Access will remain a challenge to the U.S. military in general and to the Air Force in particular for the foreseeable future. The preceding pages tell a story that is part good news and part bad news. On the positive side

- The United States enjoys strong defense relationships with a large number of countries all around the world. This web of engagement serves to facilitate access for the USAF.

- While access has historically been an irritant on many occasions, U.S. diplomacy, flexibility, and luck have usually resulted in the availability of workarounds to enable operations.

- There are a number of countries that, in looking to improve or cement their security relations with the United States and the West, could be strong candidates for enhanced access arrangements.

- Given some modifications in manning and support, current and future USAF forces appear able to sustain a reasonably high tempo of operations at fairly long ranges from their operational areas—up to 1000–1500 nm.

The negatives are as follows:

- “Assured access” is a chimera outside U.S. territory. National sovereignty may be eroding in cyberspace, but in the “real world” of air bases and airspace, it continues to reign supreme.
• Even close allies, such as the British and Germans, have at times refused access or overflight.

• In addition to the politically driven access problems that the United States has occasionally encountered, new military threats—particularly advanced surface-to-surface missiles—may change the calculus of risk, inducing commanders to base forces farther away from the immediate combat zone.

• Access arrangements in Southwest Asia and Asia outside of Korea and Japan are limited and may prove woefully inadequate for the kinds of contingencies that could develop in those regions.

• Given current and likely future access arrangements, it could prove very difficult to project and sustain a significant amount of power into sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America south of the Equator. The former in particular appears to pose serious challenges.

In short, the USAF confronts a complex set of circumstances; what options exist for dealing with them successfully?

FIVE “PURE” STRATEGIES

We have identified five alternative approaches toward managing access and basing in the future. They are

• Expand the number of overseas main operating bases (MOBs) to increase the likelihood that forces will be present where and when they are needed.

• Identify one or more “reliable” allies in each region of the world and count on them to cooperate when asked to do so.

• Proliferate security agreements and alliances to broaden the set of potential partners in any given contingency.

• Negotiate and secure long-term extraterritorial access to bases, as was done with Diego Garcia.

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1A sixth strategy is hinted at in the first sentence of this report: imperial conquest as in the British Empire of old. Suffice it to say that none of the authors is at risk of losing sleep over eliminating this a priori as a viable option.
Developing a Global Access Strategy for the Air Force

- Rely on extended-range operations from U.S. territory.

We believe that each of these strategies is insufficient in and of itself to ensure adequate access. We will briefly discuss each in turn.

**Expand Overseas MOBs**

The proliferation of a permanent presence overseas has a historical pedigree: USAF forces were at one time stationed at dozens of locations around the world. In the wake of the Cold War, that base structure has been substantially reduced. Why not rebuild a larger and more robust array of permanent overseas MOBs to support the USAF’s power projection mission?

At least three serious objections can be raised to this approach:

- There would appear to be no popular constituencies, either domestic or foreign, for such an expansion.
- Unless host countries pick up all or part of the tab, foreign MOBs are expensive propositions. Freeing up money to build or reopen these facilities would thus be extremely difficult.
- Having forces stationed on another country’s territory does not in itself guarantee that they can be used however and whenever they are desired. Spain, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others have demonstrated this repeatedly over the past quarter century.

**Rely on the Reliable**

Great Britain has proven to be a particularly stalwart friend to the United States—for example, by enabling the 1986 raid on Libya. Along with Turkey, Britain is the only other country that shared the burden of policing the no-fly zones in Iraq. Might the United States perhaps identify one or more “Britains” in other parts of the world whose reliability would be such that they would rarely if ever be uncooperative? Unfortunately, our analysis suggests that this would not be easy.

First, candidates are few and far between. Britain and the United States have, after all, enjoyed a mutually beneficial “special relation-
ship” since the 1940s. It began with Lend-Lease, was solidified through the war against Hitler and with British participation in the Manhattan Project, and set was on firm ground with continued cooperation on postwar nuclear matters. Moreover, the United States has a strong cultural attachment to and affinity for Britain that is deeply rooted in both countries’ common history.² Looking around the world, it is difficult—indeed, one is tempted to say impossible—to find another country that shares a similar range and depth of connection with and similarity of perspective to the United States. This is especially the case in Asia and the greater Middle East—the regions where access promises to be especially problematic in the near term.³

It also bears repeating that even “reliable” Britain has at times asserted itself by refusing to cooperate with the United States. London’s failure to support the Operation Nickel Grass airlift to Israel in 1973 is probably the most notable example.

To be sure, this is not to say that the United States should not try to nurture close and robust relationships with other countries. It would be imprudent, however, to rest an overall access strategy on this single leg.

**Expand Security Agreements and Alliances**

Another option would be to greatly expand the existing network of alliances and other security arrangements that bind other countries

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²One author can recall a convivial evening in a Royal Air Force mess where, after several pleasant hours of conversation and toasting one another’s well-being, he found himself profusely thanking Her Majesty’s forces for “wearing those lovely red coats back in ’76.” He doubts that he would have gotten the same amused reaction had he made a parallel remark in a Luftwaffe officers’ club, for example.

³Israel might represent a plausible candidate for a “special relationship.” As discussed earlier, however, Israel’s somewhat shadowy status among its neighbors could impose great limitations on its utility as a point of access to the region. Should these circumstances change for the better, this assessment could change as well.

Australia may appear to be a possible “England” in the Western Pacific. However, Canberra’s regional and global perspectives are not identical to those of the United States and a significant portion of its people are likely to oppose greatly expanded defense ties with the United States. Furthermore, Australia’s location makes it less than ideally suited to support USAF operations outside its immediate Southeast Asian vicinity.
Developing a Global Access Strategy for the Air Force

Indeed, NATO’s recent expansion and the success of the PfP program has in fact opened new doors to USAF access. Two points must be made in this context, however.

First, as with the idea of expanding the number of USAF overseas MOBs, it is difficult to identify the political constituencies that would support a wide-ranging extension of U.S. alliance guarantees. Domestically, support for NATO expansion may be unique, based more on post–Cold-War goodwill and public familiarity with the Atlantic alliance’s long-time role in U.S. security than on any desire to see the American security umbrella more broadly spread. And while there is little doubt that America will remain an engaged and active power on the international scene, the persistence of the isolationist siren song within the national political debate may indicate that these may not be the most propitious times to advocate such an expansion.

Second, as was suggested in Chapter Two, much of the payoff in terms of cooperation from enhanced security arrangements may come during the courtship as opposed to the marriage. A desire for improved relations with the United States may motivate a partner to be more cooperative than it will be when, secure in its status, those improvements are cast in stone.

“Rent-a-Rock”

The value of Diego Garcia in supporting the U.S. position in the Persian Gulf leads one to question whether there might be opportunities to make similar arrangements elsewhere in the world. To help improve U.S. access in the area around Taiwan, for example, might it be possible to lease from the Philippine government one of the many desolate, uninhabited islands in the archipelago and build an MOB there? This is an intriguing and potentially powerful idea.

Of course, only extraordinary circumstances typically induce a country to cede sovereignty over part of its territory; Britain granted

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4 As witness Hungary’s cooperation with NATO during Operation Allied Force.

5 The political consensus on U.S. overseas involvement may be in for a change in the wake of September 2001 and the subsequent military operations in Afghanistan. What those changes may be, and how enduring, cannot be ascertained at this writing.
the lease on Diego Garcia only in the wake of World War II and in the context of its historic Cold War withdrawal from “east of Suez.” It can certainly be imagined, however, that some set of incentives might prompt Manila, for example, to agree to a similar arrangement with the United States. Filipino perceptions of rising hostility from Beijing, for example, could drive the Philippines to pay a high price for U.S. protection. The idea should therefore not be dismissed out of hand. There are, however, at least two reasons why this is not a complete solution to future USAF access needs.

First, these arrangements are rare indeed. Although the United States enjoys such a status at Diego Garcia and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, the first was acquired from a close friend that no longer needed it and the second was a remnant of the colonial past. To assume that Washington will be able to acquire such privileges anywhere else, let alone at multiple locations, would be foolish.

Second, we would expect that only uninhabited locales could even come under discussion as candidates for such an arrangement. And such places are typically uninhabited for a good reason, such as a pestilential climate, lack of livable real estate, or an absence of fresh water—conditions that would also present difficulties in establishing a major military installation. To be sure, none of these conditions is necessarily prohibitive; swamps can be drained, mountains flattened, and salt water made fresh through the sufficient application of ingenuity and cash. However, the upfront costs of such undertakings are likely to be very high, and the reallocation of resources within DoD to provide for them would be extremely painful.

**Project Power from U.S. Territory**

A final option is to reduce reliance on overseas access by resorting increasingly to employing airpower from sovereign U.S. territory. The success of long-range bomber raids from bases in CONUS—

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6A third, the Panama Canal Zone, was likewise a hangover from empire and passed into history within weeks of this writing.

7Costs are also a major factor militating against a higher-tech variant of this approach: the construction of large floating air bases. Another strike against such platforms is that, unlike England, islets, and atolls, they lack inherent unsinkability, making them potentially lucrative targets for a capable adversary.
Developing a Global Access Strategy for the Air Force

B-52s carrying cruise missiles from Louisiana to Iraq and B-2s attacking Serbian targets from Missouri—lends this idea credibility. Moreover, the improving conventional capabilities of the USAF’s heavy bomber fleet clearly earmark these aircraft for a more prominent role in future conflicts. Two factors, however, will limit the extent to which these sorts of operations can—at least in the near- to midterm—dramatically reduce the need for overseas access across all contingencies.

Sheer weight of numbers is the first factor. The USAF currently fields more than 2100 fighter and attack aircraft in comparison to some 152 bombers, and it plans no further procurement of long-range strike platforms for at least 20 years. Thus, more than 90 percent of the Air Force’s combat aircraft cannot and will not be able to operate effectively from U.S. territory in any but the most exceptional scenarios.

This quantitative difference looms even larger when we account for the productivity difference between a bomber based in CONUS and a fighter that is in theater. Heavy bombers flying 30- to 40-hour CONUS-to-CONUS missions must obviously generate less than one sortie per aircraft per day. In fact, for analytic purposes, it is typically assumed that a realistic sortie rate may be one every two or three days, and this appears broadly consistent with what has been achieved thus far in practice. An F-15E, on the other hand, can achieve an average of between 1.5 and 2 sorties per day when based within 1200 nm or so of its targets. And although the bomber’s heavy payload makes up somewhat for the disparity in sortie rates, the limited number of bombers available—in comparison to the number of fighters and attack aircraft—further reduces the heavy force’s relative impact, as shown by the illustrative numbers in Table 5.1.

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9See Figure 3.10.
10This rough comparison ignores a host of operationally important factors, not the least of which is the value of the B-2’s low-observable configuration. Nonetheless, it does, we believe, present a reasonably valid comparison of capabilities along one important dimension. Employing bombers other than the B-2 will obviously increase the amount of firepower available from CONUS bases, although neither the B-52 nor the B-1 have the same ability to operate and survive in a high-threat environment as the B-2.
Again, we point this out not to denigrate the value of the heavy bomber force; indeed, we support its modernization and will argue later in this chapter that the USAF might consider developing a new, long-range strike platform to supplement the existing force. However, enthusiasm for the role bombers can play in power projection must be tempered by the real limitations of their near-term numbers and capabilities.

The second problem with operating mainly from U.S. territory is that for some missions it is simply not a practical option. Consider the complex MOOTW in Burundi described in the previous chapter; the problem there is not putting ordnance on target but supporting complicated and intensive operations on the ground in the heart of Africa. It is difficult to conceive how that could be accomplished in the absence of access to numerous countries in the region, including but not limited to Burundi itself.\footnote{As was pointed out in Chapter Four, even limited operations in Africa have required basing in multiple countries to overcome infrastructure shortfalls.}

We believe that U.S. territory should become an increasingly important launching pad for overseas operations. However, this does not appear to be a complete solution to the access problem.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Illustrative Comparison of Weapon-Delivery Potential}
\begin{tabular}{lllll}
\hline
Aircraft & Payload & Daily Sortie Rate & Weapons Delivered per Day & Weapons Delivered in Ten Days \\
\hline
1 × F-15E & 3 × GBU-24 & 1.75 & 5 & 53 \\
24 × F-15E & 3 × GBU-24 & 1.75 & 126 & 1260 \\
1 × B-2 & 16 × JDAM\textsuperscript{a} & 0.33 & 5 & 53 \\
16 × B-2 & 16 × JDAM & 0.33 & 84 & 840 \\
1 × B-2 & 16 × JDAM & 0.5 & 8 & 80 \\
16 × B-2 & 16 × JDAM & 0.5 & 128 & 1280 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{a}JDAM = Joint Direct Attack Munition.
\end{table}
MANAGING UNCERTAINTY WITH AN ACCESS “PORTFOLIO”

If pure strategies are not adequate to cope with the challenges to come, a hybrid approach is called for. We therefore wish to suggest that the USAF consider a metaphor from the financial world and treat the construction of an appropriate access and basing strategy as a problem in portfolio management. We think the analogy is sound along several dimensions:

• As on Wall Street, the environment planners face is one dominated by uncertainty. We cannot predict where the next contingency will erupt, what form it will take, or how the geopolitical stars will align to facilitate or restrict the level of international cooperation the United States will receive. In such a “market,” a well-hedged portfolio is the best path to success.12

• Managing risk and exploiting opportunity require diversification. No single investment can ensure maximum financial success; nor can any single-point solution provide a sufficiently robust guarantee of adequate access. Success will depend on having a range of contingency options, plans, and capabilities.

• Information flows are critical to good decisionmaking. Just as a competent broker must match the needs of buyers and sellers, so must the United States remain informed and aware of its partners’ sometimes-divergent goals, strategies, and interests. Engagement and transparency play pivotal roles.

What sort of portfolio might the USAF want to construct? In keeping with the metaphor, we will describe one possibility in terms of three components: core investments, hedges against risk, and opportunities to watch out for.

Core Investments

Core investments lie at the heart of our proposed portfolio. They represent secure, low-risk investments that we expect to produce steady results. We will suggest three.

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12On reflection, it is truly unfortunate that the world of international security has no Alan Greenspan it can count on to provide reliable indicators of future circumstances.
The first and most obvious is to recommend that the United States maintain its current array of overseas MOBs in Europe and Asia. These installations are fairly secure and reliable footholds that can serve as points of entry to virtually every region of possible interest. Such bases have in the past been critical to rapid responses to contingencies around the world, and they should continue to play that role into the indefinite future.

Our second recommendation is that the USAF establish a small number of forward support locations (FSLs) worldwide. Much discussed under a variety of names, an FSL is essentially a “mega-MOB” intended to support power projection.\(^\text{13}\) Spares, equipment, and munitions could be prepositioned at these locations, which should be built where access is either guaranteed or highly likely. FSLs could also host repair facilities for key components such as engines and critical avionics units and would serve as both strategic and intratheater airlift hubs when the situation so demanded.\(^\text{14}\) Extensive RAND analysis strongly suggests that properly located and outfitted FSLs offer significant leverage in enabling both rapid and sustainable expeditionary operations.\(^\text{15}\)

As Figure 5.1 shows, even a small number of FSLs could provide broad coverage of likely contingency locales. Five FSLs can be found on the figure; in terms of “assured access,” three are in U.S. territory (Alaska, Guam, and Puerto Rico), a fourth is on de facto U.S. territory (Diego Garcia, at least until 2039), and the fifth is on the territory of America’s most reliable ally, Great Britain. Taken together, these five locations put most of the world within C-130 range of a permanent center of U.S. power projection capability.\(^\text{16}\) Extreme southern South America and southwestern Africa are left uncovered, but much of the rest of the world’s landmass can be served from two different FSLs.

\(^\text{13}\)RAND has worked extensively on the FSL concept. See, for example, Killingsworth et al. (2000) and Galway et al. (1999).

\(^\text{14}\)For a discussion of the kinds of maintenance facilities that might be placed at FSLs, see Peltz et al. (1999).

\(^\text{15}\)See Tripp et al. (2000).

\(^\text{16}\)These locations also have the virtue of being outside the range of the bulk of any likely adversaries’ probable offensive capabilities.
Third, the United States should seek to maintain and expand its contacts with key security partners worldwide. Although there would appear to be no need to pursue additional formal defense ties as a means for shoring up prospects for access, consistent engagement is of great value. Training exchanges, joint exercises, and temporary deployments help establish relationships—both formal and, perhaps equally important, informal—that can prove of great value in a crisis. And as U.S. deployments for training and exercises often include engineering undertakings—repairing runways and hardstands, improving fuel storage and delivery facilities, and so forth—they offer opportunities to enhance infrastructure as well as relationships. Finally, these interactions serve to foster the strategic transparency that we believe is invaluable for helping shape partners’ perceptions in ways that facilitate future cooperation.
Hedging Against Risk

Insuring against risk is perhaps the most important benefit of a wisely managed portfolio whether the goal is financial or national security. In terms of USAF access, we have two principal suggestions.

First, we suggest that both planning and force packaging may need to become more responsive to possible access constraints. Otherwise, basing and access limitations could impose significant penalties on expeditionary operations.

We have argued, for example, that any one or combination of threats, politics, and infrastructure limitations could compel the USAF to operate from bases located at a considerable distance from the forces’ main area of operations. Our analysis further indicates that the capabilities of the fighter and attack aircraft in the USAF inventory—again, about 90 percent of the war-fighting forces—are subject to fairly rapid and dramatic reduction as these distances grow. Prudent steps to offset this decline in effectiveness, such as planning and preparing to provide extra tankers and aircrew to AETFs deploying under such circumstances, are therefore critical hedges that we encourage the Air Force to consider.

The USAF could also consider developing and acquiring some number of high-speed, long-range strike platforms. An aircraft with an unfueled range of around 2000 nm could, with minimal tanker support, cover most of the world while operating exclusively from the five FSLs we propose, thereby greatly easing the consequences of any future access “lockouts.” A cruise speed of around Mach 2 would be valuable in helping the aircraft sustain a reasonable sortie rate.17 The size of the aircraft—and hence, to first order, its cost—could be kept under control by exploiting the coming generation of small,

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17The F-15E, for example, has an unfueled combat radius of approximately 450 to 650 nm depending on loadout, flight profile, and other factors. These aircraft would require at least four refuelings and probably more than 12 hours to complete a 3000-nm radius mission. An aircraft capable of cruising at Mach 2 between refuelings with a 2000-nm range would require 25 percent fewer refuelings and could complete the mission in just under six hours. This would allow the crew of the Mach 2 aircraft to plan and fly a 3000-nm-radius mission every day compared to every other day at best for the crew of a subsonic attack aircraft such as the F-15E.
smart munitions to minimize the weight of its payload while retaining a bomber-like ability to strike multiple targets on each mission.\textsuperscript{18}

As an alternative to acquiring a fast, long-range strike aircraft, the USAF could opt to deploy a new generation of long-range munitions for carriage by existing and planned strike aircraft. Current inventory weapons such as the joint standoff weapon (JSOW) and the conventional air-launched cruise missile (CALCM) are relatively few in number and suffer from significant operational limitations.\textsuperscript{19} The joint air-to-surface standoff missile (JASSM) promises a range “over 200” nautical miles, but at a fairly high price tag.\textsuperscript{20} Further, current plans are for the JASSM to be carried only by heavy bombers and the F-16. Building even more range into weapons employable by more of the current and future fighter force and procuring them in ade-

\textsuperscript{18}There is a vicious circle to supersonic aircraft design. As the vehicle enters the transonic regime, drag increases immensely and remains high at supersonic speeds owing to the formation of shock waves. Minimizing supersonic drag drives designers to integrate low-diameter engines (turbojets or low-bypass turbofans) rather than the much more fuel efficient high-bypass turbofans. Less efficient engines require additional fuel, which in turn requires additional aircraft structure, which creates extra drag, which demands additional power, and so on. Resolving this cycle of increasing demands for a supersonic bomber has always resulted in a relatively large aircraft for a given payload.

By using munitions such as the 250-lb “small diameter bomb” (SDB), however, the designers of our proposed attack platform could get on the virtuous side of this circle. Trading a 2000-lb weapon for a 250-lb one would actually decrease aircraft gross weight by much more than 1750 lb as the power, fuel, and structure needed to push the big bomb through the “sound barrier” would thereby be shed.

The B-2 carries 16 JDAMs, each weighing a ton and each able to attack a single target. A future “light bomber” could carry weapons weighing an eighth as much as the SDB so that a total payload of only 3000 to 4000 lb could enable strikes on eight to twelve targets per sortie. Losing those 29,000 lb of payload would mean that a much smaller—and cheaper—aerial could be built than would otherwise be required. For example, preliminary calculations suggest that a Mach 2 supercruise aircraft with a 2000-nm range and a 2500-lb payload—enough to deliver SDBs onto eight or ten targets per sortie—would weigh somewhere between 33,000 and 55,000 lb empty weight. This would put it between an F-15 and an F-111 in size.

\textsuperscript{19}The JSOW, for example, is a fairly short-ranged (12–40 nm depending on launch altitude) glide bomb. The CALCM has long range and a powerful warhead, but stockpiles are small and it can be launched only from B-52s. JSOW range from the Raytheon Web site, http://www.raytheon.com/es/esproducts/dssjsow/dssjsow.htm, dated August 16, 2000.

\textsuperscript{20}JASSMs are expected to cost about $327,000 each: the USAF is planning on buying some 2400. Range figure from Lockheed-Martin, n.d.; cost estimate from U.S. General Accounting Office, 2000; quantity from U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996.
quate numbers could make a major contribution to easing the operational burdens that could arise from access difficulties.

**Exploiting Opportunity**

A third element of our proposed portfolio is a pair of steps intended to enable the USAF to take advantage of opportunities to significantly improve its access prospects. Investments in these areas are seed money from which little immediate return is necessarily expected but a longer-term bonanza is possible.

We described the first component, “rent-a-rock,” earlier. We cannot point to a host country here or there that we believe is primed to lease the United States a chunk of real estate to serve as a military outpost. However, the upside, if such an arrangement could be negotiated (and the construction of the base financed), would potentially be considerable. We suggest that the USAF survey one or more key areas of interest—perhaps starting in the Western Pacific—to see if candidate “rocks” can be identified. If so, some thinking should be done on what kinds of facilities might be called for, how they might be built, and what cost estimates might be developed. Then, it will be prepared should the theoretical possibility of such a deal be transformed into a real opportunity.

Second, the rapid pace of geopolitical change over the past ten years may have created yet-unappreciated opportunities to engage new partners as possible access sites. The countries of Central Asia, for example, have already demonstrated an interest in closer ties with the United States; in case of a crisis involving China or even Iran, Kazakhstan and its neighbors could have great utility as hosts for USAF forces. Similarly, Mongolia, Malaysia, and even Vietnam could help support U.S. actions in Asia, while Israel and the former Soviet republics in the Caucasus could be useful in an SWA contingency.

**Areas of Immediate Concern**

As a final piece to our portfolio puzzle, we would like to highlight two regions where we believe current access arrangements are insufficient and the risk of being called to action is high. Both immediate
and longer-term ameliorative steps may be needed to shore up the USAF position in SWA and much of Asia.

In Southwest Asia, the problem is driven by the seeming impossibility of gaining firm commitments from America’s regional friends. We see little prospect of this changing in the immediate future; indeed, as the 1991 Gulf War fades into ever more distant memory, pressures may begin to grow in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to impose further limits on U.S. presence and access on the Arabian peninsula.

In the near term, we believe that flexible planning will be critical to ensuring the USAF’s ability to effectively fly and fight in the Persian Gulf. Enabling deploying forces to maintain OPTEMPO from non-optimal basing locations could be vitally important in this region. Looking out further, broadening the list of possible strategic partners is advisable, with Israel being a prime candidate should a broad peace accord permit its “normalization” in the region.

The Pacific Rim, meanwhile, offers increasing challenges the further south one casts one’s eyes. The current USAF basing posture is wholly inadequate to support high-intensity combat operations anywhere much beyond the Korean peninsula. Especially problematic is the lack of bases available in the vicinity of the Taiwan Strait. Renewed access to bases in the northern Philippines could be immensely helpful here, especially if confidence were high that these bases could be used if a fight erupted between the mainland and Taiwan. Such political concerns—which are rife with regard to Taiwan throughout the region—would make “rent-a-rock” a particularly attractive option here.

Still further south, the United States may want to consider taking steps to improve its access prospects by increasing the level and extent of its presence in Singapore. The United States should seek to build further on its excellent relations with Thailand and continue to assess Malaysia as an option for the future, depending in large part on future political developments. Vietnam may also be a longer-term alternative.

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21A discussion of some Asian basing issues can be found in Khalilzad et al. (2001).
In addition, an increased number of longer-range combat platforms (or short-legged platforms with long-range munitions) would be useful in both the Gulf and East Asia.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

There may come a time when many of the access issues we have discussed are no longer of concern. One can imagine, for example, a future in which space-based surveillance and strike systems enable responsive strikes on any target, moving or stationary, anywhere in the world.\(^{22}\) In that tomorrow, the need to deploy combat aircraft—and thousands of airmen and airwomen—to distant shores to fight their nation’s wars will have ended, and much of what is covered in this report will be of little more than historical interest. However, even come that day of jubilee, we are willing to wager that it will still be difficult to get food, water, and medical care to threatened people in Rwanda or Tierra del Fuego, or to separate warring factions in the Balkans or East Timor. And so long as nations continue to jealously exercise control over their land, air, and water, the Air Force will from time to time come up against difficulties relating to access and basing.

Our research indicates that there is no panacea or “silver bullet” awaiting discovery. Old problems, like the vagaries of international politics, will persist, and new ones—dozens or even hundreds of long-range, accurate missiles aimed at U.S. bases—will emerge. Furthermore, nothing comes free: There are real costs, in terms of both money and opportunity, associated with any course of action the USAF might take to deal with potential problems in this area. This is the bad news.

On the other hand, we do not emerge from our work with nothing but a tale of woe. We believe that the problems we have discussed are manageable and that even those that can’t be foreseen—always the most worrisome—can be minimized through a well-thought-out global access strategy. The strategy we suggest calls for increased flexibility and pays off in enhanced robustness against the in-

\(^{22}\)Please see Preston et al. (2002).
eluctable uncertainty that characterizes this problem. In the final analysis, then, access is not a problem to be solved—it is a portfolio to be managed.