DEFENCE NOTES

Ballistic Missiles and the Gulf Crisis

The Gulf crisis has focussed attention once again on the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Iraq is believed to have deployed three types of ballistic missiles: the Scud-B, a Soviet built short-range missile with a range of 300 kilometres, and two Iraqi developments of the Scud-B, the *al-Husayn* and the *al-Abbas*. The *al-Husayn*, with a range of 650 kilometres, has a greater fuel capacity and a larger warhead than the Scud-B. The *al-Abbas* is a further modification which increases the range to around 900 kilometres. Iraq also has under development the *el-Abid*, a three-stage rocket designed to launch satellites into orbit, but which could also serve as an intermediate-range missile.

In a controversial change of policy, on 5 September the US State Department issued an export license for missile casings destined for Brazil. Several press reports, neither confirmed nor denied by Brazilian officials, claim that contracts were signed in 1989 establishing cooperative projects between Brazil and Iraq on missiles and satellites.

September press reports also claimed that in 1989 Western intelligence had detected the Iraqi test of a missile armed with a chemical warhead. According to these reports, Iraq unsuccessfully sought an agreement with Mauritania to allow further tests in deserted areas of that country. Baghdad used chemical weapons repeatedly in the last phases of the war with Iran, mainly in the form of canisters dropped from airplanes. Iraq manufactures both mustard and nerve gas, and is believed to have significant stockpiles of both.

Ballistic Missile Defences

On 9 September, Israel for the first time flight-tested the Arrow, an anti-tactical ballistic missile intended to intercept and destroy short- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles of the Scud type. Although the test was described as a success, Israeli officials stressed that many more tests would be required before the missile could be considered ready for production. The Arrow development is co-funded by Israel and the United States.

Meanwhile, in Washington key administration officials have stressed the connection between events in the Gulf and the importance of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). In July Henry Cooper, former US defence and space arms negotiator in Geneva and a strong supporter of SDI, was appointed as the new director of the SDI programme. Threatened with cutbacks which could reduce funds for the research programme, Cooper has strongly emphasized the importance of SDI as a counter to the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Perhaps coincidentally, in August the US Senate proposed to redirect SDI funding from "exotic" space-based technologies to land-based ballistic missile defences which, in the short term, would be less likely to threaten the ABM Treaty and have more immediate application to defence against short- and intermediate-range missiles.

The US Defence Budget

In late October, the House-Senate Conference Committee finally reached agreement of a sort on the fiscal year 1991 US defence budget. The compromise agreement authorized total expenditures of US$288.3 billion. While many programmes were cut, no major projects were abandoned. The SDI budget was held to $2.9 billion, almost $2 billion less than requested by the Pentagon. Funding for the B-2 was continued at levels close to Pentagon requests, but dispute continued between the Senate and the House on the future of the programme. Defense Secretary Richard Cheney fought to preserve the SDI programme, but earlier signaled his own intentions in mid-August when he cut nine destroyers and one submarine from the Navy building programme. In cutting one of the two advanced, high speed Seawolf attack submarines, Cheney opened the door to the critics in the Congress who want to cancel the entire Seawolf project. The Seawolf, at a cost of US$1.2 billion per submarine, may be judged unnecessary if the Soviet threat continues to decline.

Rethinking US Defence Policy

While the FY 1991 budget promised few changes other than fiscal restraint, long-term defence policy appeared destined for change. Prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Pentagon proposed a fundamental restructuring of US military forces based on the assumption that the defence budget would shrink by ten percent over five years. The plan, reportedly overseen by General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and first presented to the President in June, is premised on the assumption that, once the Soviets have withdrawn from Eastern Europe, it would take up to two years to mobilize a full-scale, multi-front attack on Western Europe. It envisages reducing US forces in Europe to between 100,000 and 125,000 as part of an overall reduction which would cut the armed forces by 500,000 from the current level of 2.1 million.

Further key elements in the proposal include cutting the number of navy aircraft carrier groups from fifteen to eleven, and reducing the number of active Army divisions from eighteen to twelve. In addition, the plan calls for the establishment of two "reconstitutable" divisions which would stockpile equipment and rely on small cadres of permanent soldiers while relying on the rapid call-up of reservists to bring the divisions to operational strength. In general, the plan emphasises the need to respond to a variety of regional conflicts rather than to the defence of Western Europe against the Soviets.

The End of World War II

Largely unheralded in the midst of the Gulf crisis, on 12 September the victors of World War II relinquished their military occupation rights in Berlin. In Moscow the British, French, US and Soviet foreign ministers signed a treaty representing the final settlement with Germany. Building on the "two plus four" formula developed in Ottawa in February, the occupying powers surrendered their right to maintain air corridors to Berlin, to oversee the administration of the city, and to determine the boundaries of Germany. In exchange, the two Germanies agreed that the new unified country will limit the size of its army, will not acquire nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, and will consist of the area enclosed by the boundaries of the two countries as they were immediately before unification. On 2 October 1990 the two Germanies were officially united.

The combined German armies, now numbering over 600,000, will be reduced to 370,000 over the next four years. In a separate agreement, Germany undertook to pay Moscow $US7.5 billion to resettle Soviet soldiers in the Soviet Union. The unified Germany will be a member of NATO. However, there are restrictions. Until 1994, German units assigned to NATO will not be allowed to deploy in East Germany. After 1994, German but not foreign NATO troops will be allowed to deploy in East Germany, but without nuclear weapons. □

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