Speaking for his JCS colleagues, Chairman Brown insisted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were indeed “staunch proponents of reductions, but with caution.” At this stage, General Brown implied, the number one problem with the President’s proposed course would be to assure adequate verification. “Everyone looks to us to protect fair play in this matter,” he said. “We have stood and fought hard for adequate verification so that the deal will be fair.” General Brown insisted also that any proposal for reductions should bear in mind the needs of extended deterrence. He said that there was concern in Europe and a growing worry among the NATO allies that Europe would be next. “They are nervous and need reassurance,” the Chairman said.¹⁰ President Carter agreed to reassure our European allies but insisted that NATO concerns should not influence US negotiations.¹¹

After President Carter left the meeting, discussion turned to the development of a new negotiating position, with the President’s National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, urging the others to think in terms of “significant” but not as yet “deep” reductions. General Brown said the JCS could support an overall aggregate below 2,400 but not fewer than 1,750 strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs), figures the Secretaries of State and Defense said they could support as well. But Chairman Brown stressed that it would be difficult to persuade the Service Chiefs to agree to more. “Trying to lead the Chiefs on this issue,” he warned, “is like putting three wild dogs through a keyhole.” The Chairman also said that throw-weight limitations should be part of any phased-reductions proposal because of the threat posed by Soviet ICBMs to the US Minuteman. One way or another, he commented, “We have to get at the gross weight on either side.” Returning to the Backfire bomber issue, Dr. Brzezinski asked whether any “collateral” constraints would be necessary. The only verifiable one, Secretary

Brown answered, would be to “clip the wings” on Backfire, so as to reduce its range and payload. Summing up, Dr. Brzezinski directed an interdepartmental working committee to develop alternative packages in two general categories: (1) packages based on the Vladivostok agreement and the January 1976 US proposal, to include a settlement of the cruise missile and Backfire issues; and (2) a separate package on “significant” reductions for both sides (e.g., reducing the overall aggregate tentatively agreed to at Vladivostok from 2,400 down to 2,000 or even less).¹²

Over the next few weeks the Joint Chiefs sought to clarify their position on these issues while, at the same time, the SCC met regularly to iron out terms that US negotiators would take with them to Moscow where talks were scheduled to resume in the spring. Recalling the difficulties the Ford administration had had with the Joint Chiefs over SALT, Dr. Brzezinski made a special effort to line up their support insofar as possible for whatever the President decided to do. “I felt that I could serve the President best,” he recalled, “if I could ensure that the JCS view was fairly taken into consideration in the shaping of SALT proposals, so that subsequently SALT would not be opposed by the Pentagon when it came up for ratification.” As a practical matter, this meant cajoling the JCS into accepting the President’s view that deep reductions were negotiable and that they would not prove injurious to national security.¹³

Although willing to listen, the Joint Chiefs remained exceedingly circumspect. Re-reviewing their position, they concluded that cruise missile constraints were impractical, since verifying a cruise missile’s precise range and type of warhead was virtually impossible. Reaffirming a position they had taken earlier, the Chiefs insisted that the “US requirement for cruise missile systems with ranges of about 3,000 kilometers remains valid.” In contrast, the Soviets wanted to limit cruise missiles to a range of 300 to 600 kilometers, a move the Joint Chiefs strongly opposed. Not only would the imposition of such limits “preclude the advantages” of planned cruise missile deployment but also it would give the Soviets an unfair edge. While Soviet sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) with a 600 kilometer range could target a large portion of the American population, US cruise missiles would be almost useless for targeting the Soviet population.¹⁴ The Chiefs also maintained that wholesale reductions in the numbers of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles should be avoided, though they did not completely rule out cuts somewhat below the Vladivostok ceilings.

The Joint Chiefs were also convinced that the Carter administration was grossly underestimating the danger posed by the Soviet Backfire bomber and the defense burden it would impose if left unchecked. Looking ahead into the 1980s, the JCS were reasonably confident that under current deployment plans for interceptors and Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) the United States could suppress a threat of up to 100 Backfires. Anything above that number, however, would require an all new US strategic air defense program to replace the system that the United States had dismantled in the early 1970s, when it appeared that Soviet strategic aviation no longer posed a serious threat to the continental United States. Although the Chiefs offered no money figures for what might be involved, it was clear that any such effort

would be expensive. Since President Carter's fiscal policy was to cut, not increase, military spending, it followed that the only way to pay for new air defenses would be by taking money away from other programs, a possibility the JCS preferred not to contemplate, given the tight budgetary restrictions under which the Military Services already operated. Insisting that the Backfire be constrained through SALT seemed to the Chiefs the much preferred alternative.¹⁵

These views, as soon became apparent, were increasingly at odds with the emerging consensus in the SCC, which favored larger reductions and fewer limitations on the Backfire than the Chiefs deemed advisable. According to Lieutenant General Rowny's accounts of these deliberations, JCS objections received a polite reception but "appeared to fall on deaf ears." Looking back, Lieutenant General Rowny recalled, "We were outnumbered and outgunned."¹⁶ Secretary of Defense Brown frankly doubted whether the Backfire bomber posed a significant threat; he termed it a "gray area system" with questionable capabilities for strategic (i.e., intercontinental) missions.¹⁷ And because of his highly respected technical expertise on such matters, his opinions carried considerable weight with the President's other senior advisers. Although initially skeptical of President Carter's reductions proposal, he was coming round to favor it, mainly as a means of reducing risk.¹⁸

With the administration's internal review nearing completion, the Joint Chiefs on 10 March sent Secretary of Defense Brown two memoranda and asked that he forward them to the President and to National Security Adviser Brzezinski. While reaffirming their support of "an early and equitable agreement," the Chiefs warned of "a trend in weapon development and deployment which, unless arrested, will adversely affect the balance between the US and Soviet strategic nuclear forces." For this reason, the JCS believed it imperative that the United States pursue the modernization of its strategic arsenal in tandem with arms control. Turning to specifics of the negotiations, the Chiefs continued to feel that the Vladivostok accords represented the best basis for a SALT II treaty. Although they cautioned against constraints on cruise missiles, they offered no hard or fast advice on range restrictions, a clear indication that they regarded this matter open to negotiation. They also said that in the interests of compromise they would not object to "about 100" Backfire bombers counted separately from the aggregate and could accept a reduced ceiling of 2,000 strategic launchers and a MIRV level of 1,200. Further reductions, they said, would require more study.¹⁹ This was, all things considered, a substantial modification of the Chiefs' earlier position, which had been to resist almost any concessions. But whether it went far enough to meet the President's definition of real reductions remained to be seen.

To take stock of the situation, Dr. Brzezinski called a "principals only" meeting limited to JCS Chairman Brown, the Secretaries of State and Defense, Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Stansfield Turner, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) Director Paul Warnke, and Deputy National Security Adviser David Aaron on Saturday, 12 March.²⁰ Although no agenda or minutes of the meeting have surfaced, a memorandum from Dr. Brzezinski to the President two days later suggests that it

dealt mainly with drawing up a list of options for President Carter's consideration. The meeting identified several possible courses of action. One option, termed the "deferral," would codify the Vladivostok formula but postpone a CM/Backfire settlement until later. A second option, the "comprehensive reduction" formula, incorporated the JCS limits on aggregate launchers, accompanied by a free ride up to 120 Backfires for the Soviets and a 1,500 kilometer range limitation on CMs. A third option, called the "first-step reduction," applied the same aggregate limitations as in the comprehensive package, a separate limit of 120 to 300 Backfires, and range restrictions of between 1,500 and 3,000 kilometers on CMs. The meeting adopted no position on which of these options it preferred, though in submitting the list to President Carter, Dr. Brzezinski obviously leaned in favor of the comprehensive reduction formula. Among the advantages it offered, he mentioned that it promised "to produce the greatest measure of strategic stability" while paving "the way for subsequent reductions in SALT III."²¹

In further support of the comprehensive reduction package, the Joint Chiefs informally notified Deputy National Security Adviser David Aaron that this by and large accorded with the advice they had recently given the Secretary of Defense and which the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) officially conveyed to the White House on 18 March.²² But despite the pressure from Dr. Brzezinski and the Chiefs to go along with comprehensive reductions, President Carter had other plans in mind. On 19 March he met with Dr. Brzezinski, Secretaries Vance and Brown, and Vice President Walter Mondale to review the options developed earlier. Conspicuously absent from the meeting were any JCS or ACDA representatives. Dr. Brzezinski again drew attention to the advantages of the comprehensive formula encompassing the JCS-proposed aggregate on reduction levels for launchers and MIRVs. President Carter envisioned deeper cuts, but at the urging of Secretary of Defense Brown, who warned of strong JCS objections, he adjusted his position on certain reduction levels. Going against the Chiefs' advice, however, President Carter decided to exclude Backfires from the aggregate if the Soviets would guarantee that none of the planes would have strategic (intercontinental) potential.²³

A few days later, on 22 March, President Carter held a formal National Security Council (NSC) meeting to signal his approval of the modified deep cuts proposal. For backup purposes, should the Soviets reject the deep cuts, President Carter also approved offering the deferral option. Issuance of a formal presidential directive (PD-7) setting forth these instructions followed shortly. Though the President termed the deep cuts his "preferred option," he acknowledged that an agreement based on either would constitute an acceptable outcome.²⁴ Like Dr. Brzezinski, President Carter recognized that the Joint Chiefs could very well hold the key to the success or failure in the Senate of any new SALT treaty and that without constraints on the Backfire, their support would be questionable. Consequently, he went out of his way to reassure them that, appearances to the contrary, he was not ignoring their interests or advice. Dr. Brzezinski later recalled the scene in his journal: "I was quite impressed by the way Carter massaged the JCS."²⁵ The President, on the other hand, apparently felt he was less than

fully successful in getting his message across, for a few days later he held yet another meeting with the Chiefs, this one a private session with no other advisers present. But whether he was successful in bringing the JCS around to his point of view is unclear.²⁶

On 27 March Secretary of State Vance arrived in Moscow, accompanied by a delegation that included Lieutenant General Rowny representing the JCS. Like most others in the party, Lieutenant General Rowny lacked full access to Secretary Vance's instructions and did not know that, in addition to the deep cuts and deferral proposals, Secretary Vance carried with him a third offer with reduction numbers and constraints that fell roughly between the other two.²⁷ The next day, departing from the usual custom of submitting one offer while holding the second in reserve, should the first be rejected, Secretary Vance tabled the deep cuts and deferral proposals simultaneously. Taking these offers under advisement, Soviet leader Brezhnev flatly rejected both two days later. Though he offered no counterproposal, he did agree that discussions should continue in Geneva. Secretary Vance cabled Washington for permission to table the third option, but President Carter, feeling the Soviets had let him down, decided against doing so.²⁸

Looking back, Secretary Vance found the Soviets' reaction easily understandable, since the cutbacks in the first US offer fell hardest on them, and since the second made no effort to deal with the cruise missile question. According to Secretary Vance, Brezhnev termed the US offers "unconstructive and one-sided" and "harmful to Soviet security."²⁹ It was true, of course, that under the US proposal the Soviet Union would have had to give up some of its heavy ICBMs. But in exchange the United States would have forgone development of the M-X, leaving the US strategic arsenal without an improved hard-target kill capability. President Carter had corresponded in advance with Brezhnev and thought the Soviet leader was more open and receptive than he proved to be.³⁰ But in rejecting the US offers, the Soviets were only doing what the Joint Chiefs had expected. More familiar with Soviet negotiating behavior than the Carter White House, the Chiefs had suspected all along that the Soviets' wary nature would cause them to react negatively if it appeared the United States were trying to foist something different on them than the agreed Vladivostok formula. Now, with the deep cuts proposal in a shambles, the United States would have to start anew.

Negotiations Resume

Despite the setback at Moscow, President Carter felt that a SALT II treaty with significant reductions was still feasible, and he urged his advisers to continue thinking in those terms. Accordingly, on 7 April 1977 the Special Coordination Committee reaffirmed its preference for a "comprehensive" approach with deep cuts (1,800 to 2,000 aggregate, with 1,100 to 1,200 MIRVs) and decided further that the United States should try to elicit a specific Soviet critique and counterproposals.³¹ Shortly thereafter, the Joint Chiefs completed a review of their own and advised Secretary

Brown that, while they regarded some form of a reduction proposal still acceptable “in the context of a total package,” additional US concessions could adversely affect the strategic nuclear balance to the detriment of the United States. Knowing Soviet negotiating tactics all too well, the Chiefs cautioned that if the Soviets refused to accept this proposal in toto, the United States should withdraw it promptly, lest the Soviets try to “pocket” portions of it.³²

Meanwhile, a quiet reshuffling of policy-making procedures saw greater participation by State and the NSC Staff—and virtually none at all by the Joint Chiefs and OSD—in the development of proposals to restart negotiations. According to journalist Strobe Talbott, the prevailing sentiment at State and ACDA held Secretary of Defense Brown largely responsible for the fiasco in Moscow, owing to Secretary Brown’s encouragement of reductions. To mount an effective “rescue operation,” many believed it necessary to exclude Pentagon influence, including not only OSD but JCS as well.³³ Thus, as a means of reenergizing the talks, Secretary of State Vance met with his Soviet counterpart, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, in Geneva in May and secured Mr. Gromyko’s acceptance of a US proposal establishing a three-tiered procedural framework for SALT: (1) a protocol or interim agreement lasting two to three years, dealing with such contentious issues as mobile launchers and cruise missiles; (2) a treaty running until 1985, with ceilings appreciably lower than the Vladivostok limits; and (3) a statement of principles, along the lines of the comprehensive proposal, to guide SALT III.³⁴

With negotiations set to resume, the Joint Chiefs met on 3 June to consider what to do next to avoid being frozen out of future negotiations. General Bernard W. Rogers, USA, who had asked for the meeting, believed the JCS had surrendered all initiative and were no longer capable of anything other than responding to proposals that already had been presented to the Soviets. General Brown worried that, if this were the case, the Joint Chiefs might be forfeiting their statutory responsibility to advise the President. After some discussion, he resolved that the next time he was asked to review a proposal in isolation from the Service Chiefs, he would reply that he was not empowered to speak for them. General Rogers recalled that, just before the Geneva talks, President Carter had reassured the JCS that they would be consulted before any new proposals were tabled. Yet now it was the JCS consensus that Secretary Vance had apparently presented new proposals. Although Secretary Vance preferred to look upon them as “propositions for consideration,” it was Lieutenant General Rowny’s opinion, as the JCS representative in Geneva, that the Soviets regarded them as actual proposals.³⁵

An added factor in the Chiefs’ growing sense of frustration was President Carter’s announcement on 30 June that he was canceling the B-1 bomber, which the Air Force had been counting on to replace its aging fleet of B-52s and to counter the Soviet Backfire.³⁶ The President’s decision came on the recommendation of Secretary of Defense Brown, but it was clear beforehand that President Carter had no use for the plane—indeed, that he found it to have limited strategic value in light of the advent of stand-off cruise missiles and the still highly secret “stealth” aircraft program. Above all, President Carter considered the B-1 “a gross waste of money.”³⁷ Although the

immediate effects on SALT of the cancellation were negligible, there were bound to be eventual repercussions. Not only was the loss of the B-1 a major blow to the Joint Chiefs' hopes for strategic modernization but also it sent a signal to the Soviets that the United States would have nothing new to trade in exchange for limitations on the Backfire. If by canceling the B-1 President Carter was exercising unilateral restraint, expecting the Soviets to show similar forbearance with the Backfire, he was in for a disappointment.

On 18 July the Joint Chiefs gave Secretary of Defense Brown their latest appraisal of where they thought SALT II stood. Though not enthusiastic about the three-tiered framework, they agreed that it did not appear "unreasonable." However, they felt that certain elements represented "significant US movement" from past proposals, whereas the Soviet position remained "essentially unchanged." The JCS perceived "an essential link" between continued force modernization and an acceptable agreement, and this in turn necessitated preserving options. Yet President Carter had recently canceled the B-1 bomber; the Minuteman III ICBM had gone out of production; and the Trident missile submarine and M-X ICBM were experiencing delays. The remaining programs, the Chiefs warned, "may not represent a sufficient deterrent; nor may they signal US resolve to maintain the strategic balance." The Chiefs therefore opposed making any further concessions, either in the protocol or the treaty, and cautioned against allowing the temporary protocol to establish undesirable precedents for long-term restrictions.³⁸

This advice figured little, if at all, in the development of proposals in the face of determined efforts by Vance, ACDA Director Warnke (who also served as chief US negotiator), and a handful of aides to find a formula that would get the talks moving again. And with the SALT I Interim Agreement scheduled to expire on 3 October, State and ACDA approached the task as though working under something of an artificial deadline.³⁹ By late August these efforts had caused the Carter administration to soften its demands for reductions in overall launcher numbers and to shift instead to obtaining a reduced subceiling on MIRVed systems, including ALCM-equipped heavy bombers, a concession the United States had resisted in the past. When the issue had first come up in SCC discussions in June and July, the JCS had reminded Secretary Brown and National Security Adviser Brzezinski that they opposed constraints or limitations of any kind on ALCM-carrying bombers.⁴⁰ Observing that further concessions would be unavoidable, including some affecting ALCMs that would doubtless irritate the Chiefs, Dr. Brzezinski urged President Carter to slow down the pace of the negotiations, partly so as not to jeopardize the Panama Canal Treaty still awaiting action in the Senate, but also to buy time until the administration found itself in a stronger position to fend off JCS and congressional criticisms.⁴¹ Not surprisingly, Dr. Brzezinski also launched a quiet but "sustained effort" to bring the JCS back into the mainstream of the policy process.⁴²

While Dr. Brzezinski counseled caution and delay, State and ACDA were eager to move on to an agreement, hoping that meetings scheduled between Secretary Vance and Foreign Minister Gromyko toward the end of September would achieve the long-

awaited breakthrough. In preparation for Mr. Gromyko's visit to Washington, President Carter convened the NSC on 6 September to review three possible new SALT proposals. All three began with a 2,160 aggregate and then veered off with different options for counting MIRVed and related-type systems. This general approach appealed to President Carter and received qualified endorsement from the Joint Chiefs.⁴³ For the first time in months, Dr. Brzezinski believed that an administration consensus was near at hand.⁴⁴ However, at a meeting a week later the Joint Chiefs reminded Secretary of Defense Brown that in their view, serious problems still remained. In particular, the JCS believed that the United States should have more leeway to develop its cruise missile program and that it should insist on counting all Backfire bombers in excess of 100 against the strategic aggregate. Moreover, there was nothing in these proposals, the Chiefs argued, that would adequately curb the growing Soviet threat to the US silo-based ICBM force. The concessions, in other words, all seemed to be coming from the United States, in an apparent effort to wrap up an agreement as quickly as possible.⁴⁵ Secretary Brown did not in fact fully share the Chiefs' sentiments. He still considered the Backfire a gray area system, with questionable intercontinental capabilities, and he doubted whether ALCM constraints, either in numbers or in range, would prove as debilitating as the JCS believed. Yet like his military advisers, he seemed increasingly uneasy over what a possible agreement might include.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, Secretary Vance, with President Carter's blessing, was cutting a deal with Foreign Minister Gromyko. Out of the give and take, there finally emerged on 27 September a tentative four-level counting agreement similar to the formula discussed earlier in the NSC. Under the overall aggregate (a number yet to be decided) there would be a ceiling of 1,320 on MIRVed missiles and ALCM-equipped heavy bombers, a subceiling of 1,200 to 1,250 on MIRVed missile launchers, and a limit under that of 820 MIRVed ICBMs (as against the 650 to 700 recommended by the JCS). To be sure, significant differences still remained. The United States favored an overall aggregate of 2,160, while the Soviets wanted it set at 2,250. Moreover, the Soviets insisted that the Backfire be excluded from SALT II. Responding to US prodding, they offered assurances, as a good faith gesture, that it lacked, and would never have, intercontinental capabilities. Also yet to be resolved were the handling of cruise missile limitations, the introduction of new ICBMs (including those that might be mobile), and restraints on improvements of existing missiles. But all in all, Vance recalled emerging from the talks "heartened and optimistic."⁴⁷

Sentiment among the Joint Chiefs was distinctly different. On 6 October 1977 they met with President Carter to inform him of what their reactions would be should the United States and the Soviet Union reach an agreement on the basis of the recently concluded Vance-Gromyko deal.⁴⁸ As the Chiefs understood the proposed terms, they remained worried about the future handling of the cruise missile question, the absence of a firm commitment on the part of the United States to build a new ICBM (the M-X) as a deterrent to heavy Soviet systems (e.g., the SS-18), and the failure of the Vance-Gromyko talks to impose constraints on the Backfire. Personally, General Brown also

mentioned reservations he had about verification measures and stressed that a treaty must represent equal concessions. General Jones, then the Air Force Chief of Staff, emphasized the need to keep open the option for a mobile M-X, while Admiral James L. Holloway, III, Chief of Naval Operations, expressed concern over the future of the Trident II missile submarine. President Carter reassured both that their Services' interests would be protected, but he declined to be more specific.⁴⁹

Despite their misgivings, the Joint Chiefs grudgingly acknowledged that the Vance-Gromyko understandings provided "the basis for concluding a workable SALT II arrangement." Even so, they left no doubt that it would be an agreement they might find hard to support in Congress. The JCS hoped that the United States could avoid further concessions at Geneva, but more than that they wanted assurances that modernization plans for the US strategic arsenal would go forward without obstruction or interruption. Otherwise, they feared, "it will be exceedingly difficult to maintain a strategic balance or to provide the Soviets with incentives for further [sic] reductions."⁵⁰ From a military standpoint, it was an eminently sound and sensible position to take. But from President Carter's perspective, a commitment at this stage to JCS preferences would have been a wholesale repudiation of everything he hoped SALT would achieve in terms of an outright reduction in the size and capabilities of both sides' strategic nuclear arsenals. Until now, President Carter had made limited use of JCS advice in developing his strategic arms control policy; henceforth, he would make even less.

Framing the SALT II Treaty

While the Vance-Gromyko talks had established the guidelines for a SALT II treaty, numerous details remained to be resolved in such areas as definitions, the accompanying protocol, and verification measures. This process would take more than a year of further tough negotiation and, in the end, would produce one of the most complex and controversial treaties ever to go before the US Senate. The ensuing battle over ratification would eventually prove inconclusive. But almost from the moment the treaty was signed, its fate in the Senate was uncertain. Only the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and President Carter's decision to withdraw the treaty in protest spared the administration from what might have been the bitter political embarrassment of seeing the Senate either reject the treaty for ratification or compel the administration, through amendments, to reopen the negotiations.

To the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President's decision to withdraw the SALT II treaty was neither unwelcome nor altogether surprising. Throughout the negotiations leading up to its signing, they warned repeatedly that, in their estimation, the emerging agreement contained serious flaws and inequities which, by implication, could jeopardize its chances in the Senate. Although the JCS professed continuing support of strategic arms control, their skepticism remained all too apparent, further underscoring the immense difficulties the Carter administration faced in lining up support for SALT II.

A chronic complaint heard during these months at meetings in the “tank” and throughout the JCS organization revolved around the limited opportunities the Joint Chiefs had for making substantive inputs into arms control policy. In late March 1978, for example, Secretary of State Vance and Ambassador Warnke sent President Carter a memorandum outlining the diplomatic path toward an agreement, but they declined to provide a copy to the JCS. When General Brown finally learned about the Vance-Warnke memorandum, he commented privately: “I’m sorry the JCS aren’t involved to the degree that memos like [this] are shared with them.” Only several weeks earlier, Lieutenant General Rowny had voiced concerns of his own that the JCS viewpoint was not being sufficiently taken into account at the Geneva negotiations. “I told Warnke we were trying to play on his team,” Lieutenant General Rowny reported, “but more and more were being relegated to the bench.”⁵¹

Lieutenant General Rowny was truly in a frustrating and difficult position. Not only was he the official JCS representative but also, unofficially, because of his rumored contacts with Senator Henry Jackson, he was reputed to be “Jackson’s man” in Geneva. Aware of the senator’s influence on the Armed Services Committee, Secretary of Defense Brown had agreed that Lieutenant General Rowny should stay on as the JCS representative in Geneva, despite his reputation among senior State and ACDA officials as a “spoiler.”⁵² Lieutenant General Rowny, for his part, found the Carter administration’s whole approach to arms control much too conciliatory and deferential to Soviet sensitivities, at the expense of US interests. Although he admired President Carter’s idealism and enthusiasm, he considered the President exceptionally naïve, closed minded, and perhaps worst of all, ill-advised by people like Secretary of State Vance and Director Warnke.⁵³ Increasingly at odds with administration policy, Lieutenant General Rowny became embroiled in quarrels leading to published reports of bad blood and backbiting between him and other members of the delegation.⁵⁴

At the same time, owing to the deteriorating health and eventual departure of General Brown, Lieutenant General Rowny found himself losing influence and credibility with his core constituency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Brown and Lieutenant General Rowny had been classmates at West Point and close friends ever since, and it was largely because of General Brown that Lieutenant General Rowny enjoyed as much access as he did to the JCS. But as the Chairman became progressively incapacitated from terminal cancer and was unable to participate in JCS deliberations, Lieutenant General Rowny’s advice counted for less and less. A case in point was a question that arose in the spring of 1978 over how to handle the dismantling of Soviet ICBMs, so that the Soviet force would fall within the proposed aggregate. The Soviets wanted eighteen months to complete the dismantling, but Lieutenant General Rowny warned that extending the dismantling period beyond twelve months would be “political dynamite” in the United States. Nevertheless, Lieutenant General William Y. Smith, the Chairman’s assistant, urged Acting Chairman Admiral Holloway to pay no attention to Lieutenant General Rowny’s comments. First, said Lieutenant General Smith, “we as military professionals are not the best judges of what is ‘political dynamite.’” And second, there

was little to be gained from further haggling as long as the dismantling took place and gave the JCS what they wanted—fewer Soviet ICBMs. Without belaboring the matter, Admiral Holloway sided with Lieutenant General Smith.⁵⁵

With General David C. Jones' advent as Chairman in June 1978, Lieutenant General Rowny's stock appears to have slipped a bit further. As Chief of Staff, General Jones had acquiesced in the President's B-1 cancellation decision, a sign that while he might not agree with the Chief Executive's decisions, he was prepared to cooperate with the White House and accept its direction. Lieutenant General Rowny, on the other hand, preferred the confrontational approach. Although Lieutenant General Rowny established what he described as a "solid" partnership with JCS Chairman Jones, it was clear that the new Chairman had his own ideas on SALT and that he was far less reliant on Lieutenant General Rowny and less deferential than his predecessor had been. As a result, as Lieutenant General Rowny put it, "my relationship with Jones was not as intimate as the one I had enjoyed with Brown."⁵⁶

Still, Lieutenant General Rowny was by no means alone in his concern for what SALT II would produce. Anxieties permeated the Joint Staff as well, as exemplified by the circulation in mid-February 1978 of a J-5 report on the US-Soviet strategic balance pointing to ominous trends which SALT II threatened to exacerbate. Looking at the situation since 1972, the J-5 analysts saw Soviet strategic forces surging ahead, acquiring quantitative and qualitative improvements that were rapidly outstripping those of US forces. Among the factors cited as causing concern were the appearance of the Backfire bomber, Soviet introduction of new and more accurate modern large ballistic missiles (MLBMs) with MIRVed throw-weight far exceeding that of US ICBMs, improved Soviet SLBM capabilities, and the apparent reluctance or unwillingness of the United States to implement corresponding modernization measures in its own strategic arsenal. Planned US strength, compared with that of the Soviet Union, the analysts concluded, "May not result in real and perceived equivalence and, consequently, deterrence . . . in the late 1980's."⁵⁷

This draft underwent a long series of revisions.⁵⁸ Eventually, on 20 March, the Joint Chiefs adopted a toned-down version which they sent to Secretary Brown, together with a recommendation that he pass it along to President Carter. Secretary Brown did so, but with a caveat that the Joint Chiefs' views were not necessarily his own.⁵⁹ Most notably gone from the JCS version the Secretary and the President read was any mention of deterrence possibly failing by the late 1980s. Instead, the JCS chose to emphasize the political and diplomatic advantages the Soviets stood to gain should they ever acquire strategic superiority. From their examination of the strategic balance, the JCS believed that, on a variety of recent issues, Soviet intransigence flowed from a perception that the relative balance of power was shifting in Moscow's favor. Such a shift, the Chiefs warned, threatened to undermine the basic structure of essential equivalence and could tempt Soviet leaders into adopting bolder policies of political and diplomatic coercion. The JCS felt that, broadly speaking, for a SALT agreement to be acceptable, it had to be verifiable and it had to provide a framework allowing both

sides to exercise the right to maintain strategic stability. “The emerging agreement,” the Chiefs acknowledged, “generally provides this framework.” But they worried just the same that, without a more vigorous US strategic modernization program, SALT II could usher in a decisive and perhaps permanent shift of power favoring the Soviets.⁶⁰

As the negotiations progressed, two issues continued to loom over all others in any list of JCS concerns. One of course was the Backfire threat, which the Carter administration seemed inclined to discount, while the other was the fate of the proposed M-X missile, a larger and more accurate ICBM that could “carry the maximum number of warheads” under the proposed SALT II agreement.⁶¹ The Joint Chiefs had long maintained that the United States needed an improved follow-on to the Minuteman, both for deterrence purposes and to offset the growing hard-target kill capability of the Soviet ICBM force. Under the SALT II agreement they saw emerging, the Chiefs could find little being done to prevent the US Minuteman force, as General Jones characterized it, from becoming “unacceptably vulnerable.” As Air Force Chief of Staff, General Jones had had to wrestle with this problem day in and day out, and as the incoming Chairman he advised his colleagues that he would do everything he could to assure that US ICBM capabilities were not further degraded. The solution favored by General Jones and the Air Force at the time was to deploy the M-X under a so-called “multiple aim point” (MAP) system, which focused on the “proliferation of ICBM silos with a transporter which covertly moves a ‘launcher capsule’ from silo-to-silo,” which was permitted under SALT.⁶² But to implement the program General Jones needed both a high-level commitment to support M-X deployment (something President Carter had thus far withheld) and assurances that mobile ICBM basing modes such as MAP would be allowable under SALT II.⁶³

An important turning point came in the summer of 1978 at a series of SCC meetings which seemed to signal the glimmer of a revival of JCS influence on SALT policy by endorsing the Chiefs’ positions both on mobile ICBMs and on a related matter termed “fractionation,” the practice of loading increasing numbers of warheads on missiles.⁶⁴ Both proposals, if incorporated into an arms control agreement, would pose significant verification problems. Mobile launchers were hard to count, and without actually peering into the front end of a missile, it was impossible to tell for sure how many reentry vehicles it might be carrying. But as Secretary Brown pointed out to President Carter, the Joint Chiefs’ recommendations made a lot of sense. The allowable increase in Soviet warheads during the 1980s was of such enormous proportions that, without curbs of one kind or another, the Soviets would have an exceedingly dangerous advantage in less than a decade.⁶⁵

At this stage President Carter remained convinced that “on balance our position is better than that of the Soviets.”⁶⁶ But he was under growing pressure, not only from his military advisers but also from Congress, to bolster what appeared the weakest leg of the US triad—land-based ICBMs. At a Camp David meeting in August 1978 he reluctantly acknowledged the likely need for the M-X, but he rejected the proposed MAP deployment scheme as too problematic for verification purposes. Before making up

his mind, he wanted to see other deployment options.⁶⁷ No doubt also President Carter was playing for time, postponing a decision on the M-X in hopes that something might materialize at Geneva to make the missile unnecessary. But from the JCS standpoint, the signs were encouraging that the President was coming around to their point of view on the M-X as well as on SALT in general. Reporting to his colleagues on the results of a 2 September White House meeting, General Jones exuded confidence that the JCS could count on “getting perhaps 80% of what we want.”⁶⁸

This was, as it turned out, a gross overestimation. Instead of adopting a tougher position, President Carter seemed more determined than ever to close a deal, hoping to use the momentum generated by the recent Egyptian-Israeli peace accord to nudge matters along.⁶⁹ As a further inducement, he authorized several major concessions, which Secretary of State Vance conveyed to Foreign Minister Gromyko in the autumn of 1978. These included abandoning any further attempts to constrain the Backfire bomber under SALT II if the Soviets would provide written assurances not to increase either the plane’s production numbers or capabilities; and the withdrawal of a US-proposed prohibition on testing SLBMs in a depressed trajectory.⁷⁰ By early December, with most of the major hurdles now out of the way, rumors were afoot that an agreement was imminent. Duly alerted, the television networks awaited a momentary statement from the White House. None came. Apparently irked by President Carter’s decision to establish full relations with the People’s Republic of China, the Soviets turned cool and left dangling a number of niggling issues until the following spring.⁷¹

Still, for all intents and purposes, SALT II was a “done deal” by the end of 1978. In assessing the agreement’s probable impact, Joint Staff analysts saw the Soviet Union emerging the net winner. “Within the SALT framework,” they found, “the Soviets have gained at least strategic parity,” based in no small part on strategic expenditures that were roughly triple those of the United States in recent years. Not only were US strategic forces failing to keep pace with Soviet forces in terms of renewal and modernization but also it seemed clear that SALT II contained neither the incentive nor the requirement for the Soviet Union to curb the pace of its current programs. Looking ahead, JCS analysts fully expected the Soviet Union to forge on with additional SS-17, SS-18, and/or SS-19 ICBM deployments, two new SLBMs, a new SSBN, and probably a new heavy bomber as well, all accompanied by improvements in command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I); civil defense; and air defense. In contrast, the United States had yet to approve a deployment mode for the M-X; was counting on cruise missile technology to rejuvenate the effectiveness of its over-age B-52 fleet; and would doubtless have to keep its Poseidon SSBNs in service longer than planned owing to slowdowns in the Trident construction program.⁷²

Lieutenant General Rowny’s assessment was essentially the same. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that the agreement nearing completion was inherently unequal and that it would confer unacceptable and destabilizing advantages on the Soviets. Lieutenant General Rowny, commenting on the treaty, stated, “Accordingly, I saw a SALT II treaty emerging which would be against our security

interests.”⁷³ At a private meeting in late December in Geneva, he confronted Secretary of State Vance with his concerns. Secretary Vance, for his part, seemed unperturbed. The main issue, he believed, was whether this agreement was better than no agreement at all, and whether conceding to the Soviets on such matters as the Backfire was the only practical thing to do. Lieutenant General Rowny, on the other hand, expressed confidence that it was not too late for a reopening of major issues and that it would lead to greater reductions in the overall aggregate than the current agreement envisioned. Lieutenant General Rowny added that these past few months had marked, for him, “an all-time low.” He had been neither privy to President Carter’s decisions nor part of the negotiating process. Secretary Vance replied that it had to be his decision what he revealed and whom he took to the negotiating sessions.⁷⁴

Back in Washington in March, Lieutenant General Rowny found the Joint Chiefs still worried but increasingly prone to accept the treaty without raising any further serious objections. Most agreed with Secretary Vance that the emerging agreement, while far from ideal, was the best possible outcome. Indeed, the only avowed dissenter from this view was General Louis H. Wilson, Commandant of the Marine Corps, who agreed with Lieutenant General Rowny that SALT II contained serious flaws. General Bernard W. Rogers, Chief of Staff of the Army, while concerned that the treaty could lead to undue complacency among the American public, favored it all the same. Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, CNO, disagreed with Lieutenant General Rowny’s judgments that SALT II did not serve US interests and that the Soviets could be pressured into renegotiating major issues. Without a treaty, Admiral Hayward insisted, the United States would have to spend more on strategic forces and this, in turn, would rob funds from the Navy’s cash-strapped shipbuilding program. General Lew Allen, Jr., USAF, doubted whether SALT II would undermine deterrence, as Lieutenant General Rowny thought it might. Nor did he accept another of Lieutenant General Rowny’s arguments—that one of the functions of the treaty was to arrest a Soviet buildup. The Chairman, General Jones, did not see the treaty giving the Soviets any unfair advantages. On the contrary, he viewed the constraints on Soviet systems in the treaty as constituting “a big plus” for the United States and did not believe that the Soviet Union would be in a position henceforth to seize a qualitative edge over the United States. Without a treaty, General Jones feared that Congress would not fund any new programs, and that it might even reduce the money for those already under way. Obviously, although the Chiefs were far from sanguine over the impending agreement, they were prepared to give it the benefit of the doubt and learn to live with it.⁷⁵

From this point on, until the Vienna summit in June 1979, JCS interest in SALT II revolved around two sets of related problems: (1) clearing up all remaining ambiguities in the treaty, especially verification problems relating to the Soviet practice of encrypting missile test data, and removing obstacles that might stand in the way of deploying a mobile missile system; and (2) securing from President Carter a firm commitment to support the further modernization of US strategic programs, including approval of the M-X.⁷⁶ Barring such a commitment, the Chiefs insisted, “the treaty will simply codify

the existing unsatisfactory situation and compel the United States to enter SALT III negotiations from a position of weakness.”⁷⁷ Many in the Senate agreed, pointing to the need for an administration decision on the M-X before they could make up their minds on how to vote on the treaty. As one Senate aide recalled, “MX and SALT became as intertwined as the fibers of a rope.”⁷⁸

President Carter, for his part, remained as leery as ever of the M-X. But with the completion in the spring of 1979 of a new M-X basing study, and under continuing pressure from Congress and his military advisers to clarify his position on strategic modernization, he saw his hand being forced. Of the three M-X basing alternatives the President received, the front-runner in the competition now appeared to be the multiple protective shelter (MPS) concept, using 5,200 vertical shelters spread out over a large area to shield 200 M-X missiles in random and changing deployments. The theory behind MPS was that if an attacker did not know which shelters housed missiles, all the shelters would have to be targeted in order to ensure destruction of the entire missile force. Other possible basing options for the M-X were a road mobile system, which would involve putting M-X missiles on public highways at times of high international tensions, and a mix of air mobile and silo-based deployments.⁷⁹ Although the Joint Chiefs hesitated to endorse one option over another, MPS was the favorite of the Joint Staff and by far the preferred solution of the Air Force, owing to its survivability and cost-effectiveness over other schemes.⁸⁰ But MPS also posed significant verification problems that gave President Carter pause. After lengthy discussions in the Policy Review Committee, followed by a formal review in the NSC on 4 June, President Carter again deferred a final basing decision, but he agreed that engineering development of the M-X should proceed without further delay.⁸¹ Even so, it was a decision he regretted having to make, noting in his diary the “nauseating” feeling it gave him and the “gross waste of money” it would entail.⁸²

Soon after the President made his decision, Dr. Brzezinski circulated instructions that all press releases, congressional testimony, and speeches concerning the M-X were to be closely coordinated with the White House.⁸³ Clearly, it was through the promise of the M-X that the Carter administration hoped to fortify its position, turn skeptics into supporters, and reassure those who might be wavering that the SALT II treaty was in America’s best interests. Among those yet to be fully convinced were the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But with the SALT II agreement on the verge of going to the Senate, the time was fast approaching when they would have to resolve their doubts, one way or the other, and adopt a public posture that would not only place their credibility on the line but also, no doubt, go far toward influencing the outcome of the ratification debate.

The SALT II Treaty before Congress

More than six years in the making, a SALT II agreement finally became reality at the Carter-Brezhnev summit held in Vienna in June 1979. A long and exceedingly

complicated document, SALT II consisted of numerous interrelated parts, including a five-year treaty on the limitation of strategic offensive arms, accompanied by agreed statements and common understandings clarifying the treaty text; a protocol (treated as an integral part of the treaty) imposing temporary constraints and prohibitions; and a joint statement of principles to guide negotiators going into SALT III. A Memorandum of Understanding and Statements of Data supported the agreement by providing an agreed inventory of existing strategic offensive forces. Finally, in a further clarification of the issues dealt with in the SALT II negotiations, the Soviets supplied, albeit reluctantly, the statement they had promised renouncing any intention of giving the Backfire bomber intercontinental capabilities and confirming that production would not exceed thirty copies per year. With these assurances in hand, President Carter made known that he considered "the carrying out of these commitments to be essential to the obligations assumed under the Treaty." This was, however, no more than a unilateral declaration and was in no way binding upon the Soviets, who declined to confirm that they, too, considered their Backfire declaration to be a treaty obligation.⁸⁴

What attracted the most attention and subsequent criticism were the treaty's numerical limitations and qualitative constraints. Instead of a permanent agreement as originally sought, the SALT II treaty would expire at the end of 1985, making negotiation of a replacement agreement all the more imperative. The treaty initially established an overall aggregate of 2,400 on ICBM launchers and heavy bombers, dropping to 2,250 by the end of 1981. The subceiling for ICBM and SLBM launchers equipped with MIRVs and for ALCM-equipped heavy bombers was 1,320; for MIRVed ICBMs and SLBMs, 1,200; and for MIRVed ICBMs alone, 820. During the treaty period each side could flight-test and deploy one new type of "light" ICBM, carrying up to ten reentry vehicles. However the number of reentry vehicles (RVs) placed on existing ICBMs and SLBMs for flight-testing and deployment could not exceed the number of RVs with which that type of ICBM or SLBM had already been flight-tested. ALCM-capable heavy bombers (defined as B-52 and B-1 types for the United States; Tupolev-95 and Myasishchev types for the Soviet Union) could carry up to twenty nuclear or nonnuclear cruise missiles with a range of over 600 kilometers, though should either side elect to build a new cruise missile platform, a load of twenty-eight would be permissible. Finally, for verification purposes, it was up to each side to use its own national technical means and to address compliance questions to the other through the Standing Consultative Commission based in Geneva.

The accompanying protocol set forth certain limitations through the end of 1981 dealing with issues on which the parties had been unable to agree for the entire term of the treaty. Deployment and flight-testing of mobile ICBMs were prohibited for the period of the protocol, while under the treaty, once the protocol expired, the United States would be free to test and deploy a mobile version of the M-X. Since the M-X was not scheduled to be ready for deployment before the mid-1980s, the restrictions in the protocol posed little hindrance. In addition, during the life of the protocol the deployment of ground-launched and sea-launched cruise missiles with ranges in excess of

600 kilometers was prohibited. The Soviets hoped by this to curb the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's plans for a long-range theater nuclear force (LRTNF). However, at the time the treaty was signed, NATO's plans for a LRTNF were still in flux. Later that year, when NATO finally made up its mind, it was with the clear stipulation that there would be no LRTNF deployments before 1983.

Since controversy and public criticism had dogged the Carter administration's handling of the SALT II negotiations from the outset, it could have come as no surprise to the White House that the newly signed treaty would encounter opposition. What the President and his aides seem to have underestimated were the depth and intensity of the public reaction. Practically no one liked the treaty. Vigorously condemned by conservatives for containing too many concessions to the Russians, it received but tepid support from many liberals, who felt it did not go far enough toward restraining the arms race.⁸⁵ Among those participating in the attack on the treaty from the former point of view was Lieutenant General Edward Rowny. Now retired from the Army, he devoted himself practically full-time to seeing the SALT II treaty either defeated or drastically rewritten.⁸⁶

In these circumstances, JCS assessments promised to play an especially critical part in deciding the SALT II treaty's fate in the Senate. Indeed, nearly a third of the Senate expressed itself as being undecided at the time of the treaty's signing.⁸⁷ A strong JCS endorsement of the treaty doubtless would help to win converts among this group, whereas a JCS recommendation against the treaty would almost certainly prove fatal to its chances. SALT II was the second major treaty debate involving the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Carter years, the first being the Panama Canal treaty (see chapter 6). That experience had drawn accusations from some members of Congress that the Chiefs were not providing them with wholly objective advice and that they were merely parroting what the administration wanted said. This time, the Chiefs decided that they would approach the problem differently. Anticipating that they would be called on for their views, they laid down certain criteria in advance and advised Secretary Brown that they would judge the treaty largely on the basis of three questions: Was it equitable and in the mutual interests of both sides? Did it accommodate broader strategic interests, including those of America's allies? And did it provide a suitable framework for, and would it be accompanied by, measures "to arrest the deteriorating state of the military balance"?⁸⁸

Taking these various factors into account, the Chiefs on 11 July 1979 told Secretary of Defense Brown that they found SALT II to be "a modest but useful contribution to our national interests." The Chiefs explained that, while they would have preferred larger reductions and a more restrictive treaty, with greater emphasis on curbing Soviet heavy missiles and the Backfire, they believed that the aggregates and sub-limits, combined with the fractionation ceilings, represented "an important step forward." But they also reminded the Secretary that much remained to be done unilaterally by the United States to arrest what they considered to be the deteriorating military balance. Efforts in SALT III, they advised, should show greater determination to achieve substantial

strategic reductions, especially in the throw-weight of Soviet heavy missiles. Though not a particularly vigorous endorsement of the treaty, it served notice nonetheless that the Chiefs would stand behind SALT II and do their best to help see it approved.⁸⁹

Over the course of the summer the Joint Chiefs testified at length before the Senate Foreign Relations and Arms Services committees in support of SALT II. Basically, the arguments and opinions they offered differed little from those they had provided privately to the Secretary and the President. While the Chiefs endorsed the treaty for ratification, they did so without disguising their disappointment over its failure to include the Backfire bomber or to reduce the size and capabilities of the Soviet Union's menacing arsenal of large ICBMs. Moreover, the JCS readily acknowledged that, owing to the recent loss of monitoring posts in Iran, the task of verifying Soviet compliance with the treaty would be that much harder. However, they felt it would be easier to watch and assess Soviet capabilities with the treaty than without it.⁹⁰

A key point, reiterated throughout the Joint Chiefs' testimony, was their belief that SALT II could not stand alone and that it needed to be accompanied by a national commitment to boost defense spending. "Our priority must go to strategic nuclear force modernization," General Jones explained, "but increases are needed across the board for nuclear and nonnuclear forces."⁹¹ This reflected the growing concern among the Chiefs over recent and expected increases in Soviet strategic power and over the parallel buildup since the early 1970s in Soviet conventional forces, including what Admiral Hayward described as "a concerted challenge to the maritime superiority the United States has enjoyed since World War II." General Jones and Admiral Hayward agreed that, with or without the treaty, the Soviets were likely to overtake the United States in most indices of strategic nuclear power by the mid-1980s. Consequently, the United States needed to initiate steps of its own to guard against falling into a position of strategic inferiority, which might invite the Soviets to engage in political blackmail. Arms control could help in this process, but it was not enough by itself. "To the extent," Admiral Hayward observed, "that SALT agreements provide a framework within which we can compete with the Soviets to maintain an adequate balance and prevent the establishment of Soviet superiority, they represent a useful device."⁹²

As expected, JCS objectivity was a matter of concern throughout the hearings. Hoping to sway others, proponents of the treaty, such as Democratic Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, sought assurances from the Chiefs that they had had ample opportunity to reach the President with their advice and inputs and that they could vouchsafe the treaty as militarily sound.⁹³ Critics, on the other hand, such as Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, tended to dismiss the Chiefs' testimony as biased to begin with, and therefore of little credibility. In assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the administration's case, Senator Jackson and his staff rated Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, rather than any of the JCS, as by far the most persuasive and influential pro-treaty witness the Senate was likely to hear.⁹⁴

As the hearings progressed, many critics also questioned whether the administration was paying sufficient attention to the Joint Chiefs' recommendations concerning

strategic modernization. Especially skeptical was Georgia Senator Sam Nunn, who accused the administration of allowing itself to be lulled into a false sense of security through the promises and prospects of arms control. As a result, Senator Nunn argued, the United States had few plans to carry through on all the new programs permitted under the treaty. Citing DoD estimates, Senator Nunn saw the United States backing away from the 3 percent annual increase in defense spending that President Carter had promised the NATO allies in 1977. Without mentioning any specific programs, Senator Nunn said that he personally favored annual net increases in the 4 to 5 percent range (a figure the JCS supported as well), and that without an unequivocal commitment from the White House to support something on this order, he could not in "good conscience" vote for the treaty.⁹⁵

According to Dr. Brzezinski, such criticism was not without effect on President Carter's thinking, and by early August the White House was giving serious consideration to a supplemental defense appropriations request in order to help generate support in Congress for SALT II.⁹⁶ At the same time, President Carter again took up the question of the M-X basing mode, and at an NSC meeting on 5 September he declared his support for a horizontal basing system over the vertical basing system.⁹⁷ Anticipating verification problems with the vertical system, President Carter opted for a horizontal basing mode which would allow each missile's profile to be more visible to Soviet surveillance satellites. Thus, several times a year when the shelters were opened for view from above, the Soviets could confirm that the United States had deployed no more than the agreed number.⁹⁸

Just as ratification efforts seemed to be gaining ground, disclosures in August and September 1979 that US intelligence had confirmed the existence of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba yielded a setback from which the administration never fully recovered. In fact, rumors and reports of Soviet military activity in Cuba circulated almost constantly, and normally such information would have caused little stir. But with the SALT II debate going on, the Soviet brigade became a cause celebre, which played into the hands of the treaty's opponents.⁹⁹ Early in November, by a vote of 9 to 6, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended the treaty for ratification. But as a sign of trouble yet to come, the Armed Forces Committee a month later adopted a report condemning the treaty as "not in the national security interests of the United States."¹⁰⁰

The final blow to the SALT II treaty's prospects was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on 26 December 1979. From this point on, President Carter knew that there was no chance of gaining the two-thirds vote he needed for ratification.¹⁰¹ As part of a package of NSC-recommended actions to demonstrate US displeasure with Soviet behavior, President Carter withdrew the treaty from Senate consideration and made no recommendation that it be rescheduled for a vote in the foreseeable future.¹⁰² But having come this far with the treaty, President Carter refused to repudiate it outright, and in May 1980 he announced his intention to abide by its terms as long as the Soviet Union did the same.¹⁰³

Assessing the JCS Role

Throughout the SALT II treaty negotiations, the Joint Chiefs kept two objectives in clear view. One was to preserve a strategic balance built on essential equivalence. Though difficult to define in terms that could be encompassed in a treaty, essential equivalence meant to the Chiefs the preservation of a posture that would prevent either side from gaining a significant strategic edge over the other leading to confidence in being able to inflict a disarming first strike. The Joint Chiefs had long maintained that this should be a top priority of US arms control policy, but it was not until the negotiation of the SALT II treaty that they came face to face with having to evaluate arms control trade-offs in these terms. From the JCS standpoint, most of the concessions favored the Soviet Union, and while the treaty itself may not have prejudiced the existing strategic balance to any undue degree, it set an unfortunate precedent for the negotiation of future strategic arms control agreements.

Related to this first objective was a second: to nail down commitments from Congress and the President to modernize the US strategic arsenal in order to stay competitive with the steadily improving Soviet posture. Had the United States continued all along to invest the large sums in strategic weapons that it had spent in the 1950s and 1960s, the Joint Chiefs might have accepted the concessions in the SALT II treaty more easily. But with the general fall-off in defense expenditures that followed the end of the Vietnam War, the dismantling of US air defenses, President Carter's cancellation of the B-1 bomber, and the administration's hesitation over Trident and the M-X, the Joint Chiefs saw their options for modernization becoming fewer and fewer. Where the problem would become most acute was in the decade ahead. The Chiefs worried that time was on the Soviets' side and that before long the correlation of forces would be decidedly in Moscow's favor.

This line of analysis put the Joint Chiefs rather at odds both with the mood of the country and with its national leadership. President Carter passionately hated nuclear weapons, and in his ardent advocacy of arms control he reflected a popular antimilitary bias that carried over from the recent Vietnam War. The legacy he wanted to leave was one of beginning to rid the world of these awful devices, not bringing more into existence. Not surprisingly, he found JCS advice less than helpful in this regard and tended to work around them when he had to make major decisions. The Chiefs may have gone on record that they had had ample opportunity to present their views to the President, but there is little evidence that he was listening very closely. What the Chiefs considered necessary modernization of the strategic arsenal, President Carter thought of simply as waste. To President Carter, as to many people, it seemed ludicrous that, in order to achieve reductions in strategic arms, both sides had to build more. Even so, President Carter was enough of a realist to recognize that he had to have JCS support for the SALT II treaty to clear the Senate. He knew that he needed to demonstrate to skeptics that, come what may from arms control, he remained committed to preserving a credible, up-to-date strategic deterrent. Approval of the M-X (a weapon the President

personally loathed and despised) was President Carter's way of satisfying both these needs. But in view of the deteriorating international situation as the SALT II debate progressed, President Carter found himself steadily forced into taking a tougher stand.

There can be no doubt that the Joint Chiefs emerged from the SALT II experience feeling somewhat frustrated. While they wanted to support the President's policies, they could not in good conscience give the SALT II treaty their wholehearted blessing. Indeed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted SALT II essentially on the grounds that it would do no immediate or measurable harm—hardly a ringing endorsement. And while they welcomed the M-X decision, they could only be cautiously optimistic as to where it would lead. Whether the administration would, as the JCS recommended, follow through and “arrest the deteriorating state of the military balance” remained to be seen. But without that follow-through, the JCS were far from confident about the prospects for SALT III.



GEN Richard A. Ellis, Strategic Air Command, commander in chief, handles top level communications in his airborne command post, during Exercise Global Shield '79.

Formulating Basic Policy and Strategy

In dealing with basic national policy, as in dealing with the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty and other major security problems during the Carter years, the Joint Chiefs of Staff faced a changed world. Setbacks in Vietnam, the Soviet strategic buildup, and the relative decline in US economic power vis-à-vis Western Europe and Japan, all had combined to create a much different geopolitical environment than in years past. Though still a global superpower, the United States had lost the international predominance it had enjoyed in the several decades following World War II. Sensitive to this trend, President Carter wanted to establish new relationships with the Soviet Union and other countries based on greater respect for human rights, more reliance on diplomacy for problem-solving, and reduced arsenals of weapons. Although the Joint Chiefs could not help but admire President Carter's sincerity and high moral purpose, they were at the same time leery of moving too far, too fast, toward adopting strategic concepts and policies that might not prove practicable. Between President Carter's view of the world and that of his military advisers, there was ample room for divergence.

Probably the most fundamental difference was in their respective perceptions of the Soviet threat, which contributed to friction over such issues as arms control, fiscal policy, and major procurement programs. Initially, President Carter tended to judge the Soviets on what he thought to be their intentions, which he hoped to change. He entered office brimming with optimism that he could reach agreement with the Soviets on a variety of arms control and regional security issues that would obviate both sides' need for new or additional military forces. He liked the idea of tailoring basic national security policy accordingly and endorsed unilateral initiatives to find more flexible uses of military power resting on a thorough reexamination of strategic nuclear targeting and employment policy, the most thorough of its kind since the early 1960s. Although the Joint Chiefs rarely raised any overt or strenuous objections, it was clear

that they considered the President's thinking somewhat naïve and that they harbored serious misgivings about the feasibility of some of his policies. Almost as a rule of thumb, the Chiefs measured Soviet intentions in terms of Moscow's already large and growing military capabilities. As time went on, President Carter became increasingly disillusioned with Soviet behavior, as evidenced by his reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Yet he never accepted the Chiefs' judgment that the changes in basic policy and strategy he hoped to bring about would necessitate far-reaching changes and improvements in the force posture as well.

Basic Policy Review: PRM-10 and PD-18

Like Presidents before him since World War II, Jimmy Carter had plans for conducting a broad review of basic national security policy through the National Security Council (NSC) in order to establish new priorities and give clearer definition to his administration's objectives, both at home and abroad. Generally speaking, the Joint Chiefs welcomed these exercises, even though they were time consuming and tended to yield mixed results, since they offered an opportunity for all involved to air their views, compose differences, and perhaps come up with new ideas. With the resulting policy guidance in hand, the JCS felt themselves on firmer ground when it came time to recommend strategy and force levels for incorporation into the President's annual budget submissions to Congress. Basic policy reviews thus served a dual purpose: they allowed the administration to set forth in systematic fashion the objectives it intended to pursue; and they gave the Military Services and the Joint Chiefs a vehicle for suggesting generalized plans and programs to meet the administration's goals.

The impetus for the review conducted at the outset of the Carter administration came largely from Presidential Assistant for National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski. After years of what he considered drift, frustration, and uncertainty in the wake of Vietnam, Dr. Brzezinski felt the time had come to take a fresh look at US foreign and defense needs in the context of "a broadly gauged review of the US-Soviet strategic balance."¹ Initial guidance (PRM-10), approved by President Carter in February 1977, called for a "comprehensive examination" in two parts. The first, conducted through the Policy Review Committee (PRC) under the chairmanship of Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, was a military force posture review, looking at such topics as force levels, the impact of new technologies, alternatives to reliance on foreign bases, deterrence at reciprocally lowered strategic levels, and the viability and desirability of preserving the "triad" strategic forces posture. The second part, which Dr. Brzezinski himself elected to head, using the Special Coordination Committee (SCC), was to be "a dynamic net assessment" of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the United States and the Soviet Union. Once the two groups completed their investigations, they were to merge their findings in order to "identify for Presidential decisions alternative

national strategies and the major defense programs and other initiatives required to implement them.”²

An ambitious undertaking from the start, the PRM-10 review quickly grew into one of the most laborious ever conducted, involving a dozen and a half interagency working groups, augmented by consultants from the academic community and from government-sponsored think-tanks. In many respects it resembled the elaborate basic national security policy reviews done annually by the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s.³ But even though there were close similarities between the PRM-10 review and those initiated by previous administrations, this one differed from most others in that, except for Dr. Brzezinski, few senior officials paid it much attention once it was under way. As a result, it was somewhat questionable as the project progressed what its impact, if any, would be. President Carter, while supportive of Dr. Brzezinski’s efforts, initially asked to see only segments of the report, such as the findings on the Middle East.⁴ Evincing more interest in details than in grand strategy, the President soon found his time and attention preempted by other matters, SALT and the Panama Canal treaty debate especially. Rarely did he bother to look in on the PRM-10 project until the very end. Secretary of Defense Brown was likewise preoccupied with other tasks, and turned the coordination of Department of Defense inputs over to Lynn E. Davis, a deputy assistant secretary in International Security Affairs (ISA) and author of a recent monograph urging closer attention to incorporating limited nuclear options (LNO) into future strategic targeting plans.⁵

The Joint Chiefs of Staff were among the few who accorded serious high-level attention to the PRM-10 review from the very start. In making plans for JCS participation, the Director, Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Ray B. Sitton, USAF, turned down a Navy suggestion that each Service provide its own representation to the task forces conducting the review and opted instead to handle military inputs on a joint basis. Thus, while the Chairman, General George S. Brown, USAF, represented the JCS at the PRC/SCC level, Vice Admiral Patrick J. Hannifin, USN, Director for Plans and Policy (J-5), headed the JCS representation to the Military Force Posture Review Interagency Group and its various subgroups. Attempting to be reassuring, Lieutenant General Sitton advised the Navy that the need for analytical support studies and the creation of a DoD Concepts Group, composed of six Service personnel (two Army, two Navy, one Air Force, and one Marine Corps) and two civilians from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), ought to provide ample opportunity for each Service to express its views before any final submissions went to the President.⁶

Even with JCS and Service participation at all working levels of the PRM-10 review, military planners encountered repeated difficulties making their voices heard. Part of the problem was an apparent eagerness on the part of civilian officials in OSD and on the NSC Staff to wrap up the review as quickly as possible, unaware perhaps of the internal coordination procedures that Joint Staff officers assigned to the study were obliged to follow. “As a result,” one J-5 action officer found, “JCS comments are continually required without adequate time for consideration of . . . important issues.”⁷

But more often than not the complaints had to do with what seemed the rigid mind set and preconceptions of civilian officials. A case in point was the NSC-supervised net assessment as it related to Europe, which J-5 analysts judged to be an “incomplete and inadequate exposition of the NATO/PACT military balance,” based on “unwarranted optimism concerning current status and future trends in NATO/PACT nonnuclear force balance.”⁸

The most immediate and direct concern of JCS planners was, of course, the strategy and force posture review, nominally chaired by the Secretary of Defense, but in actuality overseen from Ms. Davis’ office in ISA. Additional guidance provided by Dr. Brzezinski suggested that this part of the inquiry should address itself to the development and identification for presidential decision of a wide range of alternative military strategies and alternative force postures, with appropriate cost data for each. Among the various contingencies Dr. Brzezinski had in mind, he specifically mentioned eight: a major US-Soviet strategic nuclear exchange; limited US-Soviet strategic nuclear exchanges; a NATO-Warsaw Pact (WP) war in Central Europe; a limited conflict on the flanks of Europe involving Soviet forces; conflict with the Soviet Union in the Pacific as part of an overall NATO-WP war; a conflict in the Middle East involving limited Soviet participation; intervention by the Soviet Union in relatively remote areas (e.g., Southern Africa); and conflict with third countries without Soviet forces involved (e.g., North Korea). Instead of a final report recommending a specific military strategy or military posture for dealing with these contingencies, Dr. Brzezinski wanted statements of options for each, taking into account such factors as the scale and scope of the military threat, foreign policy aims, arms control initiatives, the impact of new technologies, costs, and any other considerations that might be pertinent. What the study was meant to produce, in other words, was not so much a new basic policy per se, but rather a new set of flexible criteria for measuring future defense- and security-related needs.⁹

In fact, Dr. Brzezinski and President Carter already had a basic policy pretty well in mind. To provide additional guidance and to help give their ideas clearer definition, Dr. Brzezinski brought in Samuel P. Huntington, a close personal friend who taught government at Harvard University, to serve as a senior consultant to the NSC Staff. In April 1977 Dr. Huntington circulated a brief paper advising the PRM-10 working groups of the conceptual framework that he and Dr. Brzezinski (and by extension, President Carter) wanted applied. Projecting ahead over the next five-to-ten years, Dr. Huntington expected US-Soviet relations to be “a mix of cooperation and competition.” Assuming “an environment of strategic parity,” he anticipated competition to outweigh cooperation, thus requiring the United States to maintain “at least the current military balance in relation to the Soviets.”

Turning to regional matters, Dr. Huntington discounted the possibility of China becoming an enemy of the United States and foresaw instead a Sino-American rapprochement diverting Soviet resources from other purposes. He also thought that Africa and the Middle East would continue to experience “considerable political instability,” but instructed the working groups to assume that the United States would

respond with diplomatic and economic, rather than military, initiatives, except where it might be necessary to deter or counter Soviet military intervention. In Europe he saw an ongoing process of “political decay and/or ideological change,” which would place added burdens on the more stable members of NATO. And finally, he found there to be a “reasonable probability” of a crisis-confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, comparable to the confrontations of October 1962 and October 1973. Bearing this possibility in mind, his instructions noted that it was only prudent for the United States to maintain sufficient conventional and strategic capabilities to avert and/or deal effectively with a possible escalation toward nuclear conflict.¹⁰

Here in a nutshell were the basic strategic assumptions around which the PRM-10 review came to be organized. By early May 1977 work on the force posture sections had yielded an interim report to the White House highlighting nine alternative integrated military strategies (AIMS), which Secretary of Defense Brown described as “analytical building blocks for various geographical areas of the world or fields of conflict.”¹¹ Practically speaking, their purpose was to illustrate what the United States could expect to accomplish in worldwide and lesser conflicts with various force postures. The suggested AIMS ranged from a relatively low level of readiness, involving significantly reduced reliance on military power, to the development of clear US superiority (conventional and nuclear) in any foreseeable confrontation with Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces.¹²

In assessing whether these were viable concepts for strategy and force-planning purposes, the Joint Chiefs noted the absence of any statement of national interests and objectives. Such a statement, they insisted, was a major prerequisite in fashioning a single, coherent military strategy. The Chiefs also questioned whether it was sound policy to contemplate AIMS based on such low levels of capabilities that it would be nearly impossible, in their opinion, “to preserve the basic ability of the United States to prevent coercion in Europe against the US and its allies short of all out nuclear conflict.” As a practical matter, the JCS did not believe that these AIMS deserved further, serious consideration. At the same time, they were also uneasy over trying to attain uncontested US military superiority, lest it provoke the Soviets into actions that could prove radically destabilizing to the military balance. A posture somewhere in between these two extremes, the Chiefs implied, would hold the key to preserving credible deterrence and effective security. But without a clearer notion of ultimate strategic objectives, the Chiefs refrained from stating any definite preferences.¹³

Secretary of Defense Brown concurred that the AIMS in the interim report needed to be refined and reduced in number, down to “the two or three most advantageous,” in order for them to be useful in program decisions and specific force planning guidance, including acquisition and employment policy.¹⁴ President Carter agreed, and at a meeting with the JCS and Secretary Brown on 19 May he ordered, as the Chiefs had recommended, a paring of suggested AIMS to reflect only the most realistic possible scenarios resulting from an East-West confrontation. At the same time he directed the exploration of political and diplomatic initiatives against the Soviet Union during

wartime, the factoring of sustainability into a “limited loss” option resulting from a strategic exchange, and closer integration of political and military strategies.¹⁵

Incorporating the President’s preferences, the Policy Review Committee set about assembling a draft PRM-10 final report, which it circulated toward the end of June.¹⁶ Despite improvements over what they had seen earlier, however, the Joint Chiefs felt that, overall, “significant inadequacies and shortcomings still exist.” Among the problems the Chiefs identified were the continuing absence of a precise statement of political objectives; the lack of a clearly articulated analysis of projected enemy capabilities; a tendency to understate the mutual reliance of the United States and its allies, especially in NATO Europe; the use of questionable assumptions that neglected “real world” considerations, such as the practicality and cost of various strategic options; the availability of raw materials, including energy supplies, and the capacity of the US industrial and manpower base to support the illustrative strategies; and insufficient attention to the role and importance of theater nuclear forces (TNF) in both US warfighting and deterrence doctrine. Summing up their findings and impressions, the Chiefs advised that “utilization of the Draft as a basis for specific strategy decisions is not warranted at this time.”¹⁷

Frustrated by the lack of progress in composing differences, Secretary of Defense Brown named an ad hoc committee, chaired by David McGiffert, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, to assemble “a brief report” summarizing the most useful findings thus far of the PRM-10 force posture review. The others on the group were Lieutenant General William Y. Smith, USAF, Assistant to the Chairman; Russell Murray, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation; William J. Perry, Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering; and Andrew Marshall, Director, Net Assessment in OSD.¹⁸ To help speed up and focus the committee’s work, the Joint Chiefs provided a general critique of the PRM-10 AIMS and their military implications, which Secretary Brown later appended to the PRM-10 final force posture report. For security objectives and policies, the Chiefs looked to the Defense Guidance of November 1976, a legacy of the Nixon-Ford years, but still the most recent and authoritative statement of its kind on record. While the JCS saw pros and cons in each of the proposed AIMS, their general impression was that none reflected a wholly satisfactory or reliable military posture. The most prudent strategy would have to reflect an almost incalculable number of variables and assumptions. A defense strategy resting primarily on strategic forces, for example, much as the United States had relied on in the 1950s, ran the risk of wholesale and indiscriminate destruction should deterrence fail, leading to a Pyrrhic victory at best; while a posture tilted toward conventional forces, though useful in controlling escalation, could leave the United States and its allies vulnerable to Soviet nuclear blackmail. “It must be noted,” the Chiefs added,

that military strategies are not without inherent risk. At one level, there is the risk that the strategy itself may not completely fulfill national policy and objectives. At the other level, the force capabilities may not completely fulfill the

strategy requirements. Traditionally, we have adopted military strategies that contained risk at both these levels.¹⁹

Taking note of the Chiefs' advice, Secretary of Defense Brown told the other senior members of the PRM-10 force posture study panel that he had decided to await further presidential guidance before recommending an overall military strategy. Meantime, he circulated the final PRM-10 force posture report, a massive document of some 400 pages.²⁰ While he felt that the PRM-10 exercise had served "a useful purpose" by highlighting important problems, he judged the results thus far to be insufficient for specific decisions on US military force structures or force planning. "None of the notional AIMS," he commented, "is completely satisfactory." Accordingly, instead of using the study as a vehicle for refining US strategy, as originally planned, he now proposed that the Policy Review Committee consider the matter piecemeal, looking first at conventional capabilities, then at strategic forces. Once the PRC finished and had coordinated its findings with the SCC's net assessment study, he hoped to obtain presidential guidance setting forth the broad outlines of a military strategy, which would also provide "one of the bases for the conduct of our foreign policy, our arms control negotiations, and priorities for our intelligence efforts."²¹

Dr. Brzezinski, meanwhile, had come to much the same conclusion. Convinced that the time was not yet ripe for obtaining interagency agreement on a detailed statement of policy and strategy, he decided instead on a broad-brush treatment that he and President Carter could refine later. The upshot was a generalized presidential directive (PD-18), issued in late August 1977, setting forth broad objectives and laying the groundwork for additional studies.²² Leaks to the press suggested lingering dissatisfaction among the Joint Chiefs, who were said to feel that the entire review presented an overly "optimistic" picture of the strategic balance and of US capabilities.²³ But while it was true that the JCS had doubts, their complaints were relatively minor compared with those voiced by the State Department, where Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Marshall Shulman, a key adviser on Soviet affairs, saw the whole exercise leaning, at Dr. Brzezinski's instigation, toward a stronger-than-expected reaffirmation of the role of military power in American foreign policy.²⁴

Thus, the credo behind PD-18 represented no sharp departure, as some had anticipated, from the policies and doctrine that had guided both the Nixon and Ford administrations.²⁵ President Carter directed US national strategy to exploit advantages in technological superiority, economic strength, and popular political support.²⁶ But it acknowledged also a continuing need to "maintain an overall balance of military power between the United States and its allies on the one hand and the Soviet Union and its allies on the other at least as favorable as that that now exists."²⁷ In support of this goal, PD-18 recommended that the US maintain a posture of "essential equivalence" vis-à-vis the Soviet Union "... so that the strategic balance will not deter the United States from taking conventional action where its interests dictate."²⁸

As important as what the directive contained was what it left vague or unsaid. Indeed, as one former policy analyst in the Pentagon described it, PD-18 "was long on

abstractions and short on specifics.”²⁹ While acknowledging that the United States should live up to the 3 percent defense spending increase previously pledged to NATO, PD-18 made no attempt to price out programs or otherwise allocate resources. Nor did it deal at any length with establishing priorities. At most, it recommended that, in keeping with NATO’s commitment to forward defense, “initial combat capabilities” should be of first concern. But whether this meant the creation of additional conventional forces, or merely a re juggling of existing assets, the directive failed to say. Likewise, it was largely silent on what hardware improvements, if any, should accompany efforts to preserve essential equivalence in strategic forces, or how and where arms control was supposed to fit in. While categorically rejecting the development of “a disarming first strike” capability, the paper directed a closer look at more sophisticated command and control systems for managing limited nuclear options and urged the development of a strategic force posture “capable of inflicting an unacceptable level of damage on the Soviet Union following a Soviet first strike.” Recognizing that numerous questions remained unanswered, PD-18 authorized a review of strategic targeting policy, accompanied by other follow-on studies as needed, in order to clarify future requirements. Pending the outcome, however, it served notice that the existing strategic nuclear guidance (NSDM 242) would remain in effect.³⁰

Changes in Conventional Strategy

Following the issuance of PD-18, JCS involvement in the refinement of strategy focused on two sets of separate, but related, issues. One concerned the directive’s impact on strategic nuclear policy and led eventually to the adoption (discussed below) of a revised targeting doctrine and employment policies (PD-59) that moved away from the traditional “assured destruction” concept, toward a greater emphasis on developing “. . . flexible sub-options that will permit, to the extent that survival of C3 [command, control, and communications] allows, sequential selection of attacks from among a full range of military targets, industrial targets providing immediate military support, and political control targets. . . .”³¹ The other set of issues dealt with general purpose forces and, while ostensibly producing less momentous results, signaled a realignment of priorities that would significantly affect the allocation of assets in future emergencies. The net effect by the end of the Carter presidency was the emergence of a new and increasingly more demanding body of strategic requirements in which JCS planners had to cope with an escalating number of both strategic nuclear and conventional missions.

Obviously, one of the more readily identifiable purposes of PD-18 was to provide additional support and strategic justification for the Carter administration’s highly publicized NATO buildup—the Long Term Defense Program (LTDP) and a related slate of short-term conventional improvements adopted at the NATO summit in May 1977. But as necessary and desirable as these initiatives may have been, the Joint Chiefs had

trouble accepting the administration's argument that they could be done with little additional infusion of resources and without jeopardizing defense obligations in other parts of the world.³² Subsequently, much of the discussion relating to the PRM-10 force posture review centered on how to balance commitments to Europe, while developing what Dr. Brzezinski called "a global strike force" for limited contingencies in the Persian Gulf or elsewhere.³³ The report found that, even though the United States could in theory perform such missions, prior claims by NATO and long-standing commitments under the "swing strategy," which required the United States in an emergency to shift large numbers of air and naval forces from the Pacific to the European/Atlantic regions, operated as effective constraints. "A greater capability [for contingency operations outside the European/Atlantic theater] could be retained," the report advised, "by delaying the 'swing' of PACOM forces to NATO with an attendant risk for the European war."³⁴

By side-stepping the question of the swing strategy, PD-18 avoided for the time being the troublesome question of whether to rely on existing forces or whether to create new ones to carry out the directive's aims. Even so, it established clearly that, for politico-military planning purposes, the Carter administration intended to pursue what amounted to a one-and-a-half war strategy, based on preparing for a major conflict in NATO Europe and a somewhat smaller contingency in the Western Pacific or the Persian Gulf. And with the endorsement of a 3 percent real increase in annual defense spending, it gave every impression that the administration would entertain some augmentation of capabilities should shortfalls arise. Ever since the dramatic "overstretching" of US conventional forces during the Vietnam War, the Joint Chiefs had worried that they would face a similar situation in the future. Now, by the mid-1970s, they had added cause for concern arising from the steady increase in the size and effectiveness of Soviet naval forces, Soviet access to ports and air bases around the Indian Ocean and on the Horn of Africa, and growing Soviet ability to project military power worldwide. The options for dealing with this threat were limited and by no means wholly satisfactory from the standpoint of Joint Staff planners. In the event of a short war in Europe, US air and naval swing forces might not have sufficient time to redeploy to make a difference. On the other hand, regional instability and the growing danger to US and European oil supplies from the Middle East raised the prospect of drawing down major NATO-dedicated capabilities for a non-NATO emergency. Either way, as the Joint Chiefs contemplated how to interpret and implement PD-18, they saw a growing mismatch between US global commitments and available resources.

PD-18 follow-on studies requested by President Carter were supposed to address and help resolve these problems by determining, among other things, the needs of intervention forces for limited contingencies outside Europe and "the appropriate level of US capability to sustain a worldwide conventional war."³⁵ But because these issues came up routinely in one form or another as part of the normal planning process, Vice Admiral Hannifin, now Director, Joint Staff, saw no particular urgency in making a special effort.³⁶ Earlier, Secretary of Defense Brown also had advised the Joint Chiefs that, as agreed in deliberations between OSD, JCS, and the Services,

he was moving ahead on significant reforms to the budget process, starting with the issuance of comprehensive “consolidated guidance,” which would bring about major changes in the Joint Strategic Planning System.³⁷ Pending the outcome of the Secretary’s proposed revision of these procedures, the Joint Chiefs adopted a wait-and-see attitude before delving further into a reassessment of conventional strategy.

An early draft of the Consolidated Guidance (CG) that the Secretary had promised, combining planning, program, and fiscal guidance into one document, reached the Joint Chiefs in January 1978. Looking specifically at the allocation of assets, the Chiefs found the CG at odds with their interpretation of the guidance in PD-18 because it failed to take full account of the “additive requirements” for forces assigned to NATO, as recognized in the President’s pledged 3 percent spending increase, and those required for simultaneous contingencies in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Korea. By downplaying the additive nature of force requirements and by crediting some forces with dual functions, the JCS believed, the draft CG greatly exaggerated US military capabilities and engaged in a dangerous game of “double counting.” The Chiefs also pointed to what they felt to be ambiguities and contradictions in different sections of the CG regarding the redeployment of Pacific Fleet forces to the European/Atlantic theater in an emergency, and noted also that the detailed deployment guidance to the Navy concerning carrier operations in the Mediterranean, in conjunction with forecast reductions in shipbuilding, would have a debilitating impact on US naval support for NATO.³⁸

Bowing to some, but not all, of the JCS’ criticisms and suggestions, Secretary Brown initiated a series of new support studies, including one (CG-8) supervised by ISA on requirements in Asia during a worldwide conventional war.³⁹ At issue, basically, was whether Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), should be relieved of his responsibility to provide up to three carrier task forces for emergency duty to Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), and Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic (SACLANT). In fact, when the swing strategy was originally conceived in the [early] 1950s, PACOM had fifteen carriers at its disposal. By the mid-1970s it was down to six, and there were growing complaints from CINCPAC that, with a more active Soviet naval presence in the Far East, he could ill afford to split his carrier force in half.⁴⁰

The Joint Chiefs proved initially sympathetic, and in May 1978 they recommended a major reallocation of forces, to be announced in the next NATO Defense Planning Questionnaire (DPQ-78), the annual guidance provided to NATO planners on the expected availability of forces and support. Among the changes the Chiefs proposed were a significant increase in US air and ground commitments to NATO, using previously unassigned reserves, and a reduction in NATO-dedicated ship deployments from the Pacific. In all, Army divisions dedicated to NATO would increase from 9 to 18 (10 “assigned” and 8 “earmarked”) and separate brigade-sized units would increase from $7\frac{1}{3}$ to $23\frac{1}{3}$ ($5\frac{1}{3}$ assigned and 18 earmarked). Additionally, the Chiefs proposed designating 4 more Army divisions and $8\frac{2}{3}$ separate brigades as among the “other forces for NATO” that could be available for planning purposes, although where these forces would come from was far from clear. At the time, active duty Army forces consisted

of 16 organized divisions, 5 of which were under strength, backed by 8 reserve divisions. The difference, presumably, would come from mobilized National Guard units. Marine Corps forces earmarked for the NATO strategic reserve would hold steady at 2 Marine Amphibious Forces (MAF), while the total number of Air Force fighter, reconnaissance, and tactical airlift squadrons would increase 73 percent, from 75 to 130 (5 NATO command, 71 assigned, and 54 earmarked).

The most striking change by far was a proposed decrease in committed US naval forces. Although the number of NATO-dedicated ships would increase slightly, from 237 to 240, a total of 58 ships would be downgraded from assigned to earmarked. Included in this number were the three carriers previously committed to NATO under the swing strategy. As justification for this change, the Chiefs cited the presumed global nature of a possible conflict with Warsaw Pact forces, the reduced numbers of hulls worldwide, and the time and distance involved in any significant movement of naval forces from the Pacific to Europe in support of SACEUR or SACLANT operations.⁴¹

Secretary of Defense Brown found the JCS proposed response “a particularly good effort,” with one notable exception. That concerned the Chiefs’ re-categorization of PACOM and Middle East naval units from the status of “assigned” (meaning that they would redeploy almost immediately in an emergency) to the lower priority of simply being “earmarked.” Feeling that the Chiefs were moving too far too fast, Secretary Brown reminded them that the status of the swing strategy was under study in OSD, and that it would be premature to write it off at this time. Secretary Brown knew that the NATO allies looked askance on the prospect of a prolonged conventional war being fought on their territory, and that any major reallocation of forces, implying a change of strategy in this direction, needed to be handled with the utmost diplomacy. Announcing it through the DPQ “would come as something of a surprise to our Allies,” possibly causing damage to US credibility and to the prospects for fully implementing the LTDP. “Setting aside the adequacy of the reasoning behind the proposed change,” Secretary Brown said, “I do not believe that it is prudent for us to make such a change at this time.”⁴²

A year later, the swing strategy issue came up again in JCS deliberations during preparation of their response to DPQ-79, describing the US commitment of forces through 1980. This was the first JCS response to a DPQ to incorporate an estimate of US compliance with the LTDP, and it portrayed progress in terms that implicitly supported a recommendation, endorsed by a majority of the Chiefs, to cut back on naval swing forces available to NATO. Of the sixty-four LTDP measures then requiring US reporting in the DPQ, the Chiefs offered assurances that forty-six would be fully implemented by the end of 1980 and that, of the rest, all but two would undergo some degree of implementation. Taking these factors into account, all except Army Chief of Staff General Bernard W. Rogers recommended sharp reductions in NATO-dedicated naval support, from 240 to 228 ships, by 1980. Included under the proposed changes were the decommissioning of ten reserve destroyers; the redesignation of two Middle East Force destroyers/frigates from assigned to earmarked; and last, but not least, the effective elimination of all

PACOM carrier support for NATO in order to “provide greater flexibility in employment of PACOM naval assets in a global war or in lesser contingencies in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf area.” Of the three carrier task groups previously dedicated to NATO, two would be shifted into the “earmarked” category, while the third would be placed on the other-forces-for-NATO list.⁴³ Looking on the bright side, JCS Chairman Jones believed that in the long run these proposed changes would “contribute to sounder NATO strategy and planning.” But General Rogers, who was about to assume new duties as SACEUR, vigorously disagreed, arguing that the threatened loss of PACOM carrier support could seriously undermine European morale and should be avoided at all cost as long as the United States pursued a NATO-first strategy.⁴⁴

On 10 July 1979, Secretary Brown approved the majority recommendation to re-categorize two Middle East Force destroyers/frigates from assigned to earmarked. But he declined to authorize any change in the status of the three PACOM carrier task groups, pending the outcome of a follow-on CG-8 study he had ordered and a clearer picture of the situation in the Far East and the Indian Ocean.⁴⁵ Exchanges between OSD, the White House, and the State Department raised the possibility of an inter-agency study as well, but nothing seems to have materialized.⁴⁶ The revised US reply to DPQ-79 thus reflected a decrease of only five NATO-dedicated ships, with the PACOM carrier task groups remaining “assigned” to NATO. The reply also warned, however, that the United States was studying a possible change in the status of these units in order to cope with threats to alliance interests outside the NATO area, particularly in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, but would consult with the allies before taking any decisions.⁴⁷

By the time the Joint Chiefs took up consideration of the next NATO Defense Planning Questionnaire (DPQ-80), they had before them both the results of the CG-8 swing strategy review and a follow-on study done by the Joint Staff in collaboration with Under Secretary of Defense Robert Komer’s office. Both efforts cast serious doubt on the continued usefulness of the swing strategy as a means of providing Europe with timely reinforcements and advised utmost flexibility, especially in the commitment of naval forces, in view of the uncertainties of growing US involvement in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean.⁴⁸ As Under Secretary Komer succinctly put it, “We cannot determine *a priori* whether the ‘swing’ forces would be needed more in the NATO or Indian Ocean theaters than the Pacific.”⁴⁹ Instead of swinging PACOM forces to reinforce Europe, JCS planners were now finding that, as they probed more deeply into the requirements for the newly authorized Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), NATO-dedicated units might be needed to reinforce the Persian Gulf. While the Joint Chiefs earnestly hoped to avoid such a possibility, knowing that it would encounter strong opposition from the NATO allies, they advised the Secretary of Defense in November 1979, that were the RDJTF to go up against Soviet forces, there would be no choice but to call on reinforcements from US units assigned or earmarked for Europe.⁵⁰

By May 1980, when the Joint Chiefs forwarded to the Secretary their recommended reply to DPQ-80, it was clear that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan the previous

December had shifted attention from Europe to Southwest Asia. In these circumstances, military planners had no choice but to contemplate changes that would render the swing strategy less and less viable. Showing his customary sense of initiative, Under Secretary Komer urged the Secretary of Defense to redesignate three “swing” carriers from “assigned” to “earmarked,” to remove both the 101st Airmobile Division and the 82nd Airborne Division from the list of ready reinforcements to NATO, and to postpone indefinitely the pre-positioning of equipment and munitions for up to three US divisions in Europe under the LTDP.⁵¹ However, the Joint Chiefs saw no urgent need to go quite so far in changing the allocation of forces. Although the US commitment of ground and air units would remain essentially stable for 1981, they recommended redesignating fifty-six PACOM principal surface combatants, including three carriers, from assigned to earmarked and adding thirty other vessels, primarily PACOM amphibians, to the other-forces-for-NATO category. The justification given for these changes was that they would increase US employment options, make NATO planning more realistic, and bring the alignment of forces more into line with the US commitment to protect vital out-of-area alliance interests (e.g., access to Persian Gulf oil). Hinting at the next possible step, the Chiefs essentially concurred with Under Secretary Komer (but refrained from making any specific recommendations) that units supporting the RDJTF might have to include some of those committed to NATO. Indeed, as the Chiefs pointed out, so much of the US general purpose combat force had become NATO-oriented over the years that the use of assigned or earmarked units in a non-NATO contingency “cannot be ruled out in cases where there is no immediate direct military threat to the Alliance.” As a result, however, other NATO countries might have to carry proportionately more of the burden within the NATO area. This time, in contrast to years past, Secretary of Defense Brown offered no objections to the Chiefs’ recommendations.⁵²

Thus, by the end of the Carter presidency the Europe-first strategy, which had underpinned much of US military planning since World War II, was giving way under pressure of events to a more global orientation and deployment of US general purpose forces. Increasingly, the emphasis was on preparing for contingencies, not just in Europe or the Far East, but in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia especially. This shift in attention and priorities was fully in line with JCS perceptions of emerging threats, as evidenced by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and of evolving US strategic interests. But it was also potentially unsettling to the NATO allies, who had seen US forces earmarked for Europe steadily evaporate during the Vietnam War. Expanding the DPQ commitment was one way of reassuring the allies that the United States would not repeat the experience of the 1960s by becoming more deeply engaged in Southwest Asia. Yet it was a promise that, as JCS planners routinely warned, the United States would be hard pressed to honor in an emergency without a significant augmentation of forces traditionally offered under the swing strategy. Although the Joint Chiefs may have agreed among themselves that, as a practical matter, the swing strategy had outlived its usefulness, there was as yet no firm consensus on what course of action should replace it, other than to juggle resources and hope for the best.

Strategic Forces and PD-59

In tandem with the development of revised strategic plans for the worldwide allocation of conventional forces, the Carter years also witnessed significant changes in strategic nuclear strategy and supporting employment policies. While President Carter professed no other objective than to rid the earth of nuclear weapons, he soon found that, in the face of the failed US “deep cuts” SALT II proposal and evidence of a continuing Soviet buildup of strategic and theater nuclear missiles, he had no choice but to pay closer attention to the problems of nuclear strategy. Accordingly, not only did the Carter administration come to support nuclear modernization for NATO but also, as a direct outgrowth of the PRM-10 review and PD-18, it set in motion a series of follow-on studies that led eventually to the issuance in 1980 of yet another presidential directive (PD-59) enunciating a new philosophy governing the conduct of US strategic nuclear operations, target-selection, and employment policy in the event of a strategic nuclear exchange.

Under President Carter, as under his two immediate predecessors, the management of strategic nuclear forces continued to be a source of intense friction between the JCS and the White House. President Carter was determined to reduce military spending and saw no better place to begin than with strategic nuclear weapons. While he acknowledged the contributions of military power to an effective foreign policy, he was satisfied with maintaining “essential equivalence” in strategic forces vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and a balance of power “at least as favorable as that that now exists.”⁵³ All the same, he was under constant pressure to reassure the JCS and other skeptics that he remained committed to preserving a credible deterrent posture, even though he personally found the arms race “a nauseating prospect to confront, with the gross waste of money going into nuclear weapons of all kinds.”⁵⁴

Perhaps because he disliked nuclear weapons so much, President Carter was determined to exercise the closest possible control over them. Indeed, not since Harry Truman had a president been so personally involved in the management of the country’s nuclear arsenal and how it would be used. Most far-reaching of all were the changes he made in the targeting and employment policies governing US nuclear forces. The Joint Chiefs regarded these matters as more or less closed after adoption of the Schlesinger doctrine (NSDM 242) in 1975.⁵⁵ But to President Carter and his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, NSDM 242 was merely the first step. Convinced that targeting doctrine should have specific political as well as military objectives, Dr. Brzezinski wanted it to include refinements that would give policymakers greater flexibility in a crisis.⁵⁶

The upshot was the appearance in November 1978 of the “countervailing strategy,” the product of an interagency review headed by Leon Sloss, a respected strategic analyst and consultant to Secretary of Defense Brown.⁵⁷ Mr. Sloss had served during the Nixon administration in the State Department’s Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs and in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and had been a principal member of the

interagency group that had developed the studies leading up to NSDM 242 in 1974.⁵⁸ As much as anything, the choice of Mr. Sloss to chair the study indicated that the Secretary was indeed serious about doing an objective and impartial inquiry and that he wanted to mend fences with the Joint Chiefs, who had made no secret of their dissatisfaction with the handling and outcome of the PRM-10 review. According to one account, most of those in OSD who had worked on PRM-10, including the overall coordinator, Ms. Lynn Davis, now found themselves “cut completely out of the action.”⁵⁹

Presented to the Joint Chiefs as more or less a *fait accompli*, the countervailing strategy was in many respects a logical extension of the Schlesinger doctrine. As Secretary Brown defined it, the countervailing strategy envisioned the maintenance of “military (including nuclear) forces, contingency plans, and command-and-control capabilities to convince Soviet leaders that they cannot secure victory, however they may define it, at any stage of a potential war.”⁶⁰ But in carrying out these tasks, it imposed a far more sophisticated and rigorous set of targeting requirements. A formidable assignment, Chairman Jones promised to give it his utmost attention but was somewhat skeptical of achieving quick results. In fact, General Jones believed strategic nuclear planning and targeting had become so exceedingly complex that he foresaw few significant changes resulting anytime soon, no matter what the declared targeting policy might be.⁶¹

The most strenuous objections to the countervailing strategy came not from the Pentagon, but from the State Department. According to Dr. Brzezinski, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance found the whole question of nuclear targeting emotionally disturbing and gave it grudging cooperation.⁶² As a result, approval of a presidential directive (PD-59) sanctioning the new strategy was held up until July 1980.⁶³ But by then the Joint Chiefs were well along toward putting the countervailing strategy into operation, since many of its provisions could be implemented on orders of the Secretary of Defense. The main function of PD-59 was to pave the way for issuance of a new Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy (NUWEP-80), which the Joint Chiefs received in October 1980.⁶⁴

President Carter and Secretary of Defense Brown both insisted that it was never their intention under the countervailing strategy to make sweeping changes in US policy or doctrine. According to Secretary Brown, the countervailing strategy amounted to nothing more than a “modest refinement in US nuclear strategy as a response to charges that the USSR had achieved strategic nuclear superiority.” Its aim, he insisted, was to strengthen deterrence and not to boost war-fighting capabilities.⁶⁵ President Carter’s view was essentially the same. As much as he abhorred nuclear weapons, he accepted the necessity of their role in US defense policy but sought to narrow their use for strategic purposes in carefully planned ways. Hence the emphasis on options that would theoretically allow the President to choose from an almost endless array of measured responses to almost any level of Soviet provocation.⁶⁶

By and large, the Joint Chiefs agreed that the more options they and the President might have, the better. As during previous strategic reviews, however, their main concern was one of feasibility. Speaking for himself, Chairman Jones said he found the

Sloss report to be an “excellent framework” for reshaping strategic policy. But he no doubt spoke for his JCS colleagues as well when he added that much would also depend on achieving “satisfactory capabilities” and improvements in such “crucial” areas as the endurance of nuclear forces, related C3I, and the preservation of “a relatively simple and responsive execution process” before the countervailing strategy could become a working reality.⁶⁷ The most complex and demanding targeting policy thus far, the countervailing strategy required them to prepare for almost any contingency, from a limited nuclear exchange to a fully generated nuclear war. Most military professionals involved in this process shared the view of the Chairman, General Jones, that implementing the new doctrine would be a slow, expensive, and laborious process, testing their patience and resourcefulness. That it would require significant improvements in technology, from weapons in the field to command, control, and communications, was practically a given. In other words, implementing the countervailing strategy was a long-term process that JCS planners approached with mixed feelings about achieving ultimate success.



An air-to-air front view of a B-1 bomber with its new camouflage paint scheme.

Forces and Budgets

The adoption of new strategic concepts during the Carter years put added pressure on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to find the resources to accomplish their assigned tasks. While the JCS had seen defense budgets wax and wane repeatedly since World War II, they found the situation in the mid-1970s all the more uncertain owing to the anti-military mood in Congress in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, a shift of public interest away from foreign affairs, and the Carter administration's determination to curb military spending. Like his predecessors in the Oval Office, President Carter vowed to preserve a strong defense posture. But during the 1976 campaign he had promised to impose strict controls on the defense budget, starting with an immediate cut of five to seven billion dollars in new obligations, and thereafter to obtain more effective and efficient use of resources at lower cost.¹ In office, however, he faced an uphill battle to keep his pledge to reduce spending in the face of greater-than-expected obligations to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, double-digit inflation, and an increasingly adventuresome Soviet foreign policy that challenged the United States to undertake new commitments in Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf.²

While not direct participants in the budget process per se, the Joint Chiefs could not avoid a certain degree of responsibility for the content and outcome of budget deliberations. Indeed, it was up to the JCS to advise the Secretary of Defense and the President on what would be needed objectively to meet national security commitments worldwide; how well the current and proposed spending levels satisfied those needs; and the risks entailed in operating at a less-than-optimum level of readiness. Not surprisingly, these were often controversial and contentious issues that produced arguments among the Chiefs themselves and among the JCS, the Secretary of Defense, and the White House.

The most acute sources of tension and debate concerned the level of funding for military programs. Despite détente and reduced commitments in Southeast Asia, US defense spending in the post-Vietnam era remained at what many in the incoming Carter administration deemed excessive, driven by outmoded force sizing practices, lax

management, and inefficient allocation and use of resources. The Joint Chiefs saw the situation differently. Given the global nature of US defense commitments, they believed that the growing military power and reach of the Soviet Union was outdistancing that of the United States. With the resources available, the United States, in their view, was barely holding its own and was likely to lose ground steadily in the years ahead. But confronted with mounting pressure from Congress and administration initiatives such as the PRM-10 policy review, the JCS found themselves continually on the defensive and often at odds with the prevailing philosophy and outlook in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and at the White House.

Changes in the Strategic Planning Process

For President Jimmy Carter, defense budget reform was an uppermost concern. Not only did President Carter want to trim military spending, he wanted to do so by introducing new practices and procedures that would hold down and control future expenditures more effectively. The President's starting point was the PRM-10 exercise, leading to Presidential Directive (PD)-18, which together were supposed to provide broad strategic guidance from which the Department of Defense could extrapolate basic fiscal guidance. One concrete result was the introduction early in 1978 of the Secretary's Consolidated Guidance (CG) paper, which replaced the old Defense Guidance directive. The CG incorporated comprehensive policy, fiscal, and strategic guidance in one document, which the Services were to use in preparing their annual budget submissions, known as Program Objective Memorandums (POMs). The CG was supposed to help quiet complaints from the Services, the Combatant Commanders, and the Joint Chiefs that, under the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) introduced by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in the 1960s, they had seen their opportunities for making inputs into the final budget and force-level decisions steadily diminish. Under the new arrangements, the Consolidated Guidance would be an evolving document, with all involved free to make inputs. Not only would the Military Services and the Joint Chiefs have a fuller picture of the budgetary situation but also they could now critique the guidance they received before making any submissions to the Secretary or the President.³

As part of these reforms, the Joint Chiefs, late in 1977, launched a major overhaul of the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS), the conceptual framework around which the Services prepared and submitted their POMs. The most extensive restructuring of the strategic planning process since the early 1950s, this overhaul took several years to accomplish. Two key documents were eliminated and two new ones took their place. One of those to go was the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP), which gave way during 1978-1979 to the Joint Strategic Planning Document (JSPD). Previously, through the JSOP, the Joint Chiefs had provided the Secretary, the President, and the National Security Council with their annual professional estimate of global military

requirements to meet national strategic objectives on a mid-range (i.e., seven-year) basis. But by the mid-1970s the JSOP had lost much of its credibility. As two members of the NSC Staff characterized it, "The JSOP became archetypical of the irrelevant material produced by the JCS."⁴ Invariably, JSOP estimates exceeded fiscal authority by a wide margin, giving rise to criticisms that the JSOP was nothing more than a "wish list" used by the Services and the unified and specified commanders to stake out claims on resources. Efforts by the Joint Staff to dispel this notion made little headway.⁵ Although JCS planners maintained that the system was "conceptually sound," they readily acknowledged that improvements were possible. With the looming advent of new budget procedures, they seized the opportunity to replace the JSOP with a more objective set of assessments.⁶

Though outwardly similar to the JSOP, the JSPD differed from it in two important respects. First, it was scheduled to circulate sixty days before the appearance of the Secretary's draft Consolidated Guidance, thus making the JSPD's contents more timely and relevant in the upcoming deliberations on allocating resources; and second, it was a more compact and analytical document, with greater emphasis on providing a "joint" view. The JSPD would appraise the threat to US interests and objectives; recommend the military strategy needed to attain those objectives; summarize the force levels needed to execute, with a reasonable assurance of success, approved national strategy; appraise the attainability of those force levels in the light of fiscal, manpower, materiel, technological, and industrial capacity; assess capabilities and risks that would be incurred by holding to the programmed level of forces; and recommend changes, where appropriate, to the force planning and programming guidance. A two-part supporting analysis would accompany these assessments. Part I would supply military planners with JCS perceptions about national military objectives, strategy, and planning guidance as stated in the CG and other documents, while Part II would develop required force and support levels.⁷

A further difference between the JSOP and the JSPD was the inclusion in the latter of a "risk reduction" package, which set interim goals to shore up the more apparent weaknesses in the force structure. Programmed forces in the Five Year Defense Program (FYDP) weighed against recommended improvements under the JSPD provided the base point. The operating premise was that program development should build toward the planning force, which might not be attainable with available resources. Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs developed the risk-reduction idea to give the Secretary of Defense and the President a somewhat wider range of choice in framing interim policy and force-level objectives. The Chiefs offered the risk reduction package, not in lieu of the planning force but as an incremental step toward it. A major drawback of the risk reduction package was that the JCS made no attempt to prioritize specific measures within it; instead, they treated each Service's needs as having more or less equal importance. As a practical matter, this diluted the value of the whole exercise, since allocating resources generally posed the most difficult problems at budget time. Consequently, of the risk reduction measures the Chiefs proposed, few ever came to fruition.⁸

A more serious shortcoming was that the JSPD seldom received the attention that Joint Staff planners hoped it would. Although considered an improvement, the JSPD, like the JSOP, was largely ignored outside the Pentagon. Copies forwarded to the White House routinely went to NSC staffers, who concluded that the JSPD was much too long and complicated to merit the President's time and attention. Leaving it up to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to study the details, they prepared a page-and-a-half précis for National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to pass along to President Carter. Rarely if ever did a full copy of the JSPD make its way to the Oval Office.⁹

The other new document was the Joint Program Assessment Memorandum (JPAM), which superseded the Joint Force Memorandum (JFM) as the JCS estimate of the optimum balance of forces attainable under fiscal limits. Although the function of the JFM was supposed to have been essentially the same, the fact that it appeared several weeks before the POMs effectively negated its usefulness in assigning priorities to Service programs. Under revised scheduling, the JPAM would appear thirty days after submission of the POMs, thus giving the Joint Staff time to evaluate Service requests and to suggest alternatives. Also, the JPAM would supply JCS views about the overall balance and capabilities of POM forces to execute the approved national military strategy, mindful of the tentative funding limits set by the Secretary of Defense. The first JPAM, covering Fiscal Years (FY) 1980-1987, appeared on 8 July 1978.¹⁰

Taking resource allocation reform one step further, the Secretary of Defense in April 1979 directed the creation of a Defense Resources Board (DRB). Chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the DRB was composed of senior budgeting and program analysts whose job was to oversee the review of Service budget requests. The DRB had its origins in a report submitted earlier by Donald B. Rice, an experienced defense analyst and senior executive of the RAND Corporation. Convinced that the JSOP and JFM had been "irrelevant," Mr. Rice doubted whether the JSPD and JPAM would be much better at giving the Joint Chiefs of Staff "a credible institutional role" in resource management. In recommending creation of the DRB, he urged ex officio participation by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, who would have responsibility for providing the DRB with an independent prioritization of initiatives above the base or minimum level reflected in the individual Services' program/budget review process.¹¹ The Service Chiefs, in deference to growing pressure for an enhanced military voice in resource allocation, agreed that the Chairman should participate in the board's deliberations but objected to giving him too much latitude or independent authority to tender separate estimates. As a means of limiting the Chairman's independence, they wanted it made clear that his participation would be "in concert with the corporate body." Secretary of Defense Brown, in naming the CJCS to the board, offered no objection but left open the option for the Chairman, as he felt his way along, to make whatever recommendations he might deem suitable and appropriate.¹²

While these changes promised to enhance the JCS role in resource management decisions, questions remained whether the Joint Chiefs could effectively discharge their responsibilities. Having seen their involvement in budget matters wax and wane since

World War II, the Chiefs now had a golden opportunity to regain much lost ground. But to do so, they would have to produce a more united front than ever before and contain the interservice rivalry and competition for funds that had historically plagued their deliberations. In other words, they needed to adopt a more “joint” and unbiased view. As it happened, the Carter years would witness steps in this direction, but not enough to make a significant difference in budget debate outcomes. Even though the Chiefs, collectively and individually, might see serious flaws and shortcomings in the fiscal and other guidance they received from the President and the Secretary, they were seldom sufficiently united to be able to offer a credible alternative. The best they could usually come up with during the Carter years was a set of generalized recommendations, which left the real power for allocating resources in the hands of others.

Force and Budget Planning in 1977

While aware that the new administration intended changes in budget and defense policy, JCS force planners had no choice at the outset of Carter’s presidency but to continue operating under the policies and priorities set by the Ford administration.¹³ Adhering to the schedule and procedures that were in effect at the time, the Joint Chiefs in late January 1977 forwarded Volume II of JSOP FY 1979-1986 to the Secretary of Defense, summarizing their recommended objective force-levels for those years (see Table 11.1, page 272). The overall appearance was that of a gradual but steady buildup toward a more modern strategic force built around the traditional “triad” of land- and sea-based ballistic missiles and manned bombers and larger, more versatile general purpose forces. Major aims over the next seven years would be to replace obsolescent equipment—ships and planes especially—which had not been upgraded since the Vietnam War and to maintain essential equivalence with the Soviet Union in strategic power within the constraints of the 1974 Vladivostok arms control accords and the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The Chiefs advised that the capability of the strategic objective force to meet these requirements and to maintain “a prudent level of risk” would also depend on appropriate levels of funding for accompanying research and development (R&D) programs.¹⁴

As in the past, Service disagreements (i.e., “splits”) over the allocation and use of resources accompanied the JSOP. Under the Nixon-Ford administration the Navy had embarked on an ambitious and long overdue modernization program to replace the aging vessels in its fleet, many dating from World War II. However, the other Services believed that, because of sharply escalating ship construction costs, the Navy should curb its program. Indicative of the division of opinion, the Chief of Naval Operations registered across-the-board objections to the JSOP-recommended limits on the Navy’s size and rate of replacement, starting with the objective construction of two Trident SSBNs per year, a figure the CNO characterized as inadequate to alleviate Poseidon block obsolescence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Two boats per year commencing

in FY 1981 and FY 1982 and three per year thereafter, the CNO insisted, should be the goal. Supported by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the CNO also held that the JSOP-recommended Navy objective force for carriers, surface combatants, and V/STOL support ships (VSS) was inadequate to meet the projected threat and to implement the national military and maritime strategy at a level of prudent risk. For planning purposes, they urged adherence to the numbers in the previous year's JSOP, which had recommended an eventual fleet of twenty carriers and nineteen VSS.¹⁵

Neither the Chief of Staff of the Army nor the Chief of Staff of the Air Force concurred in the need for naval expansion on a scale or in the areas the CNO and the CMC recommended. They pointed out that over the past year "detailed studies" (presumably those done by the Wade Working Group of the Defense Review Panel) had confirmed that the Navy should shift its priorities from a power projection force structured around carrier-based air to a force more oriented toward the protection of vital sea lanes against the Soviet submarine threat. The security of the United States and the protection of the sea lanes, they argued, must be achieved with these priorities in mind; hence, the reduction in carriers and VSS in the current JSOP. They added that the US strategy for operations in Europe, as part of a worldwide conventional conflict with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), required prompt and continuous movement of forces and materiel from the continental United States (CONUS) to Europe, and that the Navy should therefore give top priority to establishing sea control in the North Atlantic and defending military convoys in that area. In support of this effort, the Army and the Air Force stated that they could readily endorse increases for antisubmarine warfare purposes, but they could recommend an eventual force of no more than sixteen big carriers. Any more than that, they argued, would make only a "marginal contribution" to the Navy's capability to perform the vital sea lines of communication (SLOC) protection mission, since carriers themselves required a significant commitment of submarines and surface combatants for protection.¹⁶

Though hardly as intense as clashes in the past, these disagreements over the JSOP underscored the continuing presence in JCS deliberations of interservice friction, which made it difficult for the Chiefs to reach a consensus. The larger problem, however, was one of strategic perspective—whether JCS views, as reflected in the JSOP, accorded with the incoming administration's on how and where to allocate resources. Interservice differences aside, the Chiefs assumed, in framing the recommendations contained in JSOP 79-86, that the Vladivostok accords would largely govern the sizing and rate of development of strategic offensive forces, and that the United States would continue to commit sizable numbers of general purpose forces for possible contingencies in the Far East, to assure stability on the Korean peninsula and to defend against what the Chiefs described in the JSOP as "a significant military threat" posed by the People's Republic of China to nations on its periphery. In fact, the thinking of the Carter administration on these two points was quite different from that of the JCS. Not only did the new administration hope to achieve immediate "deep cuts" in the US and Soviet strategic arsenals, going well below the Vladivostok ceilings, but also it intended to

pursue a rapprochement with China in an effort to relax tensions throughout the region, pave the way for the withdrawal of US combat troops from South Korea, and shift greater support to NATO. It was through policy changes such as these, coupled with improved management, that President Carter hoped to realize most of the permanent savings in defense spending that he had promised during the 1976 campaign.

Shortly after taking office, President Carter directed Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to provide the National Security Council with a "detailed review" of the defense budget, a first step toward the broader review initiated in February 1977 under PRM-10.¹⁷ Anticipating the President's request, Secretary Brown had identified immediate savings totaling nearly \$3 billion attainable through slowdowns in the M-X ICBM and other strategic programs, cutbacks in some procurement areas, and the outright elimination of certain programs (e.g., the Air Force's A-7E fighter and the Navy's nuclear-powered strike cruiser) that he and his budget advisers deemed "marginally" important to national security. Favorably impressed, President Carter in mid-February gave his unqualified approval to the adjustments Secretary Brown proposed.¹⁸ Looking ahead, Secretary Brown told the President that he was conducting more thorough studies to explore even greater savings in four areas: (1) strategic programs, focusing on the B-1 bomber, the M-X ICBM, and cruise missiles; (2) the F-15 fighter program; (3) NATO readiness and mobility forces; and (4) the Navy's ship construction program.¹⁹

Strategic forces, already constrained to some extent by the SALT I agreements, would likewise remain at or near their current levels. Full-scale engineering development of the air-launched cruise missile (ALCM), initiated during the Ford administration, and further work to improve the effectiveness of the Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) against hardened targets would continue. But production and deployment of the M-X would be held in abeyance, pending further study of basing options. Also undecided was the fate of the B-1 bomber which, though funded for prototype procurement, stood a good chance of being canceled before the end of the year owing to campaign promises President Carter had made to curtail the program. As a possible alternative to the B-1, the Secretary's guidance cited the possibility of "enhancing the penetration capability of [other] manned bombers," an apparent reference to Air Force efforts to upgrade the FB-111.

In fact, the general purpose force levels in the Secretary's PPGM for the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps were identical to those proposed by the Joint Chiefs for FY 1979 in JSOP 1979-1986. Where the Secretary's guidance diverged was in the programmed size of the Navy: one fewer carrier and slightly fewer surface combatants than the Chiefs had endorsed in the JSOP. The reasoning behind this decision was complex, but basically it rested on two considerations: first, that the Carter administration considered the Navy's shipbuilding program to be grossly over budget and out of control; and second, that it put less priority on naval power projection than on strengthening NATO.²⁰ Looking ahead, the Secretary's Five Year Defense Program called for curbing growth all around, especially in Navy ship construction, which would be scaled back drastically. Instead of building more new ships, the Navy would have to make do by

refurbishing older ones under the Service Life Extension Program (SLEP). All in all, by FY 1983 the Navy could wind up with over 100 fewer surface combatants and attack submarines and at least two fewer carriers than its plans called for.²¹

As part of the assessment in the Joint Force Memorandum, forwarded to the Secretary in May, the Joint Chiefs expressed their lack of confidence that “programmed US General Purpose Forces, even in concert with the forces of the NATO and other allies, are sufficient to execute the national military strategy.”²² The most serious risk, the Chiefs believed, was that of becoming involved in two wars at the same time—a major conflict in Europe, say, and a lesser one in Korea.

The Chiefs were also dubious of projected trends in strategic forces, but saw fewer grounds for challenging the Secretary’s proposed spending and force levels. By the time the JFM appeared, it was apparent that the administration’s “deep cuts” arms control initiative had foundered, thus reopening the whole question of a SALT II agreement. Needing a benchmark for planning purposes, the Joint Chiefs assumed that the Vladivostok understandings remained valid and affirmed their intention of structuring strategic offensive forces accordingly. The only specific changes they advised for FY 1979 were an earlier retirement schedule for the Polaris SSBNs, a more deliberate pace for air-launched cruise missile procurement, and procurement of the SRAM B, a nuclear hardened and updated air-to-surface short-range attack missile, at a rate consistent with the B-1 deployment schedule. The Chiefs also welcomed more vigorous research and development in the area of strategic defenses, including stepped-up work on anti-satellite (ASAT) interceptors, but acknowledged that “fact-of-life technology development” imposed inherent limitations.²³

Meanwhile, on 30 June 1977, in an action with far-reaching arms control as well as budgetary implications, President Carter publicly announced that he had decided to cancel production and deployment of the B-1 bomber.²⁴ Despite long-standing JCS support of the B-1, President Carter and Secretary of Defense Brown questioned its penetration capabilities and concluded that it had become superfluous with the advent of air-launched cruise missiles that could be delivered from existing B-52s. In retrospect, they argued also that “stealth” technology, though still in its infancy, offered more promising possibilities than the B-1.²⁵ However, as General David Jones, the Air Force Chief of Staff at the time, recalled, stealth R&D was concentrated on developing smaller planes and cruise missiles and was not then seriously involved in producing a bomber alternative to the B-1.²⁶

Though not wholly unexpected, the President’s decision to abort the B-1 program jolted military planners all the same and set the stage for what the JCS viewed as increasingly austere and ill-advised ceilings on Service programs. In his Program Decision Memorandums (PDM) to the Services in early August 1977, Secretary Brown confirmed that he would hold the line on new or additional defense spending and insist on reallocating funds to support priority programs and policies. Atop the list in this regard was the strengthening of NATO, in line with the President’s goals under the recently announced Long Term Defense Program (see Chapter 8). Once again,

Secretary Brown admonished the Navy to take a critical look at its ship construction program and to curb expectations in such areas as nuclear propulsion for surface combatants and the V/STOL program.²⁷

The Joint Chiefs thought the Secretary was operating under a misconception. Citing the views expressed in May in their JFM, they reminded the him that failure to fund Service programs for long-term growth and improvement could only have adverse consequences for executing the national military strategy in years to come. Turning to specifics in the PDMs, they urged the Secretary to reconsider program cutbacks of more immediate impact, particularly the proposed phased elimination of 100,000 active duty military spaces by FY 1983. The Chiefs found this action hard to reconcile with the administration's declared policy of strengthening NATO, even though most of the spaces slated to go were administrative jobs scheduled for replacement by civilians. Other cuts cited by the JCS included a cumulative reduction in research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) funding and curbs on aviation that would effectively delete two Air Force tactical fighter wings and three Marine Corps fighter/attack squadrons.²⁸

The Chiefs' pleas won back some, though far from all, of what they wanted. In his Amended Program Decision Memorandums (APDM), issued in September 1977, the Secretary of Defense restored part of the funding previously cut from the Services' RDT&E programs; agreed to maintain Marine Corps fighter strength at its current level of twelve squadrons; relaxed proposed reductions in military manpower; and added back money for F-16 procurement to fill out USAF wings. But he held firm in subjecting the Navy's ship construction program to close scrutiny and made no changes in an earlier directive requiring the Navy to conduct further analysis of carrier and amphibious ship requirements as part of its ongoing Navy Force Planning Study.²⁹

The military budget for FY 1979 that went to Congress in January 1978 thus emphasized improvements in the defense posture through the reallocation of resources rather than through Service-wide increases in capabilities, as the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Military Services had urged. Specifically, the administration's submission and accompanying FYDP envisioned the following force structure:³⁰

	<u>30 June 1979</u>	<u>30 June 1983</u>
Strategic Forces		
B-52 bombers	316	316
Titans	54	54
Minuteman II	450	450
Minuteman III	550	550
Polaris A-3	10/160	9/144
Poseidon/Poseidon	31/496	19/304
Poseidon/Trident I	---	12/192

	<u>30 June 1979</u>	<u>30 June 1983</u>
General Purpose Forces		
Army Divisions (A/R)	16/8	16/8
Marine AFs	3	3
USAF Tactical Fighter Wings	26	26
CVs and CVNs (A&R)	12/1	12/1
Attack Submarines	77	94
Surface Combatants (A&R)	196	229
MAF Lift Capability	1½	1½(-)

Described by President Carter as “prudent and tight,” the budget called for \$126 billion in total obligational authority (TOA) and \$115.2 billion in outlays. While \$8 billion below the Ford administration’s spending estimate, President Carter’s budget still managed to show just over 3 percent real growth in outlays, thus technically meeting the agreed NATO objective.³¹ Yet because of spending cuts and reduced future funding, any increase for forces earmarked for Europe would be at the expense of other programs. Earlier, during the final budget mark-up, President Carter had shown interest in an OMB proposal to achieve even deeper cuts by confining the 3 percent growth figure to NATO-related items only, but he was dissuaded from doing so by Dr. Brzezinski and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, who convinced him that such an approach would go over poorly with the allies.³² Secretary Brown also sought to apply the 3 percent increase to TOA, which in the long-run would have generated a cumulatively larger growth rate. But he lost to OMB, which convinced the President to limit the increase to actual outlays.³³

All in all, as Secretary Brown found, the Joint Chiefs were “particularly disappointed” and “rather pessimistic” over what they saw in the President’s budget.³⁴ Hardest hit was the Navy, which found much of its ship construction put on hold—a money-saving move, certainly, but also a reflection of the administration’s shift in strategic priorities. Instead of an offensive naval strategy, as advocated by the Navy, the administration’s budget projected a defensive one, built around increased cooperation and collaboration with the NATO allies to protect the Atlantic SLOCs and lessened emphasis on power projection. Noticeably absent from the budget was any request for new sea-based aircraft platforms or for large surface combatants (i.e., cruisers and destroyers). The V/STOL program, though not eliminated entirely, was relegated to further study. Recognizing the Navy’s need for ships, the President’s budget clearly favored the procurement of relatively inexpensive multipurpose vessels. Toward this end it advanced funds for eight Oliver Hazard Perry class guided missile frigates (FFG-7), described by Secretary Brown as “required for sea lane defense” and other tasks where the enemy threat appeared less concentrated.³⁵ In all, the President’s budget reduced the Navy’s shipbuilding program by some 25 percent from the number of vessels in the Navy’s original FY 1979 submission.³⁶ Although these curbs were generally in line with what

Army and Air Force planners thought ought to be done, the overall tone of the budget was such that it could have brought solace to none of the Services. For the Joint Chiefs, the problems of reconciling forces and budgets around a credible military strategy to which all could agree were only beginning.

Force and Budget Planning in 1978

On 30 January 1978 the Joint Chiefs forwarded to Secretary of Defense Harold Brown Volume II of JSOP 80-87, which laid out their objective force recommendations for fiscal years 1980 through 1987. In contrast to the year before, the JCS now had a much clearer picture of President Carter's goals and priorities. Their instructions consisted of a broad statement of basic policy (PD-18) and a brief defense guidance paper issued by the Secretary of Defense in late December 1977. Still in preparation was the Secretary's more detailed Consolidated Guidance. For budget and force planning purposes, Secretary Brown told the Chiefs that they should continue to observe the Defense Guidance issued in November 1976, as amended by PD-18, and to assume that military spending in the aggregate would rise by approximately 3 percent per year in real terms.³⁷

As interpreted by the Joint Chiefs, the salient points of this guidance required the following preparations: to maintain a strategic nuclear force posture of essential equivalence with the Soviet Union; to provide a clear capability to conduct successful nuclear operations across a full range of conflict intensities; to design US strategic forces with emphasis on preserving stability in a crisis; to assure, under conditions of nuclear equivalence, viable conventional alternatives; to stop a Warsaw Pact attack with minimum loss of NATO territory (the so-called "forward strategy"); to strengthen NATO's conventional capabilities in accordance with the agreed strategic concept (MC 14/3); to maintain a deployment force of "light divisions," augmented by "moderate" tactical air and naval forces, with strategic mobility independent of overseas bases and logistic support for contingencies in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, or the Korean peninsula; and, with the exception of withdrawals from Korea, to maintain the current level of combat forces deployed in the Western Pacific, in order to deter aggression throughout the region.³⁸

To carry out these tasks the Joint Chiefs in JSOP 80-87 envisioned a strategic force posture almost identical to that programmed in the Secretary's fiscal guidance through FY 1983 under the Five Year Defense Program and general purpose forces with a slightly larger Army and the Air Force (see Table 11.2, page 273). The main difference was in the JSOP rate of growth for naval forces, which assumed an operational requirement for a two-ocean navy, one protecting SLOCs in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, the other functioning in support of NATO in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. To meet these obligations, the Navy estimated that it would need to complete fifty-one new ships during the next FYDP, versus a programmed rate of forty-four under the Secretary's

FY 1979 budget submission.³⁹ With retirements and obsolescence factored in, the net effect of adhering to the programmed schedule would be a steadily shrinking Navy in terms of ship numbers, and a less effective one in terms of power projection through carriers and surface combatants. Although not reflected in the force table, the JSOP schedule also would introduce Trident missile submarines at a rate of two per year starting in FY 1983, compared with the programmed rate of three every two years.

Critics, mostly in the civilian sector, had routinely disparaged the JSOP numbers as posturing by the Services, either to improve their bargaining position at budget time or as a reflection of a “wish list” mentality behind JCS planning. But as the Joint Chiefs made abundantly clear time and again throughout JSOP 80-87, they were exceedingly skeptical, based on their own assessments and on those of the unified and specified commanders, whether programmed force levels would be sufficient to meet the one-and-a-half war strategy demands of PD-18. As a sign of the Chiefs’ seriousness and concern, JSOP 80-87 exhibited a rare degree of interservice unity; it was devoid of split views except for an objection by the Chief of Staff of the Army, who declined to endorse any specific number of carriers for the Navy pending the outcome of ongoing requirements studies.⁴⁰

Predictably, much of the ensuing budget and force level debate turned on questions affecting the size and purpose of naval forces. A major innovation this year was the introduction of the Secretary’s Consolidated Guidance (CG) paper, which finally reached the JCS around mid-January 1978, incorporating planning, programming, policy, and fiscal guidance in one document.⁴¹ However this (covering FYs 1980-1984), like many first cuts, initially proved a less than overwhelming success and drew sharp criticisms from the Joint Staff and from the Combatant Commands. Feeling that the draft needed refinements, the Joint Chiefs returned it to the Secretary with a long list of recommended changes and a suggestion that it incorporate, among other things, a statement of approved military policy and strategy, with JSOP 80-87 suggested as a possible model.⁴² As Chairman Brown characterized it, CG 80-84, as currently written, reflected “one view of the world by well-intended but militarily inexperienced analysts” in OSD and would need “extensive revision” before the Service Chiefs and the commanders in chief (CINCs) could take it seriously.⁴³

The Secretary of Defense concurred with the Chairman that CG 80-84 needed more work (something both expected anyway), and after copious revision and amendment, he forwarded a synopsis to President Carter on 10 March 1978. Secretary Brown said that, for budget planning purposes, he was sticking to the previous year’s submission (FY 1979) of \$126 billion in TOA and adding just under 3 percent in real growth annually, an increase driven more by US promises to NATO than by “any firm conviction” that it was the right amount for national security purposes. Indeed, as he readily acknowledged, there were growing pressures—from the JCS, from Congress, and from members of his own staff—for an increase of up to 5 percent. Were this to happen, he conceded, it would raise the defense budget to the level estimated by the Ford administration. The Secretary insisted that he was keeping an open mind, but as a practical

matter he saw movement, especially in Congress, toward a higher level of defense spending than the administration had planned. The question in the year ahead would be how well the Secretary could hold the line.

Secretary Brown drew special attention to the difficulties he faced with the Navy. The basic problem, he said, was that the unit costs of Navy hardware—surface ships, aircraft, and submarines—were rising faster than the defense budget as a whole and the Navy's share of it. The Trident missile submarine, which the Secretary regarded as the most important weapons project in the budget, was a case in point. Its costs for one reason or another had skyrocketed and threatened to displace new construction of other vessels. One possibility he said he was considering was to cut back Trident construction from the current rate of one and a half boats to one per year. Such a cut would weaken the strategic deterrent and run the risk of falling below the level of "essential equivalence" mandated in PD-18. Faced with this prospect, the Navy would have no choice but to accept the expensive course of extending the service life of its Poseidon fleet to keep boats operating into the early 1990s. Other options were to sustain shipbuilding at the level desired by the Navy by transferring funds from other Service programs, or by increasing the defense budget by as much as \$3 billion annually over the next few years. However, Secretary Brown was skeptical of both moves. Any transfer of funds, he firmly believed, would impair efforts to strengthen NATO, while an infusion of additional money would inevitably provoke competition for funds, pitting the Navy's long-term needs against the more urgent near-term requirements of bolstering air and ground forces on the Central Front in Europe.

Pending further review of the Navy's problems, the Secretary affirmed his intention to build on the policies and programs set in motion the year before, with NATO's Long Term Defense Program accorded first priority. Among the measures he proposed were the addition of nine new heavy battalions to the Army over the FY 1980-1982 period, designated primarily for NATO Europe but available for uses elsewhere; the pre-positioning of additional equipment in Europe; and the conversion (still tentative) of the 9th Division from an infantry to a mechanized infantry division. At the same time, Secretary Brown cautioned that sizable savings from withdrawing US troops from Korea were not likely to materialize soon. In order to allay worries expressed by US allies in Asia, Secretary Brown advised against force withdrawals from the Western Pacific beyond those already scheduled. The overall aim, he said, would be to create a conventional force posture for coping with "1½ simultaneous contingencies"—a major one in Europe and a "lesser" conflict in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, or Korea.⁴⁴

Secretary Brown hoped that, by highlighting the DoD's growing budget problems, he could interest President Carter in holding an early NSC discussion that would either affirm or amend the Consolidated Guidance (CG) before the Services submitted their Program Objective Memorandums for FY 1980. However, it was not until almost mid-May 1978 (only two weeks before the POMs were due) that President Carter found time on his calendar to call such a meeting. By then, events in the Horn of Africa had produced an escalating US naval presence in the Indian Ocean, strengthening the Navy's

hand in the upcoming budget review. Despite the increased reliance on naval power in foreign policy, however, President Carter seemed little inclined to back away from his commitment to hold down the military budget. Given the scope and intensity of competing budget demands, force-planning analysts in J-5 were increasingly skeptical of seeing means and ends meet. "Bottom line defense requirements in force modernizations," they found, "particularly in areas such as modernization of strategic forces, shipbuilding, and ability to sustain forces in combat cannot be adequately met within basic dollar levels projected in CG."⁴⁵

The NSC, with President Carter presiding, finally met on the afternoon of 10 May to take up Secretary Brown's requested review of the Consolidated Guidance. Immediately prior to convening the NSC, President Carter hosted a luncheon for the Joint Chiefs at the White House for an informal exchange of views. Warned by Secretary Brown that the JCS might be "more outspoken than at previous meetings," President Carter accepted Dr. Brzezinski's advice to steer clear of specific issues that might prove controversial and to examine instead "underlying policy assumptions."⁴⁶ This approach inadvertently played into the Chiefs' hands by opening the discussion to the whole range of policy and budgetary implications raised by the issuance the previous year of PD-18. Seizing the opportunity, the Chairman-designate General David C. Jones and Admiral Holloway both expressed doubts as to the directive's feasibility, wondering if or when the JCS could expect resources to be brought into line with PD-18 rhetoric. President Carter was predictably noncommittal, but he did caution his military advisers that it would be "unrealistic to expect major budgeting increases beyond the present projections." He vowed also, however, that there would be no major cuts. Any significant new programs, he added, citing the M-X as one example, would have to come through defense budget trade-offs, not through "a flat increase."⁴⁷

In contrast to the discussion at lunch, the NSC meeting that followed dealt with more concrete issues, mostly money-saving measures.⁴⁸ Although President Carter might have invited the entire JCS to attend, he declined to do so and stuck to his practice of having the CJCS represent the military, in this instance Chairman-designate Jones. First on the agenda was the Navy's future size which, as Secretary of Defense Brown explained, would depend largely on whether the Navy continued to operate a fleet of twelve active carriers, or as OMB proposed, ten or fewer. Although General Jones apparently took no position, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance mounted a lawyer-like defense for keeping the number at twelve as offering greater diplomatic and political flexibility. Cutting short the discussion, President Carter commented to the effect that "staying with 12 carriers seems reasonable for the time being." Moving on, the meeting agreed that OMB should review the Navy's shipbuilding program, while the NSC Staff explored terms of reference for a PRM on naval missions. Dr. Brzezinski, endeavoring to be helpful, suggested that the Defense Department look more closely at simpler, less complicated weapons systems, presumably as a means of holding down future costs. Meantime, the President directed the Defense Department to move ahead

in areas of approved policy, especially the strengthening of NATO, and to work with the State Department in lining up congressional support.⁴⁹

As these decisions suggest, President Carter's priorities remained essentially the same as the year before, with Europe still his number one concern. Willing to make allowances for unforeseen contingencies, he saw no urgent need for a budget increase. Instead, he expected the Services to work within their allotted funds to come up with sound defense programs, as difficult as that might prove to be, particularly for the Navy. The Joint Chiefs, on the other hand, saw the situation differently, and in their Joint Program Assessment Memorandum (successor to the JFM), they endeavored to impress upon the Secretary their view "that directed funding at the basic budget levels for FY 1980-FY 1984 will not accommodate many essential national defense requirements." Allowances for inflation notwithstanding, they found critical requirements going unmet in strategic modernization, shipbuilding, and combat sustainability. In particular, they affirmed their support for accelerated deployment of the M-X, construction of at least three Trident SSBNs every two years, accelerated production of infantry/cavalry fighting vehicles and XM-1 tanks for the Army, full funding of combat aircraft procurement for the Air Force at the POM-recommended level, and an accelerated shipbuilding rate, with emphasis on amphibious lift capability for non-NATO contingencies and power projection.⁵⁰

In his Program Decision Memorandums on Service budget requests, issued in late July, Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles Duncan hinted broadly that he and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown shared the Chiefs' concerns, but that "fiscal realities" imposed unavoidable constraints. The most significant reduction by far was in the construction rate of Trident SSBNs, which the Program Decision Memorandum pared to one per year through FY 1984 (later increased to an objective of two in FY 1984), but with the Initial Operating Capability (IOC) still slated for FY 1988. Earlier, as a money saving move, the Navy had recommended delaying the IOC until FY 1990.⁵¹ Other decisions affecting the Navy included a prohibition on new nuclear-powered cruisers; a five-year ship construction program of new frigates, oilers, and destroyers, ranging from an enhanced level of fifty-five ships (should funding be available) to a decremented level of thirty-six; and cancellation of the LSD-41 transport ship program, in favor of pre-positioning equipment and finding less costly ways of transporting Marine divisions. At the same time, the PDM directed the Navy to extend the operating life of ten older transport vessels, previously scheduled for retirement, and to continue with projects and technologies for furthering the V/STOL program, but at the R&D level only.⁵²

In contrast to the Navy, the other Services fared comparatively well. Expecting cutbacks in procurement, the Army instead received permission to step up XM-1 tank production to ninety units per month by June 1983, rather than October 1984 as previously planned, in order to bolster "heavy" divisions slated for Europe.⁵³ Although denied funding for all the F-15 aircraft it wanted, the Air Force got the go-ahead to accelerate development of the air launched cruise missile (ALCM) and to plan for an FY 1986 IOC

for the M-X, using the Multiple Aim Point (MAP) basing system—two major improvements that the Joint Chiefs had strongly endorsed as imperative if the United States were to stay abreast of the Soviet Union in effective strategic power. Additionally, despite termination of the B-1, the Air Force obtained permission to initiate enhanced level R&D on a follow-on advanced manned bomber based on the results of a recent strategic bomber study conducted by the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering.⁵⁴

Even with these increases and improvements, Chairman Jones could not help but worry that the United States was steadily losing ground to the Soviet Union in military power. Although General Jones doubted whether the United States was militarily inferior in “absolute terms,” he found that “the Soviets have for years continued to out-man, out-gun, out-develop, out-build, and out-deploy us in most meaningful military categories, all the while shortening our qualitative lead in many important areas.” The reason for this situation, he argued, was “a decade or more of slips and reductions in US defense programs unmatched by Soviet restraint.” General Jones acknowledged that in some areas “our true relative capability today may be somewhat better than the American public appreciates,” but he declined to be specific and argued instead that it was the overall perception that mattered most, especially in retaining the support and loyalty of US allies. Ultimately, he insisted, “we should not overlook the fact that the signals we send by the combination of our negotiating strategy and our defense posture can have a profound influence on the confidence, the policies, and the programs of other nations.”⁵⁵

By the end of the summer, with the budget process moving into its penultimate stage, Secretary of Defense Brown found himself siding increasingly with his military advisers that a continuation of current trends could only result in adverse consequences for the country’s defense posture and security. In August and again in September 1978 he sent President Carter lengthy memorandums, supported with charts and graphs, illustrating the increases in Soviet military spending, with few, if any, offsetting increases by the United States. The net effect, Secretary Brown argued, was a “general trend . . . quite unambiguously against us.” Meeting with the President at Camp David on 8 September, he also gave President Carter a fresh JCS memorandum detailing the Chiefs’ views in this regard, as frank and as candid an assessment as the JCS were ever likely to submit.⁵⁶

Elaborating on the views expressed earlier by the Chairman, the Joint Chiefs’ memorandum laid out in stark and unambiguous terms their growing worry that the Soviet Union was pulling abreast, if not ahead, of the United States in military power, views they knew to be at odds with the President’s. “In relative terms,” the JCS argued, “there can be little doubt that the strategic balance has shifted, that the margin of US military capability relative to that of the USSR is narrower today than it has ever been, and that these adverse trends are continuing.” Although these trends were evident across the entire military spectrum, they were most apparent in strategic forces, where in just a few years the United States had moved from a position of clear-cut superiority

to a position of essential equivalence, with the Soviet Union poised to acquire “a margin of strategic superiority” in the early 1980s. “Our situation,” as the Chiefs characterized it, “can be likened to skating on thin ice with the ice getting thinner.” Beyond this, the JCS saw the Soviets overtaking the United States in tactical nuclear weaponry and adding to their already formidable advantage in conventional ground forces through a vigorous R&D effort and a re-equipment program that was outpacing that of the United States and its NATO allies “by a wide margin.” Meanwhile, in recent years the Soviet navy had grown from essentially a coastal protection fleet into a highly effective blue water surface and subsurface force, supported by a growing force of modern land- and sea-based naval aircraft and an increasing amphibious capability. Only in the area of power projection did the United States retain “a substantial lead,” though even here the advantage appeared to be eroding in the face of Soviet efforts to improve capabilities. Taking these various dangers into account, the Joint Chiefs drew two conclusions—not only that the United States needed more “sustained and substantial growth” in its defense programs but that it should also adopt a more vigorous national policy that would make better use of its “material and moral resources to arrest and reverse” rising Soviet power.⁵⁷

Despite a strong and concerted push from the Pentagon for more money, supported to some extent by Dr. Brzezinski, the President made few concessions. President Carter knew full well that his defense budgets failed to provide funding for everything the Services believed to be needed, but he remained skeptical of the Chiefs’ argument that the United States was moving toward a position of military inferiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In the final mark-up, he generally acted on the spending recommendations he received from OMB, which reflected a decided preference for holding down military spending.⁵⁸ Ultimately, the administration’s FY 80 FYDP adopted the following force structure:⁵⁹

	<u>30 June 1980</u>	<u>30 June 1984</u>
Strategic Forces		
B-52 bombers	316	316
Titans	54	54
Minuteman II	450	450
Minuteman III	550	550
Polaris A-3	10/160	---
Poseidon/Poseidon	30/480	19/304
Poseidon/Trident I	1/16	12/192
Trident/Trident I	---	6/144

	<u>30 June 1980</u>	<u>30 June 1984</u>
General Purpose Forces		
Army Divisions (A/R)	16/8	16/8
Marine AFs	3	3
USAF Tactical Fighter Wings	26	26
CVs and CVNs (A&R)	12/1	12/1
Attack Submarines	80	98
Surface Combatants (A&R)	185	217
MAF Lift Capability	1.15	1.15

In terms of program emphasis, the administration's budget for FY 1980, submitted to Congress on 22 January 1979, was almost a carbon copy of the year before. Calling for new TOA of \$135.5 billion, it projected outlays of \$122.7 billion which, allowing for inflation, represented a 3.1 percent increase over the FY 1979 submission.⁶⁰ While stressing that "most of this increase" would go toward strengthening NATO, the President insisted also that there was adequate money in the budget for "steady" strategic modernization, for improved readiness in tactical forces, and for necessary R&D.⁶¹

Chairman Jones, in his military posture statement accompanying the budget, painted a somewhat different picture. Echoing sentiments he had expressed only a few months earlier in private to the Secretary and the President, General Jones warned of "a potentially unstable and acutely dangerous imbalance in US-USSR military capability." The result already was a growing preponderance of Soviet military power—the basis of Soviet political influence around the globe—which, General Jones reiterated, could erode other countries' trust and confidence in the United States. General Jones abjured any need for a "crash program" to redress this situation. But in characterizing the President's FY 1980 submission as offering "modest real growth" and "some risk reduction," he left no doubt that more could—and should—be done.⁶² As yet, President Carter seemed disinclined to listen. But by the end of the next budget cycle, his attitude would begin to change.

Force and Budget Planning in 1979

The budget process leading to the FY 1981 submission would prove a crucial turning point in the Carter administration's approach to national security. Heretofore, President Carter had exercised extremely tight control over the defense budget, reminiscent in many ways of President Harry S. Truman's behavior in the late 1940s. Like President Truman, President Carter gave priority to domestic programs and chose to emphasize diplomacy in foreign affairs rather than military power. Like President Truman, President Carter faced a volatile international situation that could disrupt the most carefully crafted plans and generate irresistible pressures to boost military

spending. In President Truman's case, the turning point had been the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. President Carter never faced as serious or as clear-cut a challenge. Yet as events in Iran, Latin America, and Afghanistan unfolded in 1979, it became clear that his budget policies and priorities stood little chance of surviving intact.

The Joint Chiefs remained ardent advocates of strengthening the defense posture, and in their Joint Strategic Planning Document (successor to the JSOP) for the FY 1981-1988 period, they again recommended objectives which in many cases would require substantial increases above the levels in the FYDP. Overall, the Chiefs believed that the United States was not doing enough to assure its security and well-being. Of primary concern was what the Chiefs described as "a severe strategy-force mismatch," as a result of which programmed forces offered "no assurance" of being capable of executing the one-and-a-half war military strategy in PD-18. "Elimination of this mismatch," the JCS advised, "requires either reducing our national objectives with a related revision of our military strategy, increasing the capabilities of the programmed force, or some combination of both; otherwise, we must accept higher risks."⁶³

The solution recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in JSPD 81-88 was a progressive strengthening of US forces, starting with a series of "risk reduction" measures to take effect by the end of FY 1985. In the area of strategic forces, these included acceleration of the M-X program, with IOC by early 1985 rather than 1986 as currently programmed; stepped-up construction of Trident SSBNs to two per year, commencing in FY 1983; and the revival of the B-1 bomber. For general purpose forces, the Chiefs endorsed additions to Army manning levels and force structure to fill out 5 of the programmed 16 active divisions; procurement of an additional 198 F-15 fighters for the Air Force; the construction of at least 11 more surface combatants and 2 nuclear attack submarines (Los Angeles class) for the Navy; and a reversal of the trend in reduction of amphibious lift by authorizing, during the FY 1981-1985 period, construction of sufficient amphibious shipping to support a 1.66 Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) lift capability. To reach these goals, the Chiefs estimated that total obligational authority would have to rise by an annual average of 5 percent, as opposed to the 2½ percent TOA increase in the President's FY 1980 submission.⁶⁴ Shown in Table 11.3, page 274, are the programmed (FYDP), risk reduction, and planned force levels as they appeared in JSPD 81-88.

As the immediate successor to the JSOP, JSPD 81-88 attracted considerable attention, not only for its contents but for the manner in which it treated force level and budgetary problems. The most detailed critique came from Ambassador Robert W. Komer, Secretary Brown's adviser on NATO matters and later his Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Characterizing the JSPD as a "big improvement," Mr. Komer found it to be "more articulate, more reasoned, less mechanical" than the old JSOP. Among the changes Ambassador Komer liked was the inclusion of the "risk reduction" options, which he felt gave the Secretary more choices in assessing threats and reaching decisions. Likewise, he applauded the relative absence of Service "splits," feeling that this represented "a real achievement, given the inevitable Service propensity for

fighting over how to cut even an imaginary pie.” In fact, there were only two dissenting footnotes in the entire JSPD—a Navy objection to the size of the Army, and an Army objection to the number of Navy carriers. Ambassador Komer also agreed with the basic analysis in the JSPD that currently programmed forces were inadequate to meet the demands of the one and a half war strategy in PD-18. But he took issue with the Chiefs’ methodology for dealing with this problem, arguing that it was “still too Force Structure-oriented,” and reminded them that it was highly improbable that Congress would fund a “planning force” at anything approximating the JSPD levels. Mr. Komer was also critical of what he considered a tendency on the part of JCS planners to assume the need for a force structure that could deal effectively with two or more major conventional conflicts simultaneously. Although Ambassador Komer did not rule out such a possibility, he regarded it as highly improbable, given the constraints on and make up of Soviet forces, and suggested that it was really an excuse for the Services and the CINCs to lay claims on resources. Offering what he felt to be a more realistic approach, Mr. Komer urged the JCS to think more creatively in optimizing the use of assets, to rely more on allies’ contributions, and if necessary, to alter strategy to fit available resources. Among specific recommendations, Ambassador Komer urged the JCS to take a closer look at obtaining basing and overflight rights in the Middle East to prepare for a Persian Gulf contingency and to consider redefining the Marine Corps’ mission to make it more available for contingencies in Europe rather than amphibious operations.⁶⁵

Ambassador Komer had a reputation for unorthodox thinking, and his proposals for change probably went farther than most. Yet as his analysis suggests, the prevailing mood at the upper echelons in OSD, based on the budget deliberations of the previous year, was that the President would never endorse a costly military buildup and that maximizing existing resources posed the only realistic option for military planners seeking to bolster capabilities. A further articulation of this view appeared in the Secretary’s Draft Consolidated Guidance for the FY 1981-1985 period, which the Chairman and the Director, Joint Staff, received in late January 1979. Generally speaking, the CG postulated two primary objectives—to maintain essential equivalence in strategic forces, preferably through negotiated arms control agreements, but through unilateral means if necessary; and to fulfill obligations to NATO under the Long Term Defense Program. Although the CG noted the force-level projections in the JSPD, it wholly ignored the Chiefs’ warning of a strategy-force mismatch and adhered to FYDP fiscal projections that made no pretence of trying to keep up with inflation, let alone increase capabilities. As a result, in submitting their POMs, Service planners would have no choice but to reprogram forces for FY 1984 at lower levels than for FY 1981.⁶⁶

JCS reactions were predictable. While fully aware that the CG was still technically a “draft,” subject to further refinements, the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw it pointing in the direction of a steadily shrinking defense establishment, with many needed improvements either postponed or eliminated. US allies would find themselves weakened as well. “For virtually all types of forces,” the Chiefs stated, “the guidance in the draft CG

is too restrictive.” Not only would it curb strategic modernization but it would cripple offensive action at sea and impose “an inflexible and geographically constrained one-war, Central Region strategy, defensive and reactive in nature.” In assessing the overall effects, the Joint Chiefs concluded that “forces developed in response to this draft CG are likely to involve high risk of failure of deterrence, and of defeat should deterrence fail.”⁶⁷

Stung by the Chiefs’ comments, Secretary Brown assured them that the CG was indeed a draft subject to change and that he would give their views due consideration as the formulation of the budget progressed.⁶⁸ Budget and program analysts in OSD by and large agreed that the current FYDP was under-priced and overly optimistic about the impact of inflation.⁶⁹ Instead of a 3 percent real increase aimed mostly to bolster NATO and related programs, they recommended a 5 percent rise, which would give more of a boost all around. Joint Staff planners concurred that as a general target 5 percent “seems right,” and at a meeting on 14 May of the Policy Review Committee, Chairman Jones and Secretary of Defense Brown began laying the groundwork for the 5 percent increase by outlining various options.⁷⁰

During a crucial NSC meeting on 4 June 1979 General Jones made a strong bid to impress upon the President the need for increased defense funding lest the United States fall behind the Soviet Union in strategic and conventional military power. The Long Term Defense Program for NATO notwithstanding, General Jones repeated what the Joint Chiefs had told the Secretary of Defense—that the Soviets continued to hold a substantial edge in Europe and that they could probably win a conventional victory over NATO. He also mentioned the problems of strategic modernization and urged the President to reach a deployment decision soon on the M-X ICBM in order, as General Jones put it, to “defuse concerns about the Soviets’ large missile advantage.” President Carter agreed that the time had come for the M-X to go forward, but he put off resolving the all-important question of a deployment mode and practically ruled out any further increases for defense other than those already planned. “While the trends are against us,” he remarked, “we are strong, and . . . must solve the problem posed by perceptions that we are not.”⁷¹

Undeterred, the Joint Chiefs continued to build a case for bolstering the defense budget in their annual Joint Program Assessment Memorandum (FY 1981-1988). By way of justification, they cited “recent events in Iran” and the Soviet Union’s “determination to gain military superiority.” Once again, the JCS pointed to the strategy-force mismatch they had described in JSPD 81-88 and warned that, because of “the defense dollar’s shrinking program value,” the Military Services would be hard put to keep up with day-to-day operating costs and minimum modernization. The Chiefs estimated that the current FYDP was underfunded by some \$41.6 billion and that adoption of a real growth rate of 5 percent annually would be needed to reverse the slide. Otherwise, the Chiefs predicted, “In today’s fiscal climate, the five year defense plan (FYDP) forces will never be realized.”⁷²

The Joint Chiefs also believed that, with the Vienna summit on SALT II now a *fait accompli*, the time had come to take a closer look at funding for strategic modernization and its impact on other programs. The impetus for raising this issue came from Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, the Navy chief, citing reports that the Secretary of Defense intended to reallocate “substantial funds” from general purpose forces in order to offset a potential shortfall in the M-X program. The JCS, Admiral Hayward observed, had gone on record time and again as supporting ratification of the SALT II treaty on the condition the United States undertook a series of important strategic modernization programs designed to maintain strategic parity within the limits of the treaty. As Admiral Hayward understood it, the intent of the Joint Chiefs was that “significant portions” of these programs should be paid for by adding funds to the military budget, not by cannibalizing other programs.⁷³ His JCS colleagues concurred that this was their understanding as well. However, the JCS practice had been to stay out of squabbles between the Services and the Secretary over the use of funds, and this instance proved no exception. So, even though the Joint Chiefs notified the Secretary of their concerns lest general purpose forces be short-changed, they backed away from condemning altogether the sometimes unavoidable practice of reallocating funds and instead used the occasion to lobby for a 5 percent increase in the defense budget.⁷⁴

Despite repeated JCS appeals for more money, Secretary of Defense Brown held to a defense budget ceiling limited to 3 percent real growth. Having failed the year before to obtain an increase, Secretary Brown showed little enthusiasm for taking up the Chiefs’ cause again. PDMs and APDMs issued during the summer and early fall of 1979 reflected a continuing commitment to administration policies fashioned during the previous two years, built around strengthening European air and ground defenses and bolstering the strategic deterrent force, though at a considerably slower pace than the JCS found advisable.⁷⁵ But with double-digit inflation eroding the Pentagon’s buying power and with plans going forward for a partial augmentation of forces in the Persian Gulf, it was far from surprising that the White House should take another look at military spending. The first sign of a crack in the administration’s budget policy was its submission in September 1979 of a supplemental request for \$2.7 billion to cover unprogrammed fuel and other operating costs stemming from a higher-than-expected rate of inflation. Nothing in the supplemental would improve the strength or readiness of US forces; however without it their preparedness would certainly decline.⁷⁶

From this point on, the Carter administration found it harder and harder to hold the line on the military budget. Although the President remained personally committed to exercising restraint in defense spending, his resolve steadily weakened in the face of mounting Senate skepticism over the SALT II treaty, reports of a mysterious Soviet brigade in Cuba, the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran, and ultimately, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The immediate concern was to expedite plans and preparations for a rapid deployment capability to the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean region, the subject of numerous high-level meetings in November and December as the budget process entered its final phase. The outcome was a growing consensus

that the ceiling on the defense budget had to be raised, though by how much remained to be seen. Pending a clearer picture of the international situation, the guidance emanating from the Oval Office was that there would be no immediate or large-scale upward adjustments in military spending, other than to help plan and equip a rapid deployment force.⁷⁷

Thus, the FY 1981 defense budget that went to Congress in late January 1980 continued to reflect, in President Carter’s words, “the strategy of restraint,” while leaving open the possibility of future increases.⁷⁸ The basic elements in the FYDP it recommended were as follows:⁷⁹

	<u>30 June 1981</u>	<u>30 June 1985</u>
Strategic Forces		
B-52 bombers	316	316
Titans	54	54
Minuteman II	450	450
Minuteman III	550	550
Poseidon/Poseidon	22/352	19/304
Poseidon/Trident	12/192	12/192
Trident/Trident I	1/24	7/168
General Purpose Forces		
Army Divisions (A/R)	16/8	16/8
Marine AFs	3	3
USAF Tactical Fighter Wings	26	26
CVs and CVNs	12	12
Attack Submarines	85	97
Surface Combatants (A&R)	199	231
MAF Lift Capability	1+	1.15

Calling for total obligational authority of \$158.7 billion, the President’s budget proposed outlays of \$142.7 billion, a 3.3 percent real increase over the figure proposed the year before. Nonetheless, Secretary of Defense Brown assured Congress that the FY 1981 military budget would inaugurate a new and more robust policy, backed by a Five Year Defense Program that would average more than 4½ percent net growth annually. “The budget is intended,” he insisted, “to demonstrate a clear commitment to a strong defense.” That it did not reflect the full impact of recent developments in Afghanistan and elsewhere, he explained, was due largely to unavoidable time constraints in preparing the submission. Should he feel it advisable, he said, he would not hesitate to come back for more money.⁸⁰

The Joint Chiefs adopted a wait-and-see attitude. In their annual military posture statement accompanying the budget, they evinced guarded optimism for the improvements promised under this and future budgets and the measures being initiated to create a rapid deployment force. But in the critical area of strategic nuclear power, they found the United States barely holding its own against a continuing Soviet strategic buildup.⁸¹ Sounding a somewhat more upbeat theme, JCS Chairman Jones, in his separate overview, applauded what he saw as firm resolve by the President, backed by “a broad popular consensus,” to support increased military expenditures. But even at the rate projected in the revised FYDP, he foresaw a “long process of renovating our defense posture.” Despite an encouraging outlook, he still felt that “we have a lot of ‘catch-up ball’ to play.”⁸²

Force and Budget Planning in 1980

During 1980 the Joint Chiefs continued to press for major increases in military spending. Faced with new commitments in Southwest Asia under the Carter doctrine, the withdrawal of the SALT II treaty from the Senate, and ongoing efforts to honor obligations to strengthen NATO, the JCS were more convinced than ever that there was a serious mismatch between the demands of national strategy, on the one hand, and available resources, on the other. At the start of the year, they had good reason to hope, based on the administration’s response to the Afghanistan crisis, that President Carter was coming around to their way of thinking. But as the FY 1982 budget developed, it became increasingly clear to the Chiefs that, except for providing support of the Rapid Deployment Force, the administration remained leery of any significant departures of policy on military spending. Not until the arrival in 1981 of a new administration, operating on a wholly different philosophy and set of assumptions, would the defense budget begin to receive an infusion of funds allowing real growth on a scale the Joint Chiefs had long considered to be needed.

The Chiefs’ updated agenda for future force planning, JSPD 82-89, went to the Secretary of Defense in late December 1979. This was the first JSPD developed since completion of the interagency Sloss report on strategic targeting, which had recommended a list of significant changes in nuclear employment policy, some with obvious budgetary and procurement implications (see chapter 10). However, there is little to suggest that the study played much part in the formulation of requirements in JSPD 82-89, probably because few of the report’s implementing directives had yet been issued. At no point did the JSPD even cite the Sloss report as evidence of the need for the acquisition of new weapons systems or adjustments in force structure. The most direct link was in the JSPD’s strong endorsement of further improvements in command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I) facilities, a key element in attaining the Sloss report’s objective of more flexible targeting options. But since both the Joint Staff in Washington and the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff in Omaha kept these

requirements under constant review, changes and upgrades in this regard were almost inevitable in any case.⁸³

Like the year before, JSPD 82-89 contained recommendations for a “risk reduction” package that would expedite increases and improvements in certain critical areas (see Table 11.4, page 275). Although mindful of the President’s commitment to additional program growth, the Joint Chiefs believed that more needed to be done to acquire the capabilities for the kinds of non-NATO contingencies envisioned in PD-18. Quite simply, the Chiefs believed, “The resources required to accomplish this objective have not been provided.” The Joint Chiefs accorded highest priority to risk reduction measures that would improve strategic force connectivity (e.g., C3I capabilities) and increase the readiness and mobility of forward-deployed and early deploying general purpose forces. As part of an accelerated strategic program, the Joint Chiefs endorsed more vigorous ballistic missile defense R&D, which they felt had languished since the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty; and they renewed their support for acquiring a penetrating bomber. Dropping efforts to revive the B-1, the Joint Chiefs recommended initiating design definition and development for a wholly new plane, with deliveries to begin by 1993. (Whether this was to be a “stealth” bomber or something else is not clear.) Meanwhile, they hoped that an Air Force program to extend the range, payload, and penetration capabilities of the FB-111 on a non-SALT constrained basis would strengthen the bomber leg of the strategic triad.⁸⁴

Secretary Brown, in the initial draft of his FY 1982 Consolidated Guidance, circulated in early February 1980, assured the JCS that he and his staff had duly noted the recommendations in JSPD 82-89.⁸⁵ Close scrutiny, however, left the Chiefs skeptical. Their leading objection was that the CG did not provide sufficient program development to reduce the existing strategy-resources gap. Given the vital US security interests in the Persian Gulf region and the existing Soviet threat there, for instance, the Chiefs believed that the sizing of forces for a non-NATO contingency in that region should be based upon Soviet military involvement and not limited, as in the CG, to an Iraqi attack on Kuwait. The Chiefs also felt that the CG underestimated Soviet capabilities while overstating those of the United States and its allies; that it accorded undue reliance on the pre-positioning of equipment and host nation support, instead of acquiring independent lift capability; and that it gave excessive attention to the need for readiness at the expense of force modernization and sustainability. As a result, instead of a force posture pointing toward the future, the CG seemed to give preference to coping with limited emergencies. Worst of all, it would do little to reduce the long-term risk to US interests and security.⁸⁶

The question of how to strike a proper balance between readiness, modernization, and sustainability would recur throughout the preparation of the FY 1982 military budget. The JCS position was that all three were indispensable to military preparedness.⁸⁷ But at a time of soaring inflation, when the consumer price index was growing at over 10 percent annually for the second year in a row, budget planners in OSD and the Services found it exceedingly difficult to make accurate long-term spending

estimates. Accordingly, in submitting their POMs in May 1980, the Services generally followed the advice in the Secretary's Consolidated Guidance and deferred requests for modernization and acquisition programs in order to protect near-term readiness and support functions. Even so, not everyone agreed that the Services' submissions went far enough in this direction. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Robert Komer complained that the POMs gave only "a lick and a promise" to funding for emergencies involving the recently organized Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. But by and large there was a growing consensus that, owing to inflation, opportunities for significant new improvements in the force structure were becoming more and more limited.⁸⁸

Recognizing the reality of fiscal constraints, the Joint Chiefs reluctantly concurred that the Services were making the right choice. However, the Chiefs foresaw "considerable danger" should this trend persist. "Emphasis on readiness," they told Secretary Brown in their JPAM on the FY 1982 budget, "has forced critically important hardware programs to be funded at the margin." Most serious was that replacement rates for critical equipment—ships and aircraft especially—would not keep pace with obsolescence. Hoping to minimize the impact, the JCS implored the Secretary and the Defense Resources Board to give capital funding improvements utmost attention during the mark-up of the Services' FY 1982 POMs. Additionally, the Chiefs highlighted the need to preserve incentives to keep careers in the military attractive; to strengthen air- and sea-lift capabilities for non-NATO contingencies; to improve reserve force readiness; to develop a "credible" chemical warfare posture to offset the Soviet Union's "large and expanding" CW capability; to enhance C3I facilities against the threat of a Soviet nuclear attack; and to increase industrial preparedness for an emergency.⁸⁹

One option open to the JCS was to recommend "offsets" in their JPAM, i.e., specific increases in Service programs, matched against decreases elsewhere. But because of the potential for divisiveness, the Chiefs voted against trying to do so at a meeting in May 1980.⁹⁰ Instead, in a departure from their usual practice of offering dissenting views to the Secretary and the President in private, they elected to "go public," and during an appearance before a House subcommittee in late May, they expressed reservations as to the adequacy of the defense budget currently before Congress. Even so, the only corrective action they recommended was a general suggestion that defense spending should rise to between 6 and 7 percent of the gross national product (GNP), not the 5 percent currently programmed.⁹¹

Despite the Chiefs' public endorsement of increasing the military budget, there were no plans to follow up with detailed suggestions. A strong proponent of fiscal integrity, Chairman Jones hesitated to propose additional spending without exploring other avenues; and as an ex officio member of the Defense Resources Board, he hoped to increase the availability of funds for modernization and acquisition by trimming low priority programs. However, analysis provided by the Joint Staff suggested little room for maneuver and generally advised staying within the Service POMs, recognizing that under the limitations of the fiscal guidance it was practically impossible to accommodate both modernization and readiness at the same time.⁹² The DRB recom-

mended a similar approach, and in his PDMs and APDMs Secretary of Defense Brown sanctioned minimal changes and adjustments in the force structure, with those that he did approve relating mainly to support of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force.⁹³

The FY 1982 defense budget that President Carter sent to Congress in January 1981 was, as it turned out, largely a formality. Recommending \$196.4 billion in TOA, it proposed outlays of \$180 billion. Attached to the regular budget was a FY 1981 supplemental request of \$6.3 billion—\$1.4 billion to meet additional requirements for the RDJTF and related activities, the rest to cover inflation-induced increases, including a \$3 billion military pay raise mandated by Congress in the defense authorization law. The net effect of these submissions, the President claimed, would increase defense outlays by nearly 8 percent in real terms over FY 1980. But with the incoming Reagan administration poised to offer amendments and supplementals of its own, it was likely that defense spending would climb even higher. The major buildup, in other words, was yet to come.⁹⁴

Despite White House claims, the JCS posture statement for FY 1982 left no doubt that the Joint Chiefs found President Carter's final defense budget sorely disappointing. Not only did it fail in their opinion to keep pace with the burgeoning growth in Soviet capabilities over the past decade and a half but it contributed little to closing the strategy-resources gap that was an ever-growing strain on US and allied capabilities. The root cause of this situation, according to Chairman Jones, was "a long term decline in our defense spending." Although the Chiefs acknowledged the efforts made over the last four years to remedy this situation, they warned that the military balance continued to favor the Soviet Union and that the years immediately ahead were apt to witness a further erosion of Western military power. In these circumstances, opportunities for the Soviet Union to extend its power and influence were likely to abound. Fearing the consequences, General Jones argued for the development of "a credible global strategy" resting in the first instance on "sustained and substantial increases in defense resources."⁹⁵

President Jimmy Carter left office in 1981 believing that he had accomplished much, during difficult times, to strengthen the country's defense posture. The JCS, however, viewed Carter's presidency as a step backward from the planned buildup and improvements promised at the end of the Nixon-Ford years. Throughout his presidency, President Carter's defense budgets reflected an overriding concern for holding down, rather than increasing, military spending, and it was with considerable reluctance that President Carter had modified his position during his last two years in office. Even then, the results fell short of what the JCS believed needed to be done for long-term modernization and the sustainability of US forces. The incoming Reagan administration had campaigned on a platform to step up military preparedness across the board, and thus seemed more receptive to JCS advice than President Carter had been. But to achieve the goals the Joint Chiefs had in mind would take years of work and billions of dollars in additional new investment.

Table 11.1
Programmed and JSOP 79-86 Force Levels

	<i>Programmed FY78</i>	<i>Proposed FY86 Objectives</i>
Strategic Forces		
B-52 bombers	316	316
B-1 bombers	--- ^a	241
TITAN ICBMs	54	45
Minuteman II ICBMs	450	450
Minuteman III ICBMs	550	392
MX ICBMs	---	160
Polaris A-3	10/160	---
Poseidon/Poseidon	31/596	20/320
Poseidon/Trident I	---	10/160 ^b
Trident/Trident I	---	10/240
Trident/Trident II	---	2/48
General Purpose Forces		
Active Army Divisions	16	19
Marine AFs	3	3
USAF Tactical Fighter Wings	26	30
Carriers (CV and CVN)	12 ^c	18
V/STOL Carriers	---	14
Attack Submarines	75	144
Active Surface Combatants	162	327
MAF Lift Capability	1+	2

Sources: (TS) JSOP 78-85, Book I Force Tables (Strategic Forces), and Book II, Part V Force Tables (General Purpose Forces); (TS) JSOP FY 79-86, vol. II; (S) FYDP 79, 13 Jan 78 Update.

Notes:

^a Four test prototypes built as R&D platforms. IOC for the B-1B production model was scheduled for FY 1982.

^b Backfit of Trident I missiles into Poseidon submarines was scheduled to commence FY 1980, with deployment of a 10-boat force by FY 1982.

^c One additional carrier in reserve for training purposes.

Table 11.2
JSOP 80-87 Force Levels

	<i>JSOP Objective for FY83</i>	<i>JSOP Objective for FY87</i>
Strategic Forces		
B-52 bombers	316	301
Titan ICBMs	54	54
MM II ICBMs	450	450
MM III ICBMs	550	480(550) ^a
MX	---	80
Polaris A-3	4/64	---
Poseidon/Poseidon	19/304	16/256(19/304) ^a
Poseidon/Trident I	12/192	12/192
Trident/Trident I	7/168	13/312
Trident/Trident II	---	2/48
General Purpose Forces		
Army Divisions	17	21
Marine AFs	3	3
USAF Tactical Wings	28	30
Naval Forces		
CV/CVN	14	18
CVV ^b	---	9
SSN	94	144
Surface Combatants	232	349
MAF Lift Capability	1 1/3+	2 1/3

Source: JSOP 80-87, vol. II, p. ES-17 and Appendix A.

Notes:

^a Forces shown in () were not arms-control constrained and were considered by the JCS to be reasonably attainable. The JCS included them to illustrate "a prudent force structure that can be attained if required by unforeseen developments."

^b The CVV was a new class of mid-sized carrier in lieu of additional NIMITZ class carriers. CVVs were to be capable of operating tactical aircraft in the existing inventory and VSTOL aircraft of the future.

Table 11.3
Programmed and Planned Forces
JSPD 81-88

	<i>Programmed FYDP FY84</i>	<i>Risk Reduction by end FY85</i>	<i>JSPD FY88</i>
Strategic Forces^a			
B-52 bombers	316	343	342
B-1	---	---	10
MM II	450	450	450
MM III	550	514	352
MM III (alternative)	482	336	
Titan	54	54	54
MX	---	30	180
Poseidon/Poseidon	19/304	19/304	12/192
Pos/Pos (alternative)		17/272	13/208
Poseidon/Trident I	12/192	12/192	12/192
Trident/Trident I	6/144	8/192	9/216
Trident/Trident II	---	---	2/48
General Purpose Forces			
Active Army Divisions	16	16	23
Marine AFs	3	3	3
USAF Tactical Combat Wings	26	28	37
Carriers (CV, CVN)	13 ^b	13 ^b	16 ^b
Attack Submarines	98	98	144
Surface Combatants	209	217	404
MAF Lift Capability	1.15	1.38 ^c	2.33

Notes:

^a JSPD 81-88 advised that the specific mix of offensive strategic systems in the later years of the force planning period should be considered flexible. Numbers shown for Minuteman III, Poseidon, and MX represented alternative approaches rather than firm requirements, and were subject to change depending on the outcome of arms control negotiations, technological developments, possible changes in nuclear weapons and employment guidance, and other factors.

^b CV/CVN listings reflected totals; numbers of deployable carriers were always one less than number indicated owing to CVs in Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) or dedicated to training.

^c While the text of JSOP 81-88 indicated a division lift capability of 1.66, the force tables showed 1.38.

Table 11.4
Programmed and Planned Forces
JSPD 82-89

	<i>Programmed FYDP FY85</i>	<i>Risk Reduction by end FY86</i>	<i>JSPD FY89</i>
Strategic Forces			
B-52 bombers	316	344	342
FB-111B/C	60	53	155
Titans	54	54	54
MM II	450	450	450
MM III	550	550	312
MX	---	10	200
Poseidon/Poseidon	19/304	19/304	13/208
Poseidon/Trident I	12/192	12/192	12/192
Tri/Trident I	7/168	9/216	11/264
Tri/Trident II	---	---	1/24
General Purpose Forces			
Active Army Divisions	16	16	23
Marine AFs	3	3	4
USAF Tactical Fighter Wings (Full Strength Equiv.)	24.7	24.7	36
CV/CVN	12	11(13)	16
SS/SSN	97	92(98)	131
Surface Combatants	224	225(231)	306
MAF Lift Capability	1.15	1.14	2.33

Sources: FYDP 1981 Budget Summary and Program Element Detail, 7 Jan 80, S; JSPD FY 82-89, TS, JCS 2143/942, Appendix B.

Note: Numbers in parentheses are for ships funded but not yet operational owing to long construction lead time required for naval vessels. Additional ships would augment MAF lift capability as they became available.



Close up of General David C. Jones, Air Force Chief of Staff and General George S. Brown, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Conclusion

Jimmy Carter's presidency was a transitional period in US national security policy, between the end of American involvement in Southeast Asia and what proved to be the final stages of the Cold War. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff could not have foreseen the demise of Soviet power, they were well aware of the impact of Vietnam, the most unpopular war in American history. Hoping to put Vietnam behind them, the Joint Chiefs wanted to move ahead with improvements and modernization programs that would guarantee a strong future defense posture. But as the Carter years witnessed, they faced diminished public support for the military, soaring inflation, and widespread ambivalence to obligations abroad. All in all, it was a frustrating time to be a military planner.

Adding to the Chiefs' difficulties was the absence of a clear-cut, high-level consensus on the nature and seriousness of the Soviet threat. Although no one doubted that the Soviet Union remained a formidable adversary, opinions differed on the degree of danger. At the outset of his presidency, President Carter downplayed the Soviet military threat. Relegating it to secondary importance behind humanitarian concerns, he hoped to fashion a foreign policy that would help end human rights abuses, promote a closer North-South dialogue, conquer long-term energy shortages, curb global arms transfers, and bring peace between the Arabs and Israel in the Middle East. Later, in the light of Soviet intransigence over SALT, the Iranian situation, and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, President Carter modified his priorities and began paying closer attention to the problems of Soviet military power. Yet he never abandoned his belief that US foreign and defense policy paid too much attention to the Soviet Union and not enough to humanitarian and other concerns.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, as military professionals, operated from a different perspective. Based on available intelligence, they saw the United States steadily losing ground to the Soviets as measured against most major indices of military power and politico-military influence. Not only did the Soviets have a large and growing strategic arsenal which could give them nuclear superiority by the mid-1980s but they also were

on the verge of achieving a decisive conventional edge in Europe. Increasing the danger, they had begun to deploy a formidable force of SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles aimed at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries and the Far East and were gradually acquiring a capacity for force-projection worldwide. Alarmed at the quantitative and qualitative improvements in Soviet capabilities, the Joint Chiefs warned repeatedly that the United States was in danger of falling behind and that the demands of global commitments on US forces could readily exceed the capacity to honor them.

President Carter, while not oblivious to JCS advice, treated it with utmost caution and relied on it sparingly. Despite his celebrated penchant for detail, he had little time or patience for lengthy JCS threat assessments and posture statements, and usually wound up reading summaries prepared by his staff. The most he ever trusted the Chiefs was in planning and executing the Iran hostage rescue mission, an operation that all involved, including the JCS, had doubts and misgivings about from the moment preparations began. Records of White House meetings just before the mission show clearly that there was considerably less confidence of success and less enthusiasm for it than subsequent public statements by the President, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, and JCS Chairman David C. Jones suggest. Yet given the apparent threats to the hostages' safety at the time, President Carter felt he had no choice but to give the green light, a decision he soon had cause to regret. Indeed, it may well have cost him the presidency. However, unlike President John F. Kennedy, who held the JCS partly responsible for the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco, President Carter never claimed or insinuated that his military advisers had led him astray or let him down.

President Carter's acceptance of military advice in this instance stands in sharp contrast to the usual pattern during his presidency. From the outset of his presidency, President Carter surrounded himself with aides and assistants who were, for the most part, openly suspicious of practically anything the military recommended. This was especially true of the senior White House political staff and initially among professionals on the NSC Staff, many of whom came from the left-of-center politics of the 1960s. For them, as for others in the Carter administration, including the President himself, the Vietnam experience had confirmed the need for fundamental reform in the content and conduct of American foreign policy, starting with a significant lessening of reliance on military power. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's National Security Adviser and a leading architect of the new administration's policies, initially agreed. But as time passed he found himself siding more and more with the JCS, that bolstering the country's military posture would improve its prospects for success in foreign affairs. As a reflection of his evolving philosophy, Dr. Brzezinski gradually augmented the NSC Staff to give it stronger military representation and a more balanced outlook. But even though he aligned himself increasingly with the JCS, Dr. Brzezinski rarely risked his credibility with the President on the Chiefs' behalf. During the annual budget battles, for example, Dr. Brzezinski's presence was barely noticeable. Nor, in his eagerness to

conclude a SALT II agreement, was Dr. Brzezinski overly concerned for JCS worries, the Backfire bomber especially.

The Joint Chiefs also found, in dealing with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, that their views carried less weight than in years past. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, no newcomer to the Pentagon, entered office with a healthy skepticism of what to expect from the JCS. He preferred, as much as possible, to work directly with the JCS Chairman rather than with the Joint Chiefs as a corporate body. Not only did he find it more expedient to do so but also he felt he stood a better chance of getting undiluted military advice that way. At the same time, Secretary Brown relied more on his own staff or on outside consultants for much of the same kinds of technical support that the Joint Staff, in theory at least, could have provided just as well. Civilian advice and authority continued to substitute for that of uniformed officers in many key areas of military policy. The strategic targeting review, culminating in PD-59 and NUWEP 80, was a case in point, a review dominated and overseen by civilian consultants, dealing with issues that had predominantly military overtones. Although civilians had taken prominent roles in such matters in the past, Secretary Brown's use of them was unprecedented since the days of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. No doubt he believed that this was the only way of obtaining timely advice and recommendations. Yet it also showed a notable lack of confidence in what the JCS could produce on their own.

Ironically, Secretary Brown entered office committed to reforms that were supposed to help bridge the gap between OSD and the JCS, not make it wider. His major initiative in this regard was to give the Services, the Combatant Commanders, and the Joint Chiefs a larger voice in budget policy and greater responsibility for allocating resources than under the Planning, Policy, and Budgeting system that had been in use since Secretary McNamara's time. In different circumstances, with more liberal funding guidelines, Secretary Brown's innovations might well have had the desired effect. But under the tight spending guidelines imposed by President Carter, many if not most of the major resource decisions were preordained. Competition for funds among the Services remained as intense as ever. Meanwhile, the JCS force posture recommendations sent up to the Secretary, whether in the form of the JSOP or its improved successor, the JSPD, continued to represent compilations of Service-based estimates and preferences, rather than fully integrated and prioritized analyses of requirements. Widely regarded as little more than "wish lists," the Chiefs' estimates fell mostly on deaf ears.

Critics laid the blame for this situation almost squarely at the feet of the JCS themselves. A common complaint, voiced by the Steadman group and others, was that time-consuming and rigid corporate procedures rendered the Joint Chiefs incapable of participating effectively in resource allocation decisions, and that the JCS/Joint Staff system remained hobbled by interservice rivalry and competition, resulting in unproductive conflict at the lower levels and an inability to transcend Service interests at the top. From the standpoint of consumers—the President, the Secretary of Defense,

and the National Security Council—it was increasingly evident that the Chiefs' advice was of limited value in sorting out what should be done and who should do it. Reform was in the air, though when President Carter left office the direction it would take was still unclear.

One increasingly attractive option for turning the JCS into a more responsive organization was to vest greater power and responsibility in the Chairman. Both men who served in that capacity during the Carter years—General George S. Brown and General David C. Jones—operated on the premise that the Chairman's main job was to expedite and lead, rather than dominate, JCS deliberations. But after the abortive Iran hostage rescue mission (if not before), General Jones began to rethink his position. Citing unwieldy JCS practices for addressing internal conflicts, he became more and more discouraged by what he later described as “an intramural scramble for resources” among the Services.¹ General Jones concluded that, as the only JCS member to devote full time to joint affairs, the Chairman should have closer control over the Joint Staff and increased independence and authority to represent the JCS in inter-agency deliberations. But as the debate surrounding the Chairman's role in the Defense Resources Board indicates, it would take considerably greater outside pressure than had yet been brought to bear before the Service Chiefs would agree to accept any significant change in JCS procedures.

This is not to say that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were incapable of providing sound and timely advice should the need arise, nor that they were without influence and credibility in high-level circles during Carter's presidency. Indeed, in dealing with foreign affairs the JCS continued to play an active and prominent role, even though in some instances President Carter came around slowly to the Chiefs' way of thinking. Initially, President Carter's determination to shed military commitments abroad and to rely less on military instruments in support of foreign policy led him to adopt positions in Korea, Central America, Taiwan, Africa, and elsewhere which either ignored or downplayed JCS-recommended courses of action. But under the pressure of events, he found himself gravitating toward JCS advice on many regional security issues.

On Capitol Hill the Chiefs' advice and influence sometimes counted for as much if not more than at the White House or in OSD. This was certainly true with respect to the Panama Canal and the SALT II treaties, where Senate skeptics looked to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for assurance that the agreements were in the country's long-term interest. Holding strong reservations about both accords, the Chiefs declined to give either their unqualified backing. However, they did acknowledge that, on balance, the country's security posture probably would be better off with the treaties than without them. Such assessments fell well short of the resounding endorsement the Carter administration would have preferred, but for the canal treaty, at least, the Chiefs' position gave wavering Senators more reason to vote for the agreement than to oppose it. SALT II, on the other hand, posed tougher problems, which eventually left the White House no choice but to shelve the treaty. In the circumstances, it seems clear that not even a stronger statement of JCS support would have changed the outcome.

Maintaining cordial relations with Congress was, as always, a time-consuming yet important activity, especially for the JCS Chairman. Largely as a reaction to Vietnam, congressional involvement in national security affairs had been growing steadily since the late 1960s, and by Carter's presidency it had reached unprecedented levels. Not only did Congress enjoy more detailed control than ever before over the budget review process, but also, through the 1973 War Powers Resolution and other legislative action, it had made major inroads into defense and foreign policymaking as well. To stay up on developments, the Joint Chiefs had no choice but to pay close attention to congressional liaison, with the Chairman's office the logical place for shouldering much, if not most, of the day-to-day burden.

Two other matters that consumed a great deal of JCS time and attention during the Carter years were the effort to modernize NATO's conventional and nuclear force posture, and the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) for the Middle East. Although the Chiefs had reservations about the administration's Long Term Defense Program (LTDP) for NATO, their doubts initially had nothing to do with the need for strengthening the alliance's conventional capabilities (a goal they fully supported), but with the possibility that a buildup in Europe would be under-funded and at the expense of obligations in the Far East and elsewhere. President Carter's promise of a 3 percent net increase notwithstanding, the Chiefs doubted the feasibility of meeting LTDP goals from available resources; with the added burdens of the theater nuclear force buildup that NATO leaders sanctioned in 1979, they had all the more reason to worry. Eventually, though, it was not so much NATO's needs as the competing demands of the RDJTF that effectively side-tracked the LTDP.

Although often hailed as one of the most significant defense accomplishments of Carter's presidency, the Rapid Deployment Force also became one of the most contentious items to appear on the JCS agenda since Vietnam. Some of the issues that arose—the vying between the Army and the Marines over which should take the lead in supplying ground units and disputes over the command and control of forces—reflected the long and sometimes bitter history of interservice rivalries. But others, notably the worldwide allocation of assets and the relative merits of prepositioning equipment for an emergency versus developing a capacity for long-range force projection, reflected fundamental differences of approach between the JCS and the Carter White House. Above all, the Joint Chiefs wanted to avoid being drawn into another Vietnam-type conflict. Having recently fought one politically unpopular war, the JCS were loath to contemplate the possibility of yet another, as witnessed by their reluctance to become involved in the murky Ogaden Crisis of 1977-1978. Before taking on new obligations in the Middle East or elsewhere, they wanted assurances that the necessary political support and resources would follow.

What the Chiefs saw instead all too often during the Carter years was a succession of "hollow" policies that were long on promises and commitments, but short on providing what the JCS considered the requisite assets for effective implementation. This problem loomed large not only in the administration's conduct of defense policy

in Europe and the Middle East but also in its basic approach to strategic nuclear planning, as outlined in PD-59. Emphasizing an unprecedented range and mix of targeting options, PD-59 posed exceedingly ambitious objectives which the JCS had good reason to question without the infusion of substantial additional resources. As much as President Carter wanted to reduce the threat of a nuclear exchange, the Joint Chiefs worried that he might end up increasing the danger of a nuclear war by propounding concepts, organized around meticulously preplanned scenarios, that were beyond the realm of practicality. To meet the exceedingly tough endurance and survivability demands articulated in PD-59, the Chiefs estimated that it would take years of heavy investment and diligent effort, funding for which was far from certain. Meanwhile, should deterrence fail, the United States would have no choice but to take its chances with what the JCS regarded as less than fully reliable systems under the new policy guidelines.

While well aware that these problems existed, President Carter took them in stride. He firmly believed that, on balance, the United States and its allies held a clear edge over the Soviet Union, perhaps not as much as some would like to see in ready military power, but certainly in the areas that would count the most over the long haul in dealing with the Soviet competition—in underlying economic strength, political cohesion, and commitment to purpose. Operating on these premises, President Carter was confident that in the long run the West would prevail unless it imprudently squandered its resources. Over-investing in defense, he argued time and again, was one such possibility. Yet try as he might to implement what he considered prudent military spending practices, he left office convinced that “the defense appetite for a larger budget is insatiable.”²

The situation that President Carter and the Joint Chiefs of Staff faced was in many respects reminiscent of the late 1940s. At that time President Harry S. Truman had felt compelled for economic reasons to adopt defense budgets providing for substantially less than what the JCS recommended, despite worsening relations with the Soviet Union and growing US commitments abroad. Both then and during the Carter years, limited funds meant limited military capabilities. For President Truman, the sudden outbreak of the Korean War appeared to confirm JCS warnings of possible trouble and the need for increased preparedness. But for President Carter, there was no similarly dramatic moment. Although he reacted with concern to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, he wanted to preserve what he could of the progress made in improving US-Soviet relations under *détente*. The withdrawal of the SALT II treaty from the Senate, the acceleration of efforts on behalf of the RDJTF, and other steps taken to signal American displeasure with Soviet behavior in Afghanistan marked an obvious break with the conciliatory policies and rhetoric that President Carter had used until then. But they were measured and deliberate responses, lacking the sense of urgency that had energized American policy in June 1950.

The differences between President Carter and the Joint Chiefs were, in fact, far from insuperable. President Carter wanted to limit defense obligations to no more than 5 percent of GNP, whereas the JCS urged something in the neighborhood of 6 to 7

percent. (By way of comparison, DoD outlays in the 1950s and 1960s, during the height of the Cold War, averaged 8 to 10 percent annually.³) By holding firm, yielding only to minor increases, some forced on him by Congress, President Carter demonstrated his commitment to fiscal integrity, but he wound up losing the public debate to those who agreed with the JCS that there was a serious and growing strategy-resources gap. The election of 1980 effectively decided the issue in favor of the JCS position and ushered in a new administration dedicated to making major augmentations to the military budget. The result would be the largest sustained peacetime buildup in the country's history.

Despite the constraints under which the JCS operated during Carter's presidency, much did in fact get accomplished. The accusation by some that the 1970s was a "decade of neglect" for the American armed forces is overdrawn. While not always as well funded as the JCS would have preferred, President Carter's defense programs still made notable strides toward modernizing and upgrading the conventional force posture and toward preserving essential equivalence with the Soviet Union in strategic nuclear power, though by the time President Carter left office the results for the most part had yet to materialize. Under Ronald Reagan's presidency, the JCS would have a broader charter to accomplish more and the Carter legacy on which to build.

Acronyms

ABM	anti-ballistic missile
ACCHAN	Allied Command Channel
ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
ACE	Allied Command Europe
ACLANT	Allied Command Atlantic
AHG	Ad Hoc Groups
AIMS	alternative integrated military strategies
AIT	American Institute in Taiwan
ALCM	air-launched cruise missile
APC	armored personnel carrier
APDM	Amended Program Decision Memorandum
ASAT	anti-satellite
ASD/PA&E	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
AWACS	airborne warning and control system
C3	command, control, and communications
C3I	command, control, communications and intelligence
CBMs	confidence-building measures
CBU	cluster bomb unit
CCJFT	Caribbean Combined Joint Task Force
CENTCOM	Central Command
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CFC	Combined Forces Command
CFTs	conformal fuel tanks
CG	Consolidated Guidance
CINCCFC	Commander in Chief, Combined Forces Command
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific
CM	cruise missile
CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
COG	continuity of government
COMRDJTF	Commander, Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
COMUSJ	Commander, US Forces, Japan
CONPLAN	contingency plan
CPD	Committee on the Present Danger
CPX	command post exercises
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CTJTF	Counterterrorist Joint Task Force

CVBG	carrier battle group
DCA	Defense Cooperation Agreement
DPC	Defense Planning Committee
DDR&E	Director of Defense Research and Engineering
DMZ	demilitarized zone
DP&E	Director for Planning and Evaluation
DPQ	Defense Planning Questionnaire
DRB	Defense Resources Board
DSTP	Director of Strategic Target Planning
ECM	electronic counter measures
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ELINT	electronic intelligence
ER	enhanced radiation
ERDA	Energy Research and Development Administration
ERW	enhanced radiation warhead
EUCOM	European Command
EW	electronic warfare
FIP	Force Improvement Plan
FLIR	Forward-Looking Infrared
FLNC	Front for the National Liberation of the Congo
FMS	foreign military sales
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
FY	Fiscal Year
FYPD	Five-Year Defense Plan
GAO	General Accounting Office
GLCMs	long-range ground-launched cruise missiles
GNP	gross national product
GONT	Government of Taiwan
HLG	High Level Group
HQ, RDJTF	Headquarters, Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IADB	Inter-American Defense Board
IAG	Israeli Air Force
ICNT	Informal Composite Negotiating Text
IDA	Institute for Defense Analysis
IGs	Interdepartmental Groups

IIAF	Imperial Iranian Air Force
IIN	Imperial Iranian Navy
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMET	International Military Training and Education
INSCOM	Intelligence and Security Command
IO/PG	Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf
IOC	initial deployment date
IRBM	intermediate range ballistic missile
ISA	International Security Affairs
JDA	Joint Deployment Agency
JFM	Joint Force Memorandum
JHO	Joint History Office
JPAM	Joint Program Assessment Memorandum
JSCP	Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan
JSDF	Japan Self-Defense Forces
JSO	Joint Staff Office
JSOP	Joint Strategic Objectives Plan
JSPD	Joint Strategic Planning Document
JSPS	Joint Strategic Planning System
JSTPS	Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff
JTF	Joint Task Force
KUSLO	Kenya-US military liaison office
LNOs	limited nuclear options
LOS	Law of the Sea
LRTNF	long-range theater nuclear forces
LTDP	Long Term Defense Program
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAC	Military Airlift Command
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MAP	multiple aim point
MBA	military base agreement
MBFR	Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction
MDT	mutual defense treaty
MEAF	Middle East Africa
MERL	military equipment requirements list
MERs	Multiple Ejector Rack
METG	Middle East Task Group

MIDEASTFOR	Middle East Force
MILGP	military advisory group
MIRV	multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicle
MLBM	modern large ballistic missile
MNCs	Major NATO Commands
MPS	multiple protective shelter
MRBM	medium-range ballistic missile
MTT	mobile training teams
MURFAAMCE	Mutual Reduction of Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Command Authority
NIE	national intelligence estimate
NMA	National Military Advisers
NPG	Nuclear Planning Group
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
NSDM	National Security Decision Memoranda
NSSM	National Security Study Memoranda
NTPR	Nuclear Targeting Policy Review
NTPS	Near-Term Pre-Positioning Ships
NUWEP	Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy
O&M	operation and maintenance
OAS	Organization of American States
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OJCE	Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OMC	Office of Military Cooperation
OPLAN	Operational Plan
OPSDEPS	Operations Deputies
OPSEC	operations security
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
OV	observation
PACOM	Pacific Command
PD	Presidential Directives
PDM	Program Decision Memorandum
POM	Program Objective Memorandum
PPBS	Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System

PPGM	Planning and Programming Guidance Memorandum
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRC	Policy Review Committee
PRM	Presidential Review Memoranda
QRA	Quick Reaction Alert
R&D	research and development
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force
RDJTF	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
REDCOM	Readiness Command
ROC	Republic of China
ROCAF	Republic of China Air Force
ROK	Republic of Korea
RSAF	Royal Saudi Air Force
RTD&E	research, development, test, and evaluation
RV	re-entry vehicle
S/I	standardization and interoperability
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe
SACLANT	Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic
SAGA	Studies, Analysis, and Gaming Agency
SALT II	strategic arms control agreement
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAO	Selected Attack Options
SAU	surface attack unit
SAVAK	Shah of Iran's secret police
SCC	Special Coordination Committee
SCM	Security Consultative Meeting
SDC	Special Deployment Category
SDC	Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation
SIOP	Single Integrated Operational Plan
SLBM	sea-launched ballistic missile
SLCM	sea-launched cruise missile
SLEP	Service Life Extension Program
SLOC	sea lines of communication
SNDV	strategic nuclear delivery vehicles
SOD	Special Operations Division
SORG	Special Operations Review Group
SOSUS	Sound Surveillance system
SRAM	short-range attack missile

SRF	Secure Reserve Force
SSBN	nuclear ballistic missile submarine
TAS	tactical airlift squadron
TFS	tactical fighter squadron
TNC	third country nationals
TNF	theater nuclear forces
TOA	total obligational authority
TOW	tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided
TTPI	Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
UCP	Unified Command Plan
UNC	United Nations Command
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
USCINCEUR	US Commander in Chief, Europe
USCINCSO	US Commander in Chief, Southern Command
USFJ	US Forces, Japan
USFK	US Forces, Korea
USSOUTHCOM	US Southern Command
WP	Warsaw Pact
WRT	Weighting System for Recovery Targeting

Principal Civilian and Military Officers

President and Commander in Chief

Jimmy Carter 21 Jan 77 – 20 Jan 81

Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Zbigniew Brzezinski 21 Jan 77 – 20 Jan 81

Secretary of State

Cyrus R. Vance 23 Jan 77 – 28 Apr 80

Edmund S. Muskie 8 May 80 – 18 Jan 81

Secretary of Defense

Harold Brown 21 Jan 77 – 20 Jan 81

Deputy Secretary of Defense

Charles W. Duncan, Jr. 31 Jan 77 – 26 Jul 79

W. Graham Claytor, Jr. 24 Aug 79 – 16 Jan 81

Under Secretary of Defense (Policy)

Stanley R. Resor 14 Aug 78 – 1 Apr 79

Robert W. Komer 24 Oct 79 – 20 Jan 81

Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs)

Eugene V. McAuliffe 6 May 76 – 1 Apr 77

David E. McGiffert 4 Apr 77 – 20 Jan 81

Director, Planning and Evaluation

Edward C. Aldridge 18 May 76 – 11 Mar 77

Assistant Secretary of Defense (Program Analysis and Evaluation)

Russell Murray, II 28 Apr 77 – 20 Jan 81

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

General George S. Brown, USAF 1 Jul 74 – 20 Jun 78

General David C. Jones, USAF 21 Jun 78 – 18 Jun 82

Chief of Staff, US Army

General Bernard W. Rodgers 1 Oct 76 – 21 Jun 79

General Edward C. Meyer 22 Jun 79 – 21 Jun 83

Chief of Naval Operations

Admiral James L. Holloway, III 1 Jul 74 – 30 Jun 78

Admiral Thomas B. Hayward 1 Jul 78 – 30 Jun 82

Chief of Staff, US Air Force

General David C. Jones 1 Jul 74 – 20 Jun 78
General Lew Allen, Jr. 1 Jul 78 – 30 Jun 82

Commandant, US Marine Corps

General Louis H. Wilson 1 Jul 75 – 30 Jun 79
General Robert H. Barrow 1 Jul 79 – 30 Jun 83

Director, Joint Staff

Lieutenant General Ray B. Sitton, USAF 1 Jul 76 – 30 Jun 77
Vice Admiral Patrick J. Hannifan, USN 1 Jul 77 – 20 Jun 78
Major General John A. Wickham, Jr., USA (Acting) 1 Jul 78 – 21 Aug 78
Lieutenant General John A. Wickham, Jr., USA 22 Aug 78 – 22 Jun 79
Vice Admiral Carl Thor Hanson, USN 22 Jun 79 – 30 Jun 81

Commander in Chief, Atlantic

Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, USN 1 Jun 75 – 19 Sep 78
Admiral Harry D. Train, II, USN 19 Sep 78 – 1 Oct 82

Commander in Chief, US European Command

General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., USA 1 Nov 74 – 1 Jul 79
General Bernard W. Rodgers, USA 1 Jul 79 – 26 Jun 87

Commander in Chief, Pacific

Admiral Maurice F. Weisner, USN 30 Aug 76 – 31 Oct 79
Admiral Robert L. J. Long, USN 31 Oct 79 – 1 Jul 83

Commander in Chief, US Readiness Command

General John J. Hennessey, USA 9 Dec 74 – 1 Aug 79
General Volney F. Warner, USA 1 Aug 79 – 1 Aug 81

Commander in Chief, US Southern Command

Lieutenant General Dennis P. McAuliffe, USA 1 Aug 75 – 30 Sep 79
Lieutenant General Wallace H. Nutting, USA 1 Oct 79 – 24 May 83

Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command

General Russell E. Dougherty, USAF 1 Aug 74 – 31 Jul 77
General Richard H. Ellis, USAF 1 Aug 77 – 1 Aug 81

Selected Forces in Being, FYs 1977-1980

	<i>End FY77</i>	<i>End FY78</i>	<i>End FY79</i>	<i>End FY80</i>
Personnel				
Military	2.07m	2.06m	2.02m	2.05m
Civilians	1.02m	1.02m	.991m	.990m
Strategic Forces				
B-52 Squadrons/UE	21/316	21/316	21/316	21/316
FB-111A Squadrons/UE	4/66	4/60	4/60	4/60
Titan ICBMs	54	54	54	54
Minuteman II	450	450	450	450
Minuteman III	550	550	550	550
SSBNs				
Polaris	10	10	10	5
Poseidon	31	31	31	31
General Purpose Forces				
<i>Army</i>				
Divisions (A/R)	16/8	16/8	16/8	16/8
Heavy ^a	9	9	10	10
Light ^b	7	7	6	6
<i>Marine Corps</i>				
Divisions (A/R)	3/1	3/1	3/1	3/1
Air Wings	3	3	3	3
<i>Air Force</i>				
Tactical Fighter Wings				
A-7	2	2	1	1
A-10	2	2	2	3
F-4	17	15	15	13
F-15	---	2	4	5
F-16	---	---	---	1
F-111	5	5	4	3
Strategic Airlift UE				
C-5A	70	70	70	77
C-141	234	234	234	275
<i>Navy</i>				
Active Fleet	477	412	398	415
Attack Carriers	12	12	12	12
Air Wings	12	12	12	12
Attack Submarines	76	74	77	76
Surface Combatants^c				
Cruisers	27	28	28	26
Destroyers	96	69	72	80
Frigates	64	65	65	72

Sources: Annual Reports of the Secretary of Defense, FYs 1978-1982; Strategic Air Command Annual Reports, CYs 1977-1980; Air Staff History Branch.

Notes

^a Armored and mechanized divisions.

^b Infantry, airborne, and air mobile divisions.

^c Includes active cruisers, destroyers, and frigates.

Notes

Chapter 1. National Security Organization

1. Carter laid out his views in his pre-campaign primer, *Why Not the Best?* (Nashville: Broadman, Press, 1975). Also see Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (NY: Hill and Wang, 1986); and Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

2. "Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter," 20 Jan 77, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 3.

3. William J. Jordan, *Panama Odyssey* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 343.

4. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1982), 222.

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Chapter 3. Iran and Pakistan

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3. PD/NSC-13, “Conventional Arms Transfer Policy,” 13 May 77, S, JHO Files.

4. *JCS and Iran Policy*, TS, 122.

5. See the comments by LTG Ernest Graves, USA (Ret), the Director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency during much of this period in the published interview with Graves by Frank N. Schubert, *Engineer Memoirs: Lieutenant General Ernest Graves* (Alexandria, Va.: Office of History, US Army Corps of Engineers, [1998]), 193-219. According to Graves: “It turned out that the ceiling never limited anything. . . . You may say that was antithetical to the Carter policy. It really wasn’t because everybody saw that we were trying to save Carter from himself. . . . The truth of the matter is that once Carter got going, he transferred as many arms as anybody because he found, like his predecessors, that they were an essential tool of policy.” (*Ibid.*, 197).

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7. Joint Strategic Objectives Plan Supporting Analyses, 1979-86, Section 5, Book III, 12 Dec 77, S, JCS 2143/506-07, 511 (14 Dec 77) sec 8; Joint Strategic Planning Document Supporting Analyses, 1980-87, Section 5, Book III, 18 Oct 78, S, JCS 2143/518-04, 511 (06 Nov 78).
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19. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 435.
20. Memo, Brzezinski to Brown, 20 Oct 77, C/GDS, JCS 2315/644, 499 (29 Mar 77).
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34. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (NY: Ferrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 367; Stansfield Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 113.

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37. J-5 Point Paper for SecDef, 30 Oct 78, C; Buckslip Memo, Wickham to Jones, 1 Nov 78, U; Draft memo, CJCS to SecDef, n.d., C, all in CJCS Files (Jones), 820 Iran (1 Jul 78-30 May 79).

38. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 363-66; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 327-29; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 439; "Interview With the President by Bill Moyers," 13 Nov 78, *Carter Public Papers, 1978*, 2018-19.

39. Memo, Resor to CJCS, 4 Nov 78, S; "Recapitulation of AMCITS in Iran," 21 Nov 78, S, both in CJCS Files (Jones), 820 Iran (1 Jul 78-30 May 79).

40. Numbers on evacuees from US European Command Historical Report 1979, TS, 136-37. Daniel L. Haulman, *The United States Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations, 1947-1994* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1998), 360-61, credits MAC with the evacuation of 5,801 US nationals. The claim in Vance, *Hard Choices*, 340, that the United States evacuated a total of 45,000 appears inflated.

41. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 366.

42. It was, however, a theoretical possibility, one discussed briefly between General Robert Huyser and Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles W. Duncan, Jr., in a telephone conversation on 11 February 1979. Huyser stated that, were he to lead an intervention, he would need unlimited funds, 10 to 12 hand-picked US generals, and 10,000 elite US troops. Huyser and Duncan both regarded this as idle speculation and the matter was dropped. Nor is there any record in the JCS files of contingency planning for an intervention in Iran. See Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 283-84.

43. Vance, *Hard Choices*, 332-33; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 374-75.

44. See especially CNO to SecDef, 19 Dec 78, S/GDS; and Summary of Conclusions, Mini-SCC Mtg on Iran, 8 Dec 78, S/GDS, both in RG 330-81-0202, box 57, Iran 092. Also see Mins, Mini-SCC Mtg on Iran, 29 Dec 78, S; Summary of Conclusions, Mini-SCC on Iran, 6 Jan 79, S; Memo, Slocombe and Murray to SecDef, 12 Jan 79, S, all in RC 330-82-0205, box 12, Iran file; and Summary of Conclusions, SCC Mtg on Iran, 11 Feb 79, S, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 14, SCC Mtg No. 129 folder, Carter Library.

45. *New York Times*, 28 Dec 78: 1.

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47. Minutes, Mini-SCC on Iran, 29 Dec 78, S, RG 330, Iran, 330-82-0205, box 12.

48. Sullivan, *Mission to Iran*, 212-13; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 334-35.

49. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 443; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 376-78.

50. Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 295.

51. Msg, DepSecDef Duncan to Haig and Huyser, 0401322Z Jan 79, S, RG 330-82-0205, box 12, Iran file.

52. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 376-78; Huyser, *Mission to Tehran*, 48-49, 54-63, 206-08, 224-25; Sick, *All Fall Down*, 148-49.

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54. MFR of Conference Call with Generals Huyser and Jones by Col William E. Odom, USA, 11 Feb 78, S, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices File, box 14, SCC Mtg No. 129 folder.

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57. Amitav Acharya, *US Military Strategy in the Gulf* (London: Routledge, 1989), 38.

58. See above, chap. 2.

59. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 489; Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Failed Mission: An Inside Account of the Attempt to Free the Hostages in Iran," *New York Times Magazine*, 18 Apr 82: 29. SCC records, still largely classified, may be found in the National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices File, Carter Library.

60. Memo, Odom to Brzezinski and Aaron, 2 Nov 79, S, William Odom Collection, Rapid Reaction Forces 3/77 folder, Carter Library.

61. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 459; Sick, *All Fall Down*, 213-16.

62. Summary of Conclusions SCC Mtg on Iran, 8 Nov 79, TS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices File, SCC Mtg No. 197 folder, Carter Library.

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65. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 483.

66. Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, 27 Nov 79, TS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices File, box 17, SCC Mtg No. 211 folder, Carter Library.

67. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 466.

68. Vance, *Hard Choices*, 379-80; Sick, *All Fall Down*, 234-35.

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74. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 501; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 487.
75. Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (NY: Putnam, 1982), 229.
76. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 506.
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92. Joint Talking Paper for SecDef and CJCS for PRC Mtg on 30 Nov 78, JCS 2347/73-1, S/GDS; Summary of Conclusions of PRC Mtg on South and West Asia, 27 Jul 78, S/GDS, enclosure to Memo, Brzezinski to Brown, 2 Aug 78, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), PRC Mtg File (1 Jun 78 to 31 Dec 78).
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94. Memo, Staff Sec. NSC to VP et al., 28 Nov 78, S, with 2 enclosures, CJCS Files (Jones), PRC Mtg File (1 Jun 78 to 31 Dec 78).
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9. Memo, Brzezinski to Brown, 29 Mar 77, C/GDS, JCS 2315/626, 499 (29 Mar 77).
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18. On the background of MATMON B, see Poole, *JCS and National Policy, 1973-1976*, S, 335-45.

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32. See Memo, Atherton and Gelb to SecState, undated, C, JCS 1881/135-2, 905/460 (25 Feb 77).

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44. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 316-17; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 217.
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Chapter 5. Conflict and Competition in Africa

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11. Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 87-88; Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe, *Conflict and Intervention in Africa: Nigeria, Angola, Zaire* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 115-18.
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21. Memo, Brzezinski to H. Brown, 3 Feb 78, S/XGDS, 26 Jan 78, CJCS Files (Brown), 820 Africa.
22. Memo, H. Brown to Brzezinski, 2 Feb 78, S/XGDS, CJCS Files (Brown), 820 Africa.
23. Memo, H. Brown to Brzezinski, 4 Feb 78, TS, CJCS Files (Brown), 820 Africa; J-3 Fact Sheet, 21 Feb 78, S, J-5 NSC Collection, box 18, NSC 23 Feb 78 SALT/Horn of Africa folder.
24. Summary of Conclusions, SCC Mtg on Horn of Africa, 10 Feb 78, S/XGDS2, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices File, box 8, SCC Mtg No. 56 folder, Carter Library.
25. (C) CNOM 14-78 to JCS, 17 Feb 78, JCS 2121/245, 821/378 (17 Feb 78).
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33. See the comments by Richard Moose, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 94.
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43. CNOM 32-78 to JCS, 21 Apr 78, S; DJSM 836-78 to CNO, 16 May 78, S, JCS 2121/251, 821 (21 Apr 78); CNOM 29-79 to JCS, 17 Apr 79, S; JCSM 195-79 to SecDef, 29 May 79, S, JCS 2121/258, 821/495 (17 Apr 79).
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15. JCSM-365-77 to SecDef, 2 Sep 77, C/GDS, JCS 1778/255-1, 933/533 (15 Apr 77).
16. Carter, *White House Diary*, 89; William L. Furlong and Margaret E. Scranton, *The Dynamics of Foreign Policymaking: The President, the Congress, and the Panama Canal Treaties* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 141-42.
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68. Quoted from a transcription of a taped conversation between Anastasio Somoza and Jack Cox, *Nicaragua Betrayed* (Boston: Western Islands Publishers, 1980), 328-29. Subsequently, McAuliffe testified before Congress that he had not meant it to appear that he was asking Somoza to resign (as Somoza later claimed); rather, he was trying to make clear that Somoza should accept the inevitability of a plebiscite that would remove him from power. See

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Chapter 7. The Far East

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104. Summary of Conclusions, PRC Mtg on Philippine Bases, 28 Feb 78, S/GDS, JCS 1519/220-2, 903/472 (22 Feb 78); CJCS Files (Brown), 820 Philippines.
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112. PRC Report on PRM-19, "Micronesian Status Negotiations," 7 Apr 77, S, JCS 2326/123-1, 998/532 (15 Apr 77).

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9. Memo, Komer to CJCS, 8 Apr 77, U, CJCS Files (Brown), 806 NATO.
10. R. W. Komer, "Action Program for Revamping NATO's Defense Posture," S, enclosure to Memo, Brown to SecArmy, et al., 11 Apr 77, S, JCS 2502/961, 806 (11 Apr 77). Also see Duffield, *Power Rules*, 220-21.
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13. "Detailed Comments—NATO Action Program," S, enclosure to CM-1401-77 to SecDef, 29 Apr 77, S, 1st N/H of JCS 2502/961, 806 (11 Apr 77).
14. See Ltr, Vance to Brown, 4 Apr 77, S/GDS; and Memo, W. Y. Smith to Hannifin, 13 Apr 77, S, both in CJCS Files (Brown), 806 NATO; and "Comprehensive Review of European Issues—PRM/NSC-9," 1 Mar 77, S, enclosure to Memo, Acting NSC Staff Secy to VP, et al., 2 Mar 77, C, JCS 2494/17-1, 940/532 (1 Feb 77).

15. See Kugler, *Commitment to Purpose*, 316-17; and Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 292. Apparently, Secretary of Defense Brown outlined his views on how the initiative should be handled in a memorandum to President Carter. However, no copy appears to be in the JCS files.

16. “Address to NATO Ministerial Meeting,” 10 May 77, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 848-52.

17. The ten long-term program categories were: readiness; reinforcement; reserve mobilization; standardization/interoperability; maritime posture; air defense; command, control, and communication (C3); electronic warfare (EW); consumer logistics; and theater nuclear modernization.

18. NATO Communiqué, 11 May 1977, US Dept. of State *Bulletin* (6 Jun 77): 601-02; Defense Planning Committee Communiqué, 18 May 77, in *NATO Final Communiqués, 1975-1980* (Brussels: NATO Information Service, n.d.), 68-74; Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 65. Also see FPRI, *Three Per Cent Solution*, 21-31; and David Greenwood, “NATO’s Three Per Cent Solution,” *Survival* 23 (Nov-Dec 1981): 252-54.

19. JCSM-232-77 to SecDef, 24 May 77, S/GDS, JCS 2502/953-1, 806/372 (26 Mar 77).

20. See Memo, Komer to DJS, 26 May 77, S, JCS 2502/953-3, 806/372 (26 Mar 77).

21. Memo, Brown to SecArmy, et al., 27 May 77, S/GDS, JCS 2502/980; and DJSM-1007-77 to ASD(ISA), 8 Jun 77, U, 1st N/H to JCS 2502/980, both in 806 (11 Apr 77). For reasons that remain unexplained, the US listing of program packages included only nine subjects and treated reserve mobilization as part readiness and reinforcement planning.

22. Ltr, Brown to Vance, 19 Sep 77, C/GDS; Ltr, Christopher to Brown, 30 Sep 77, C, both in CJCS Files (Brown), 806 NATO.

23. MJCS 274-77 to DDR&E, 13 Sep 77, S/GDS, 1st N/H of JCS 2502/980-2, 806 (11 Apr 77) sec. 3.

24. DPC Communiqué, 7 Dec 77, *NATO Final Communiqués, 1975-80*, 77-80.

25. *EUCOM Historical Report, 1977*, TS, 279.

26. Memo, Brown to Carter, 10 Dec 77, S/GDS, JCS 2521/73, 806/501 (10 Dec 77).

27. “Address by President Carter Before the NATO Ministerial Meeting, Brussels,” 6 Jan 78, in *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980* (Washington, DC: Dept of State, 1983), 477.

28. See below, chap. 11.

29. Memo, Huntington to Brzezinski, 29 Nov 77, S, Samuel P. Huntington Collection, box 1 of 6, PD-18 folder, Carter Library; Richard A. Stubbing, with Richard A. Mendel, *The Defense Game* (NY: Harper and Row, 1986), 349.

30. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1978* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1979), 187.

31. Michael Quinlan, “The LTDP from a National Viewpoint,” *NATO Review* 26 (June 1978): 13-15. Also see Duffield, *Power Rules*, 215-16.

32. JCSM-77-78 to SecDef, 10 Mar 78, S/GDS, JCS 2521/109-10, 806/300 (14 Feb 78); Draft memo, JCS to SecDef, S/GDS, enclosure to JCS 2521/109-12, and 1st N/H to JCS 2521/109-12, 806/300 (14 Sep 78).

33. See *NATO Review* 26 (Aug 1978): 29-31.

34. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 293.

35. NATO Ministerial Communiqué, 31 May 78, *NATO Final Communiqués, 1975-80*, 94-95.

36. Memo, Brown to CJCS, 25 Jul 78, U, JCS 2521/193, 806 (25 Jul 78).

37. JCSM-190-79 to SecDef, 29 May 79, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO, and JCS 2521/303-1, 806 (19 Mar 79).

38. *EUCOM Historical Report, 1979*, TS, 270-71.
39. JCSM-318-79 to SecDef, 15 Nov 79, S/GDS, JCS 2147/627, 374 (26 Oct 79).
40. Memo, Komer to Brown, 14 Mar 80, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO.
41. JCSM-129-80 to SecDef, 21 May 80, S/GDS, JCS 2521/430-1; and Note to JCS, 19 Aug 80, U, JCS 2521/430-3, both in 806 (17 Mar 80).
42. DPC Communiqué, 9-10 Dec 80, *NATO Final Communiqués, 1975-80*, 149.
43. *EUCOM Historical Report, 1980*, TS, 232-33.
44. Walter Pincus, "Neutron Killer Warhead Buried in ERDA Budget," *Washington Post*, 6 Jun 77: A1, A9.
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46. Memo, Brzezinski to SecDef, 23 Jun 77, S/GDS, JCS 2430/311, 713 (23 Jun 77); Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 301.
47. CSAM 57-77, 8 Jul 77, S/RD, JCS 2430/312; and JCSM-295-77, 15 Jul 77, S/RD, JCS 2430/312-1, 12 Jul 77, both in 713 (23 Jun 77).
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49. Komer quoted in R. Jeffrey Smith, "Missile Deployments Roil Europe," *Science* 223 (27 Jan 84): 372. Also see Stephen R. Hanmer, Jr., "NATO's Long-Range Theatre Nuclear Forces: Modernization in Parallel with Arms Control," *NATO Review* 28 (Feb 1980): 4.
50. US Department of Defense, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense to Congress: FY 79* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1978), p. 112.
51. National Security Decision Memorandum 132, dated 13 September 1972, "Modification of SSBN Commitments to NATO," declassified on 13 Feb 07.
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53. See James A. Thomson, "The LRTNF decision: evolution of US theatre nuclear policy, 1975-9," *International Affairs* (London) 60 (Autumn 1984): 604 and passim.
54. Randall L. Lanning, *United States Air Force Ground Launched Cruise Missiles: A Study in Technology, Concepts, and Deterrence* (Maxwell Air Force Base: AL, Air War College Research Report, 1992), p. 40.
55. D. L. Randall, et al., "The Impact of NATO Long-Range Theater Nuclear Force Modernization," S/RD, IDA Report R-256 (Apr 1980), 20. Arms control advocates, including senior ACDA officials, tended to view the GLCM with suspicion for these very reasons.
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57. "Outline of Task for Planning TNF Improvements," 29 Aug 77, S/GDS, JCS 2521/22; and MJCS 273-77, 8 Sep 77, S/GDS, 1st N/H of JCS 2521/22, both in 806/705 (30 Aug 77). See also Thomson, "The LRTNF Decision," 605; and Daalder, *Flexible Response*, 171-72.
58. Memcon between Haig and Brzezinski, 17 Sep 77, Declassified in full, Memcons ZB 1-9/77 folder, Brzezinski Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.
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60. Communiqué of Special Meeting of Foreign and Defense Minister, Brussels, 12 Dec 79, *NATO Final Communiqués, 1975-80*, 121-23. Hanmer, “NATO’s Long-Range Theatre Nuclear Forces,” 4-6, gives a synopsis history of the HLG’s deliberations.

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64. Minutes of SCC Mtg on PRM-38, 23 Aug 78, TS/XGDS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 12, SCC Mtg No. 102 folder, Carter Library; Summary of Conclusions: SCC Meeting on PRM-38, 23 Aug 78, TS, JCS 2521/179-3, 806/710 (22 Jun 78).

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70. CM 294-79 to Kroesen, 28 Apr 79, S/GDS, 1st N/H of JCS 2501/57, 705 (2 Apr 79).

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77. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. XXXIX, European Security (Washington, DC: Office of the Historian, Dept of State, 2007), pp. 1077-1078.

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79. PRM-6, Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks, 21 Jan 77, S/GDS, JCS 2482/339, 757 (21 Jan 77).

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82. See Draft memo, JCS to William Hyland, NSC, undated, C, enclosure to DJSM 818-77 to ASD(ISA), 3 May 77, S/GDS, JCS 2482/359, 757 (03 May 77); “Report by J-5 to JCS on MBFR: Soviet Armament Reductions/Limitations,” 1 Jun 77, S/GDS, JCS 2482/363, 757 (01 June 77).

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88. “Results of Preliminary Analysis of Eastern Proposal of 8 June 1978,” S/GDS, Appendix to Enclosure A, JCS 2482/441-3, 757 (24 Feb 78).

89. JCSCM-232-78 to SecDef, 21 Jul 78, S/GDS, JCS 2482/441-3, 757 (24 Feb 78).

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93. Memo, Resor to SecDef, [21 Mar 79], S/FRD, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO (MBFR).

94. Memo, Brown to CJCS, et al., 31 May 79, S/GDS, JCS 2482/507-1 and CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO (MBFR).

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97. PD-50, “Arms Control Decision Process,” 14 Aug 79, C, JHO/NSC Collection.

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99. Agenda for 18 Sep 79 SCC Mtg on MBFR, S, CJCS Files (Jones), SCC Mtg File (1 May 79–30 Sep 79).

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115. Memo, Brown to Carter, 18 Jan 78, S/GDS, JCS 1704/212, 970/533 (18 Jan 78).

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117. Theodore A. Couloumbis, *The United States, Greece, and Turkey: The Troubled Triangle* (NY: Praeger, 1983), 106-07.

118. See Tab to J-5 TP 4-79 for JCS mtg with Ambassador Spiers, 1 Feb 79, S, 970 (3 Jan 79).

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121. Memo, ASD(ISA) to DJS, 20 Dec 79, S/GDS, JCS 1704/224-1, 970/496 (7 Nov 79).

122. See JCSM-252-80 to SecDef, 16 Sep 80, S/GDS, JCS 1704/229, 970/496 (3 Sep 80).

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124. *Eucom Historical Report, 1977*, TS, 290.

125. Couloumbis, *United States, Greece, and Turkey*, 142-43.

126. By leaving the NATO integrated command structure, Greece ceased to be a member of the NATO Defense Planning Committee and did not assign forces to any NATO commands. However, Greece continued to sit on the NATO Military Committee, the Nuclear Planning Group, the Budget Committee, and the High Level Group, and had representatives on all NATO commands except those in Izmir, Turkey. See S. Victor Papacosma, “Greece and NATO,” in Lawrence S. Kaplan, Robert W. Clawson, and Raimondo Luraghi (eds.), *NATO and the Mediterranean* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1985), 203-4.

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128. DJSM 1379-79, 7 Aug 79, S, CJCS Files (Jones), 820 Greece; “Discussion Paper—PRC Meeting on Greek Reintegration,” [17 Mar 80], S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), PRC Mtg File (1 Jan 80-15 May 80); Memo, NSC Staff Secy to SecState, et al., 17 Mar 80, S, JCS 2445/54-2, 954 (17 Mar 80).

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2. For a fuller discussion of these problems, see (S) Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1973-1976* (Historical Office, Joint Secretariat, Joint Staff, February 1993), 97-168.
3. Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal* (NY: Harper and Row, 1979), 357-58.
4. Strobe Talbott, *Endgame: The Inside Story of SALT II* (NY: Harper and Row, 1979), 39; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1994), 884.
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6. Memo from JCS to SecDef, 1 Dec 76, *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1969-1976*, vol. XXXIII, *SALT II, 1972-1980*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Historian, Dept of State, 2013), pp. 645-647. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 157; MFR, "JCS Meeting 1000, 19 Jan 77," S, att to memo, LTG W. Y. Smith to CNO, et al., 21 Jan 77, CJCS Files (Brown), 756 SALT (1 Jul 76-28 Feb 77).
7. PRM/NSC-2 to SecDef, et al., 24 Jan 77, S, JCS 2482/340, 756 (24 Jan 77); Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 216. See also PRM/NSC 2, *Foreign Relations: 1969-1976*, vol. XXXIII, *Salt II, 1972-1980*, p. 649.
8. TP for CJCS for SCC Meeting on SALT, 3 Feb 77, TS; and Summary Talker, Overview, SCC Meeting on SALT, 3 Feb 77, TS, both in J-5 NSC Collection, SCC Meeting 3 Feb 77 SALT folder.
9. Minutes, SCC Mtg, 3 Feb 77, sub: SALT, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 3, SCC Mtg No. 2 folder, Carter Library. (Declassified in full.)
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
11. Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, 3 Feb 77, *Foreign Relations: 1969-1976*, vol. XXXIII, *Salt II, 1972-1980*, pp., 652-654.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 18; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 157.
13. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 158.
14. Rpt by J-5 to JCS on Cruise Missiles and SALT Negotiations, and Decision On, 4 Feb 77, TS, JCS 2482/337-1, 28 Jan 77, 756 (12 Jan 77).
15. Detailed Minutes, SCC Mtg on SALT, 25 Feb 77, (declassified in full) National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 3, SCC Mtg No. 5 folder, Carter Library.
16. Executive Summary of SCC Meeting on SALT, 2 Mar 77, TS; and MFR by Rowny on 2 Mar 77 SCC Meeting on SALT, 7 Mar 77, TS, both in CJCS Files (Brown), 756 SALT (1 Mar 77–31 Aug 77).
17. Rowny MFR, 2 Mar 77, TS, 25 Feb 77, CJCS Files (Brown), 756 SALT (1 Mar 77–31 Aug 77); unsigned memo, no date, sub: Notes from SALT Policy Council Meeting, 2 Feb 77, TS, J-5 NSC Collection, box 1, SCC Meeting 3 Feb 77 SALT folder.
18. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 887.
19. JCSM-78-77 to SecDef, 10 Mar 77, TS, JCS 2482/346; and JCSM-79-77 to SecDef, 10 Mar 77, TS, JCS 2482/347, both in 756 (31 Jan 77).
20. Talbott, *Endgame*, 58-59, describes this meeting as the one at which Carter took the ill-fated decision to seek deep cuts at Moscow. However, a thorough search of the President's papers by the Carter Library staff failed to turn up any evidence that Carter attended this meeting. Talbott's

account, relying on interviews, apparently confuses the 12 March “principals only” meeting with the 22 March NSC meeting.

21. Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, 14 Mar 77, S, National Security Adviser Collection, SALT Chronology Item #14B, Carter Library. Under option 1 this memo gives a Vladivostok ceiling aggregate of 2,300, an apparent misprint. In fact, Vladivostok allowed an aggregate of 2,400 launchers.

22. Memo, Aaron to Brzezinski, 19 Mar 77, TS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 1, NSC Mtg No. 5 folder, Carter Library; memo, Brown to Carter, 18 Mar 77, TS JCS 2482/346-1, 756 (31 Jan 77); and memo, Brown to Carter, 18 Mar 77, TS, JCS 2482/347-1, 756 (31 Jan 77).

23. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 159-60.

24. PD-7, 23 Mar 77, “SALT Negotiations,” TS/GDS, JHO NSC Collection.

25. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 160.

26. MFR by Rowny, “Debrief of SCC Meeting of 23 Mar and Meeting of JCS with the President on 24 Mar,” undated, TS, box 36, Rowny Papers.

27. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 159-60.

28. MFR by Rowny, “Moscow Trip 25 Mar–4 Apr 77,” 12 Apr 77, TS; “Message Traffic-Moscow Trip, 25 Mar–4 Apr 77, TS, both in box 53, Rowny Papers. Also see Rowny, *Tango*, 104; Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 53-55; and Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 162.

29. Vance, *Hard Choices*, 54.

30. See Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 217-18.

31. Memo, Brzezinski to George Brown, et al., 11 Apr 77, TS, 756 (13 Apr 77).

32. JCSM-195-77 to SecDef, 7 May 77, TS, JCS 2482/351-1, 756 (13 Apr 77).

33. Talbott, *Endgame*, 85.

34. Vance, *Hard Choices*, 56.

35. MFR by Rowny, “Update on Status of SALT-JCS Meeting, Friday, 3 Jun 77,” 3 Jun 77, TS, “Key Documents, JCSREPSALT, 1973-79,” vol. IIIA-1977, box 55, Rowny Papers.

36. “President’s News Conference of 30 Jun 1977,” *Carter Public Papers, 1977*, 1197.

37. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 81-83.

38. JCSM-289-77 to SecDef, 18 Jul 77, TS/XGDS, JCS 2482/364, 756 (20 Jun 77).

39. See Vance, *Hard Choices*, 58; and Talbott, *Endgame*, 88-109.

40. See JCSM-289-77 to SecDef, 18 Jul 77, TS, JCS 2482/364, 756 (20 Jun 77).

41. Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, 5 Sep 77, TS/XGDS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Office, box 1, NSC Mtg No. 7 folder, Carter Library.

42. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 168.

43. CM 1631-77 to SecDef, 23 Sep 77, TS, JCS 2482/373-1, 756 (20 Jun 77).

44. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 169.

45. No record of this SecDef-JCS meeting appears to have been retained for JCS files. For the gist of the discussion see JCSM-371-77 to SecDef, 21 Sep 77, TS, JCS 2482/371; JCSM-369-77 to SecDef, 23 Sep 77, TS, JCS 2482/371; and JCSM-375-77 to SecDef, 23 Sep 77, TS, JCS 2482/373, all in 756 (20 Jun 77).

46. Memo, Brown to Brzezinski, 23 Sep 77, TS, JCS 2482/371-1; memo, Brown to Brzezinski, 27 Sep 77, TS, JCS 2482/371-2; memo, Brown to Carter, 6 Oct 77, TS, JCS 2482/373-2, all 756 (1 Sep 77); and Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 169.

47. Vance, *Hard Choices*, 59-61; Talbott, *Endgame*, 123-32.

48. CM-1711-77 to SecDef, 21 Nov 77, TS/XGDS, JCS 2482/404, 756 (21 Nov 77).
49. MFR by LTG Rowny, "SALT Up-Date," 17 Oct 77, TS MFR—1977 folder, box 23, Rowny Papers.
50. JCSM-440-77 to SecDef, 21 Nov 77, TS, JCS 2482/404, 756 (21 Nov 77).
51. Gen Brown's comment is written on memo, SecDef to Pres., 27 Mar 78, TS, CJCS Files (Brown), 756 SALT (1 Sep 77-30 Apr 78). For Rowny's comment, see msg, Rowny to Actg CJCS, Gen 262, 011350Z Mar 78, S, *ibid*.
52. See Talbott, *Endgame*, 140.
53. Edward L. Rowny, *It Takes One to Tango* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1992), 94-103.
54. See Walter Pincus, "Discord Surfacing in U.S. Delegation On SALT Stance," *Washington Post*, 5 Dec 77: A1, A28.
55. MFR by LTG W. Y. Smith, "SALT," 22 Apr 78, TS, CJCS Files (Jones), 756 SAT (1 Jul 78-32 Jan 79). On the Brown-Rowny relationship, see Rowny, *Tango*, 95.
56. Rowny, *Tango*, 110.
57. J-5 Draft Report to JCS on SALT and Essential Equivalence, 14 Feb 78, TS, JCS 2482/439, 756 (14 Feb 78).
58. See memo, LTG W. Y. Smith to CSA, et al., 15 Mar 78, TS, CJCS Files (Brown), 756 SALT (1 Sep 77-30 Apr 78).
59. Memo, Brown to Carter, 27 Mar 78, TS, CJCS Files (Brown), 756 SALT (1 Sep 77-30 Apr 78).
60. JCSM-95-78 to SecDef, 21 Mar 78, TS, JCS 2482/439, 756 (14 Feb 78).
61. See US Dept of Defense, *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1981* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1980), 128.
62. Summary of Conclusions, SCC, 12 May 78, *Foreign Relations: 1969-1976*, vol. XXXIII, *Salt II, 1972-1980*, pp. 829-831.
63. CSAFM-60-78 to JCS, 5 Jun 78, TS, JCS 2482/457, 756 (6 Jun 78).
64. Summaries of Conclusions, SCC mtgs, for 26 Jun 78, 5 Jul 78, and 10 Aug 78, TS, all in CJCS Files (Jones), SCC Meetings File (1 Jan 78-13 Nov 78).
65. Memo, Brown to Carter, 14 Jul 78, TS, JCS 2482/464, 756 (14 Jul 78).
66. MFR by Brzezinski of Lunch with JCS, 10 May 78, U, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 1, NSC Mtg No. 8 folder, Carter Library.
67. John Edwards, *Superweapon: The Making of MX* (NY: W. W. Norton, 1982), 165-68.
68. MFR—Debrief by Gen Jones of 2 Sep NSC Mtg, 2 Sep 78, TS, in Key Documents—JCS-REPSALT (1973-79), vol. IVC-1978, box 55, Rowny papers.
69. Talbott, *Endgame*, 205.
70. Brzezinski to Vance and Brown, 14 Oct 78, TS; and cable, Aaron to Vance, 23 Oct 78, TS, both in CJCS Files (Jones), NSC Memos File (1 Aug 78-31 Dec 78).
71. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 903-05.
72. Point Paper on Strategic Force Modernization Program, for JCS Meeting with the President on 17 Nov 78, S/GDS, J-5 NSC Collection, box 13, Meeting with the President 17 Nov 78 folder. Emphasis in original. Barry W. Fowle, ed, *Engineer Memoirs: Lieutenant General Edward L. Rowny, Former Ambassador* (Alexandria, VA: Office of History, US Army Corps of Engineers, 1995), p. 127.
73. Msg 011850Z, Rowny to Jones, 12 Nov 78, TS, J-5 NSC Collection, box 13, Meeting with the President, 17 Nov 78, folder.

74. MFR by Rowny, 30 Dec 78, sub: Conversation with Secretary Vance, 29 Dec 78, C, “Key Documents, JCSREPSALT (1973-79),” Vol. IVD-1978, box 55, Rowny Papers. Also see Rowny, *Tango*, 117.

75. MFR by Rowny, 16 Mar 79, sub: Chiefs’ Comments on 7 March 1979, S, Key Documents, JCSREPSALT (1973-79), vol. VA-1979, box 42, Rowny Papers.

76. JCSM-77-79 to SecDef, 16 Mar 79, TS, JCS 2482/505, 756 (16 Mar 79).

77. JCSM-191-79 to SecDef, 24 May 79, S, JCS 2482/508, 756 (16 Mar 79) HB.

78. Quoted in Dan Caldwell, “The SALT II Treaty,” in Michael Krepon and Dan Caldwell (eds.), *The Politics of Arms Control Ratification* (NY: St. Martin’s, 1991), 306.

79. See “ICBM and Strategic Force Modernization Options,” 30 Apr 79, S, enclosure to memo, S. L. Zeiberg, DUSD(RE), to CJCS, 30 Apr 79, U, CJCS Files (Jones), PRC Meeting File (1 Apr 79-31 May 79). This study actually looked at a total of five basing options, only three of which incorporated the M-X. The other two options would have done away entirely with the M-X in favor of relying on various adaptations of the Trident missile system.

80. TP on ICBM Rebasing and Strategic Force Modernization, for SecDef and CJCS, PRC Mtg, 4 May 79, TS, CJCS Files (Jones), PRC Meeting File (1 Apr 79–31 May 79); Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1961-1984* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1989), 359.

81. Detailed Minutes, NSC Mtg on US Strategic Arms Policy and US-Soviet Relations, 4 Jun 79, TS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 2, NSC Mtg No. 19 folder, Carter Library. See also Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 334-37.

82. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 241.

83. Memo, Brzezinski to Vance, et al., 12 Jul 79, C, CJCS Files (Jones), NSC Memo File (1 Jan 79-2 Jul 79).

84. For the SALT II treaty and its accompanying protocol and statements, see US Dept. of State, *Bulletin* (Jul 1979): 23-47.

85. Dan Caldwell, *The Dynamics of Domestic Politics and Arms Control: The SALT II Treaty Ratification Debate* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), presents the most balanced account of both sides. Also see Patrick Glynn, *Closing Pandora’s Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War* (NY: Basic Books, 1992), 299-305. The leading opposition group to the treaty was the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), whose chief spokesman was Paul H. Nitze, the OSD representative to the SALT I negotiations. On the CPD’s role and criticisms of the SALT II treaty, see Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision—A Memoir* (NY: Grove, Weidenfeld, 1989), 359-65.

86. Rowny, *Tango*, 122.

87. Caldwell, *SALT II Treaty*, 312.

88. JCSM-321-78 to SecDef, 12 Oct 78, TS, CJCS Files (Jones), 756 SALT (1 Jul 78-31 Jan 79).

89. JCSM-233-79 to SecDef, 11 Jul 79, S, JCS 2482/512, 756 (12 Jun 79).

90. Jones’ testimony, 24 Jul 79, in US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings: Military Implications of the Treaty on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and Protocol Thereto (SALT II Treaty)*, 96:1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1979), Pt. 1, 151-60.

91. *Ibid.*, 152.

92. Hayward testimony, 24 Jul 79, *ibid.*, 161.

93. *Ibid.*, 255.

94. Caldwell, “SALT II Treaty,” 315-16.

95. 1979 CQ Almanac, 419-21. Also see “Senator Nunn Bids Carter Push for a Big Rise in Arms Spending,” *New York Times*, 8 Sep 79: 6.

96. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 345; “President Weighing Five-Year Increase in Military Outlays,” *New York Times*, 10 Aug 79: 1.

97. Detailed Minutes, NSC Mtg on M-X Basing, 5 Sep 79, TS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 2, NSC Mtg No. 21 folder, Carter Library. For a fuller discussion, see *The MX Missile and Multiple Protective Structure Basing: Long-Term Budgetary Implications* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), pp. 4-6.

98. “MX Missile System,” 7 Sep 79, *Carter Public Papers, 1979*, 1599-1601. Also see US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *MX Missile Basing* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1981), 33-107.

99. See chap. 6 for a full discussion of the Soviet brigade episode.

100. 1979 CQ Almanac, 423-29.

101. Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 264-65.

102. Memo, Brzezinski to Mondale, et al., 2 Jan 80, S, CJCS Files (Jones), NSC Memo File (12 Feb 80-20 Nov 80).

103. “Address Before the World Affairs Council,” 9 May 80, *Carter Public Papers, 1980-81*, 872.

Chapter 10. Formulating Basic Policy and Strategy

1. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 177.

2. PRM/NSC-10, 18 Feb 77, “Comprehensive Net Assessment and Military Force Posture Review,” S/GDS, JCS 2101/605, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec 2.

3. On the procedures used in drafting PRM-10, see John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (NY: William Morrow, 1991), 407-09.

4. Meeting of Net Assessment Group, 11 Mar 77, S, Huntington Collection, NAG Mtgs Mar-Jul 1977 folder, Carter Library.

5. Memo, Brown to CJCS, et al., 3 Mar 77, C/GDS, JCS 2101/605-2, 372 (18 Feb 77). Also see Lynn E. Davis, *Limited Nuclear Options: Deterrence and the New American Doctrine*, Adelphi Paper No. 121 (London: IISS, 1976).

6. Memo, Moorer to Sitton, 12 Feb 77, C/GDS; DJSM 423-77 to Dep CNO, 2 Mar 77, S/GDS; Background Paper for CJCS for a mtg with JCS on 11 Mar 77, re NSC/PRM-10, S/GDS, all in JCS 2101/605-3, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec. 2.

7. J5TP 10-77 for CJCS for a mtg with SecDef on 7 Apr 77, 6 Apr 77, S/GDS, re Alternative Strategies Interim Report, 372 (18 Feb 77).

8. BP for CJCS for a mtg with SecDef on 5 Jul 77, sub: PRM/NSC-10, S/GDS, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec. 2.

9. PRM/NSC-10 Terms of Reference, no date, S/GDS, enclosure to memo, Acting NSC Staff Secy (Hornblow) to SecState, et al., ca. 3 Mar 77, S/GDS, JCS 2101/605-1, 372 (18 Feb 77).

10. “PRM/NSC-10 Comprehensive Net Assessment: Recommendations ...,” undated, S, enclosure to memo, Huntington to Davis, 18 Apr 77, S, Huntington Collection, PRM-10 (General) folder, Carter Library.

11. Detailed Minutes, PRC Mtg, 8 Jul 77, TS/XGDS, Huntington Collection, PRC Mtg 7-8-77 (PRM-10) folder, Carter Library.

12. Memo, SecDef to President, 6 May 77, S, JCS 2101/605-8; (C) memo, SecDef to SecState, et al., 9 May 77, sub: Alternative Integrated Military Strategies (PRM/NSC-10), JCS 2101/605-9.

13. MJCS 151-77 to SecDef, 16 May 77, S/GDS, JCS 2101/605-11, 372 (18 Feb 77).
14. Memo, SecDef to SecState, et al., 25 May 77, S/XGDS, JCS 2101/605-12, 372 (18 Feb 77).
15. BP for the DJS, for a mtg with Ops Deps on 25 May 77, 24 May 77, S/GDS, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec. 2.
16. See “PRM/NSC-10 Military Strategy and Force Posture Review,” 20 Jun 77, TS, JCS 2101/605-17, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec 4.
17. MJCS 198-77 to SecDef, 27 Jun 77, S/GDS, JCS 2101/605-19, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec. 4.
18. Memo, Brown to McGiffert, 29 Jun 77, U, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec. 2.
19. MJCS 211-77 to SecDef, 1 Jul 77, S/GDS, JCS 2101/605-21, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec. 5.
20. “PRM/NSC-10 Military Strategy and Force Posture Review: Final Report,” [6 Jul 77], S/XGDS, JCS 2101/605-22, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec 6A.
21. Memo, SecDef to SecState, et al., 6 Jul 77, S, JCS 2101/605-22, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec 6A.
22. LTG William E. Odom, USA (Ret), interviewed by Drs. Steven L. Rearden and Walter S. Poole, 16 Sep 98, transcript, Joint History Office.
23. See especially Kingsbury Smith, “Joint Chiefs Blast Study Of Soviet Arms Buildup,” *Baltimore News American*, 19 Jul 77: 5.
24. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 174-76.
25. Frank L. Jones, *A “Hollow Army” Reappraised: President Carter, Defense Budgets, and the Politics of Military Readiness*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2012), p. 14.
26. PD/NSC-18, 24 Aug 77, Declassified, “US National Strategy,” www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/pddirectives/pd18.pdf.
27. Ibid.
28. AASD/ISA Slocombe Memo, 30 Aug 77, Declassified, *US National Strategy (Presidential Directive/NSF-18)(PD/NSC-18)*.
29. Richard A. Subbing with Richard A. Mendel, *The Defense Game* (NY: Harper and Row, 1986), 361.
30. PD/NSC-18, loc. cit., TS.
31. Presidential Directive/NSC-59, 25 Jul 80, Declassified, “Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy” www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/pddirectives/pd59.pdf.
32. See chap. 8.
33. Detailed Minutes, PRC Mtg, 8 Jul 77, TS/XGDS, Huntington Collection, PRC Mtg 7-8-77 (PRM-10) folder, Carter Library.
34. “PRM/NSC-10 Military Strategy and Force Posture Review: Final Report,” [6 Jul 77], pp. 21-23, S, JCS 2101/605-22, 372 (18 Feb 77) sec 6A.
35. Memo, Brzezinski to Harold Brown, 24 Aug 77, TS, J-5 NSC Collection, box 24, SCC, 4 Apr 79, Strategic Targeting Forces Policy folder.
36. DJSM 332-78 to ASD(PA&E), 23 Feb 78, C, 1st N/H to JCS 2101/609, 373 (10 Feb 78).
37. Memo, Brown to CJCS, et al., 26 Oct 77, U, JCS 2522/7; also see Walter S. Poole, *The Evolution of the Joint Strategic Planning System, 1947-1989* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Staff, Sept 1989), U, 15-16.
38. JCSM-56-78 to SecDef, 16 Feb 78, S/GDS; and Appendix A to JCSM-56-78, S/GDS, JCS 2522/12-3, 555 (17 Jan 78).
39. See memo, Brown to Secretaries Military Depts, et al., 7 Mar 78, U, JCS 2522/12-6; and memo, Brown to Secretaries Military Depts, 16 May 78, U, JCS 2522/12-10, both in 555 (17 Jan 78).

40. DJSM 1562-78, 27 Sep 78, TS, CJCS Files (Jones), 550 Consolidated Guidance.
41. JCSM-162-78 to SecDef, 17 May 78, S/GDS, JCS 2521/123-1, 806 (10 Feb 78).
42. Memo, Brown to Jones, 19 Jul 78, S/GDS, JCS 2521/123-3, 806 (10 Feb 78).
43. JCSM-190-79 to SecDef, 29 May 79, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO, and JCS 2521/303-1, 806 (19 Mar 79).
44. CM 335-79 to SecDef, 29 May 79, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO, and JCS 2521/303-1, 806 (19 Mar 79); and “Statement of Army Rationale on DPQ-79 Categorization of CTGs, no date, S/GDS, Appendix H to JCS 2521/303-1, 806 (19 Mar 79).
45. Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 10 Jul 79, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO, and JCS 2521/303-3, 806 (19 Mar 79).
46. Memo, Thomson to Brzezinski, 3 Aug 79, S, National Security Adviser Collection, Agency File, box 6, DOD 8-9/79 folder, Carter Library.
47. MJCS 185-79 to SecDef, 18 Jul 79, S/GDS, 1st N/H of JCS 2521/303-3, 806 (19 Mar 79).
48. JCSM-289-79 to SecDef, 1 Oct 79, S/GDS, JCS 2101/619-1, 520 (13 Jun 79); memo, Komer to Jones, 19 Oct 79, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO.
49. Memo, Komer to Brown, 3 Jan 80, TS, CJCS Files (Jones), 550 Consolidated Guidance.
50. JCSM-318-79 to SecDef, 15 Nov 79, S/GDS, JCS 2147/627, 374 (26 Oct 79).
51. Memo, Komer to Brown, 14 Mar 80, S/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 806 NATO.
52. JCSM-129-80 to SecDef, 21 May 80, S/GDS, JCS 2521/430-1; and (U) note to JCS, 19 Aug 80, U, JCS 2521/430-3, both in 806 (17 Mar 80).
53. PD/NSC-18, 24 Aug 77, “US National Policy,” U, NSC Collection, Carter Library.
54. Diary entry, 4 Jun 79, Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), p. 323.
55. See Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1973-1976*, chap. 3.
56. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 454-459. Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1994, rev. ed.), 868; and David M. Walsh, *The Military Balance in the Cold War: U.S. Perceptions and Policy, 1976-85* (London: Routledge, 2008), 26.
57. Leon Sloss and Marc Dean Millot, “U.S. Nuclear Strategy in Evolution,” *Strategic Review* 12 (Winter 1984): 19-28; and Walter Slocombe, “The Countervailing Strategy,” *International Security* 5 (Spring 1981): 18-27.
58. Memo, Brown to Secretaries Military Depts, 22 Dec 77, U, JCS 2101/607-3, 338 (03 Nov 77) HB.
59. Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 410. See also Janne E. Nolan, *Guardians of the Arsenal: The Politics of Nuclear Strategy* (NY: BasicBooks, 1989), 132-33.
60. Harold Brown, *Thinking About National Security: Defense and Foreign Policy in a Dangerous World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 81.
61. Jones Interview, 4 Feb 98.
62. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 458-59.
63. PD/NSC-59, 25 Jul 80, “Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy,” National Security Advisor’s Papers, Carter Library (sanitized).
64. Desmond Ball, “The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983,” in Desmond Ball and Jeffrey Richelson (eds.), *Strategic Nuclear Targeting* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 79.
65. Harold Brown, “Domestic Consensus and Nuclear Deterrence,” in *Defence and Consensus: The Domestic Aspects of Western Security*, Adelphi Papers No. 183 (London: IISS, 1983),

Part II, 21. See also Brown's testimony explaining the countervailing strategy in US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearing: Nuclear War Strategy*, 96:2 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1981), 6-28.

66. See Carter's interview in Michael Charlton, *From Deterrence to Defense: The Inside Story of Strategic Policy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 88.

67. CM-150-78 to ASD(ISA), 21 Nov 78, TS/GDS, CJCS Files (Jones), 710 Nuclear Weapons/Systems (1 Jul 78—31 Dec 78).

Chapter 11. Forces and Budgets

1. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1977* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1977), 217-218, 224.

2. Of the various factors influencing budget policy during the Carter years, none was more unpredictable and crippling than the rate of inflation. During Carter's first year in office (1977), the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 6.5 percent. Thereafter, it rose steadily, by 7.7 percent in 1978, 11.3 percent in 1979, and an unheard of rate of 13.5 percent in 1980. US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1981*, (102d ed.; Washington, DC: GPO, 1981), 467.

3. Memo, Brown to Secretaries Military Departments and CJCS, 26 Oct 77, U, JCS 2522/7, 555 (29 Sep 77); Walter S. Poole, *The Evolution of the Joint Strategic Planning System, 1947-1989* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Staff, September 1989), 15-17.

4. Memo, Stewart and Utgoff to Aaron, 31 Jan 79, S/XGDS, National Security Adviser Collection, Staff Offices, box 10, JCS 1/79-2/80 folder, Carter Library.

5. On the problems of JSOP credibility, see DJSM 212-77, 31 Jan 77, S; and J5M 662-77 to CJCS, 24 Mar 77, S, both in CJCS Files (Brown), 511 JSOP.

6. For JCS views on reforming the budget and strategic planning system, see DJSM-1700-77, 4 Oct 77, U, 1st N/H of JCS 2522/1; and Rpt by J-5 to JCS on Calander [sic] of Key PPBS Events for FY 1980-1984, U, JCS 2522/3-1, 555 (29 Sep 77).

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8. See JSPD 81-88, Section VI, pp. 9-10, TS, JCS 2143/522, 511 (24 Nov 78); and JSPD 82-89, Section II, pp. 16, TS, JCS 2143/542, 511 (07 Dec 79).

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