

U.S. military forces are checkmated: What comes next?

by Paul Goldstein

Amid all the outcries for political, economic and diplomatic countermeasures particularly from the Carter administration against the Soviet Union—a policy supported only by Great Britain among America's NATO allies—President Carter declared in his State of the Union address this week that the United States is prepared to confront the Soviets militarily! “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America. And such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force,” said Carter.

This extraordinary declaration came in the same statement where Carter proposed that once U.S. hostages are released by the Khomeini regime in Iran, Washington and Teheran could ally against the Soviet Union. “Persuade the Iranian leaders that the real danger to their nation lies to the north in Soviet Union and from the Soviet troops now in Afghanistan, and that the unwarranted Iranian quarrel with the United States hampers their response to this far greater danger to them,” continued Carter. From any competent military strategic standpoint these statements constitute an immediate danger to the security of the United States. To confront the Soviets when the U.S. is in an inferior military position and to form an unstable alliance with a crazed nation of fanatics is an act of national suicide.

As a measure of his insanity, Carter deployed B-52 bombers into the Persian Gulf region on “reconnaissance overflights” over the Soviet naval deployments. Such deployments are supposed to represent a military capability of a “projection of power.” However, this empty show of force does not conform to what the allies of the U.S. would consider doing.

In fact, the view reflected in the Federal Republic of Germany—the strongest military ally of the U.S. in

NATO—which counts strategically when considering military moves of the sort Carter proposes, is quite the opposite. In an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a journal which normally follows U.S.-NATO policy lines on military matters, the paper's military analyst said: “If the Soviet Union wants to occupy Iran and Pakistan no one could stop them. This means that the United States has no chance in this region to overcome them with conventional weapons.”

“It is not just a question of conventional inferiority of Washington vis á vis Moscow, which goes back to 1945 and became more acute since the United States ended the draft after the Vietnam War,” the authoritative Frankfurt daily continued. Pointing out that “there are not enough units for the Rapid Mobile Strike Force Carter has set up” and that “all told, the army has 16 more or less complete divisions” available, the *Zeitung* concluded emphatically that “all this is not enough to stand up to the Soviets at their very doorstep in a region that lies thousands of miles away from America on the opposite side of the globe.” To understand the *Zeitung's* assessment that the United States has no effective military option in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area, let us look at the map of the present military disposition of all concerned nations.

First, the United States

At present there are three U.S. aircraft carriers (Midway, Kitty Hawk, Nimitz) along with 25 ships including missile carrying cruisers (the Texas and California), destroyers and frigates with additional landing capabilities operating in the Indian Ocean-Arabian Sea area.

With the 110,000 mobile strike force readied for deployment in 48 hours and with six British ships, including a large amphibious assault ship able to carry 700

troops, tanks and heavy equipment in the Mediterranean for possible service in the Persian Gulf linking up with the U.S. Sixth Fleet (30-35 ships), the combined capability of the Anglo-American forces is upwards of 300,000-400,000 troops. That includes support troops. A few days ago five U.S. ships left San Diego, steaming for the Indian Ocean.

Second, China-Pakistan-Afghan rebels

Allied with the Anglo-Americans are the combined forces of Peking, the Zia dictatorship in Pakistan, and the "Islamic fundamentalist" rebels in Afghanistan. Communist China, supposedly the formidable military force in the Asia theater, relies upon ground troops deployed in a "human wave" with the aim of overwhelming the vastly superior Soviet technology. Peking has 20 divisions on the Indian-Pakistan border in Sinkiang province. In addition, the Peking regime has deployed its military forces for a three pronged attack on Indochina—an attack on Laos, on the Vietnam-China border and against Vietnam from the sea, combined with planned thrusts of forces allied to the deposed Cambodian Pol Pot regime from bases in Thailand. China, according to diplomatic sources, has carried out extensive land-sea military maneuvers last month on Hainan Island in the Tonkin Gulf. Latest reports state that the Chinese now have six army corps directly on the Vietnam-China border.

The Chinese have sent 900 military advisers and guerrilla forces into Pakistan for infiltration into Afghanistan on the rebel side. As of yesterday, Pakistan deployed seven divisions on the Afghan border to aid the rebels as well. An additional seven Chinese divisions are positioned on the Vietnam-Laos border.

Third, the Soviet Union

Soviet forces in Afghanistan number 100,000 troops equipped for Atomic-Biological-Chemical (ABC) warfare, coupled with special counter-guerrilla troops and massive heavy equipment. 1,400 tanks and 1,300 armored personnel carriers (APCs) are also deployed in Afghanistan, turning that former "buffer state" into a virtual landed carrier force with greater in-depth reserve potential than either China or the United States could muster into neighboring Iran and Pakistan.

There are 25,000 Soviet troops in the western Afghan city of Herat near the Iranian border.

The 66th Motorized Division of the Red Army forms the center of Soviet military strength in this area. Penta-

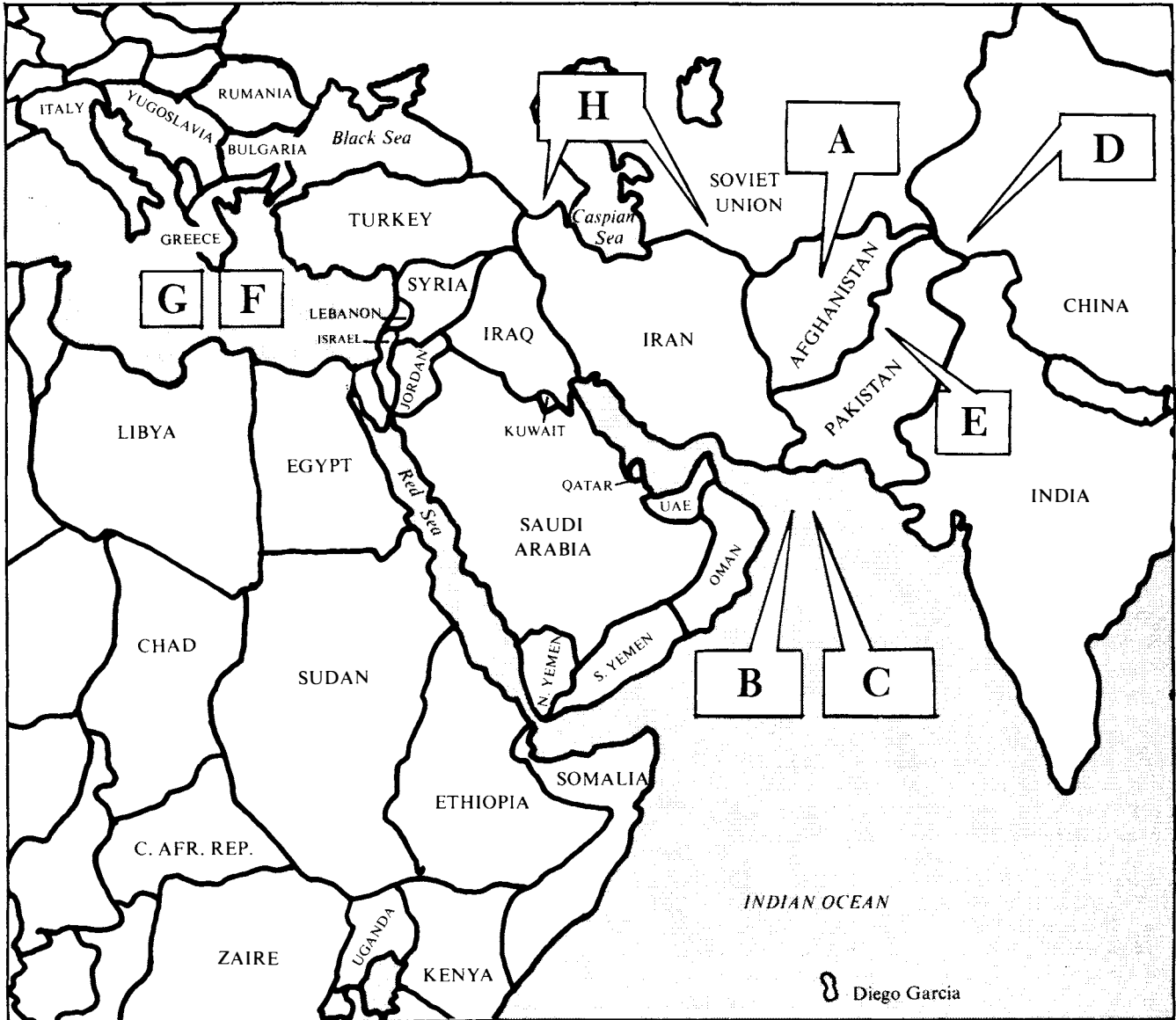
gon sources also indicated that the Soviets are presently airlifting fresh troops into Afghanistan armed with additional bio-chemical warfare capabilities. Reported Soviet troop strength on the northern border of Iran in the Azerbaijan and Turkomen provinces is 500,000 troops. Moreover, the Soviet reserve potential deployed in the Central Asian provinces of Kazakh and Uzbek ranges into several million troops.

Soviet naval deployments are approximately 37 ships in the Indian Ocean led by the missile cruiser Petropavlovsk. Meanwhile, there are 27 Soviet ships patrolling the Eastern Mediterranean, led by the helicopter carrier Moskva. The Soviets have also beefed up their troop deployments on the Hungarian-Yugoslav border, and two nuclear submarines are stationed at Yugoslav ports on the Adriatic sea. Finally, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact have announced full-scale military maneuvers starting in April—in obvious preparation for a big conflict.

Evaluation: checkmate

As outlined above, looking at the troop and related military hardware dispositions of the U.S. and U.S.S.R., Soviet superiority in in-depth warfighting terms both active and potential is far greater than any combination of opposition forces. Even the pipedream of a two-front war against the Soviet Union on its southern flank and the Chinese border in the East will quickly be ended once Communist China is knocked out by a Soviet ABC or full-scale conventional strike. The most glaring evidence for this evaluation of Chinese warfighting potential came as a result of their invasion of Vietnam. The Chinese human wave tactic failed miserably in the face of Vietnamese artillery and limited forces.

With the probability of the conflict erupting in the Persian Gulf area rapidly escalating, Washington faces a more profound military dilemma. Prior to the Soviet move into Afghanistan, U.S. naval forces in the Indian Ocean-Arabian Sea area represented a superior military force for "gunboat diplomacy." However, even to fight an all-out conventional conflict, the U.S. reserve and logistical capabilities in that region of the world are practically nil. Once the Soviets moved in Afghanistan the entire strategic balance was altered. Not only is the Soviet move a foreshadowing of an all-out commitment to fight and win a nuclear conflict, but the immediate in-depth reserve strength brought about as a result of the Afghani moves overshadows anything the U.S. has to offer.



U.S. and Soviet Force Deployments

- A** 100,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan, equipped for ABC warfare; 1,400 tanks; 1,300 APCs.
- B** U.S. naval forces in Indian Ocean; 3 aircraft carriers, 25 ships including 2 missile-carrying cruisers; B-52 bombers on reconnaissance overflights in Persian Gulf region.
- C** Soviet naval deployment in Indian Ocean: 37 ships.

- D** Peking troops on the India-Pakistan border in Sinkiang Province: 20 divisions.
- E** Seven Pakistani divisions on the Afghan border to aid Afghanistan rebels; 900 Chinese military advisers and guerrilla forces in Pakistan.
- F** U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean: 30-35 ships.
- G** British Navy in the Mediterranean: six ships, including amphibious assault equipment.
- H** Reported Soviet troop strength on Iran's northern borders: 500,000.