

## Letters . . .

### COUNTERATTACK

**To the Editor**—I appreciated the comments by Eric Michael and Patrick Carroll on my article “Rethinking Army-Marine Corps Roles in Power Projection” (*JFQ*, Autumn 00), which appeared in your last issue. But neither addressed my central focus: advocating a battle/war division of responsibilities in order to rapidly defeat an unanticipated conventional enemy. My main concern is that we do not have a capability, other than airpower, to fight a strong enemy in the first days of a conflict in an area not previously considered vital. We need to either squelch a small threat decisively and rapidly to keep it from growing—or hold off a serious threat so we can execute a successful halt phase. The Army already has forces where we expect conflict—Europe, the Republic of Korea, and Kuwait. We need the Marines to be ready to go anywhere else.

The expeditionary battle force concept is my suggestion. Army airborne forces are rapidly deployable but are too light for this role by themselves. The Marines, who are already forward deployed at sea, should both accept the battle and complementary urban warfare roles to reduce the pressure on the Army to create its own urban combat forces. Army infantry-heavy light mechanized interim brigade combat teams (IBCTs) will take over this role if the Marines do not step up. IBCTs will give the Army the expeditionary role and in the process degrade the traditional Army warfighting mission of defeating a large, well-equipped conventional enemy. Emphasis on mobility rather than power will gut heavy forces. I have no confidence that we can build future tanks as light as light armored vehicles yet as lethal and survivable as the Abrams. My proposal promotes a proper division of labor and builds on Marine expeditionary units (MEUs) already deployed. Notwithstanding Carroll’s justifiable confidence in the power of a Marine light armored reconnaissance company, it is still only a company and a MEU is just a battalion.

And despite Carroll’s contention that the Marine Corps is embracing expeditionary warfare, his list of weapons and operating concepts supports deliberate Iwo Jima-style operations rather than quick reaction capabilities in brigade strength. With all due respect, unless a Marine expeditionary brigade is already forward deployed, it will not even arrive in time to fight a battle—let alone win it. Planes are faster than ships.

I am not sure how to address Michael’s complaints. I heartily disagree with his boasts of National Guard peacekeeping roles. Peacekeeping harms the active Army and is a particular hardship for Reservists. I applaud the Marines for avoiding

it. It is true that for both some leaders and support units peacekeeping provides real-life experience. Our soldiers in the field may be proud of the hard job they perform. Nonetheless, peace operations compromise warfighting capabilities by requiring units to lose their fighting edge performing constabulary roles.

—Brian J. Dunn  
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### BETWEEN IRAQ AND A HARD PLACE

**To the Editor**—I basically agree with the critique by Ted Galen Carpenter in “Postwar Strategy: An Alternative View” (*JFQ*, Winter 00-01) on the U.S. policy of dual containment. The Persian Gulf is a region with friendly nations who do not always share American beliefs in democratic institutions and prefer to strike a balance with governments that we define as rogues—even though we warn that they pose great risks to their security. Carpenter finds this balance contradictory because it comes at a time when the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—are seeking greater security commitments from the United States, but with a more limited military presence.

But there are several discrepancies in his analysis. The dual nature of containment policy was neither equally applied nor equally successful. It contained Baghdad for a long time because it was applied under U.N. resolutions and supported by both Iraq’s neighbors and the international community. Most importantly it restrained but has not prevented Saddam Hussein from rebuilding his military and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs and threatening his neighbors. As Carpenter indicates, Iraq retains a significant capability to harm its people, in particular Kurds in the north and any potentially rebellious Shi’a Muslim elements in the south. Considering the ten-year military embargo, Baghdad has created a leaner, meaner military machine in reducing force size and cannibalizing spare parts to maintain equipment, even if it is old and ill-serviced. Clearly, the Iraqis have been able to manufacture, repair, and purchase new radars and telecommunications systems to monitor and threaten U.S. and British aircraft flying missions over the no-fly zones.

I am especially concerned about the rather blasé statement that Iraq would be deterred from using its long-range missiles—which it is almost certainly developing—and any WMD arsenal it has retained, hidden, or will reconstruct. Saddam

Hussein has not, in my view, shown himself capable of such admirable restraint, especially when he has sulked under a heightened sense of insult, as he did after signing the accord with the Shah of Iran in 1975 (revenge came in 1980), and in invading Kuwait in 1990 (whom he blamed for taking advantage of Iraq by refusing it more loans and allegedly slant drilling into Iraqi oilfields).

Of course, containment is fraying. It has been for several years, a victim of weak public diplomacy by the United States, lack of interest by Saddam’s neighbors, and an overweening urge on the part of Europe, Russia, and China to make money in the post-sanctions scramble for Iraqi dinars and oil. Washington must take some responsibility for refusing to ease economic sanctions sooner, and it could have done more to demonstrate commitment to rebuilding civilian economic infrastructure rather than letting Saddam manipulate who would receive help under sanctions and who would not.

But the burden of Iraq must be shared by those states closest to it—Jordan, Kuwait, Syria, Turkey, et al.—which face growing domestic criticism for ignoring the plight of the Iraqi people while assisting the United States. Carpenter fails to mention the impact of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian *intifada* on our relations with Arab friends and former allies against Saddam. For the first time since 1990, it is impossible to separate events in Israel from U.S. security policy in the Gulf. Indeed, Saudi and other spokesmen have made it clear that we risk local host support for U.S. force deployments, prepositioned equipment, and brigade sets should the *intifada* continue and the United States not take a lead role in resolving the tensions with the Palestinians.

My main point is that Saddam’s neighbors know they can afford to explore what Carpenter calls “alternative security measures” with Iran and even cozy up to Iraq at some point with or without Saddam in power, because they have guarantees of U.S. protection—a 911 card. If Carpenter accurately reflects current thinking—and I do not think he does—then the Arabs would be correct to question American willingness to stay the course in the Gulf. Carpenter’s conclusion, that the “neighbors of Iraq have the wherewithal to contain another episode of Iraqi aggression” and that “military forces exist for a local balance of power that would prevent any state from exercising hegemony,” reflects a theoretical reading of numbers and not a practical understanding of regional military capabilities and resolve.

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