
**TAKING DOWN REGIMES WITH EXTERNAL
MILITARY FORCE**

A final way to remove a hostile government is to overthrow it with external military force. The target country would be invaded and occupied, the old regime and its security structure would be purged, and a new government would be set in place. The ground force component of such an external invasion could be provided by troops from a neighboring country, U.S. ground forces, or a coalition of U.S. and allied forces. Whatever the makeup of the ground force contingents, U.S. air power could be called on to prepare the battlefield for the invasion and to provide support to engaged forces.

**RATIONALE FOR MAINTAINING CAPABILITIES TO TAKE
DOWN ENEMY REGIMES**

When a Takedown May Be Mandatory

A hostile regime may damage or threaten to damage U.S. interests sufficiently to impel U.S. decisionmakers to seek its removal and replacement by external force. During World War II, U.S. forces helped bring about the takedowns of the Axis regimes in Germany, Italy, and Japan. More recently, the United States employed its armed forces to remove hostile regimes in Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989) and to force the abdication of the ruling military junta in Haiti (1994).

In the case of Grenada, the United States invaded to protect the lives of U.S. medical students and to remove a regime that was thought to be providing a base for Soviet-Cuban subversion in the Caribbean, Central America, and Africa. In Panama, the U.S. motives were to protect U.S. citizens, to restore the elected Guillermo Endara gov-

ernment to power, and to bring Noriega to trial in the United States, where he had been indicted for drug trafficking. The United States occupied Haiti in order to return the elected government to power and to alleviate the immediate conditions that had prompted many thousands of Haitians to seek refuge in the United States.

All these post–World War II takedowns were conducted against relatively weak opposing military and security forces, and all were accomplished rapidly with minimal U.S. loss of life. Grenada and Panama, respectively, possessed about 1,500 and 7,000 regular troops, most of whom offered little resistance. Had a forcible entry been necessary in Haiti, U.S. planners expected only limited opposition from Haiti’s 7,600-man army. The armed forces of Grenada, Panama, and Haiti possessed no tanks, no artillery of any significance, and fewer than a dozen APCs apiece. The weakness of the opposition no doubt made it easier for U.S. decisionmakers to order the takedown operations.

However, one can conceive of future circumstances where U.S. decisionmakers might find it necessary to order the U.S. military to conduct or support the takedown of a country possessing sizable, well-armed military forces. The contingencies that might provoke such a response could include situations where a regime:

- Caused large numbers of U.S. and allied casualties in a conflict by employing WMD. In the event U.S. citizens were killed in a WMD attack against the U.S. homeland, there would also be a public outcry for the capture and punishment of the enemy leaders responsible.
- Mounted or abetted repeated terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and facilities. It should be recalled that the specter of continued Libyan-sponsored terrorism once prompted U.S. officials to propose that Egypt invade Libya with U.S. logistical support.¹

¹The invasion scheme, code-named “Flower Rose,” was reportedly proposed to Egypt in mid-1985 by President Reagan’s deputy National Security Adviser, Vice Admiral John Poindexter, and other U.S. officials. Under the plan, the United States was to supply air cover to Egyptian transport aircraft and logistical support to the Egyptian forces. The JCS had little enthusiasm for Flower Rose because they were leery of being drawn into an operation where U.S. forces might have to come to the Egyptians’ rescue. The JCS estimate was that a rescue might require as many as five U.S. divisions.

- Repeated a major act of aggression that the United States had already previously helped repulse. Should North Korea again invade South Korea or Iraq again invade Kuwait, there would be strong public pressure to remove the governments in Pyongyang and Baghdad.²

Advantages of Takedowns

Results May Be More Lasting. A major potential advantage of takedowns is that their results are likely to be more lasting than will be the case with attacks that only eliminate one or more of a regime's top leaders. Coups and direct attacks may bring to power leaders cut in the same mold as their predecessors and essentially beholden to the same power bases. By contrast, takedowns typically result in the elimination or fundamental reform of the military and security services that maintained the previous regime in power. They also typically involve popular elections to select new governing bodies and national leadership.

Considerations such as these led the U.S. officials in October 1989 to change the existing contingency plan for Panama so as to "include taking out the entire PDF" along with the removal of Noriega.³ As GEN Max Thurman described the options to GEN Colin Powell, going after Noriega alone was unlikely to be sufficient as the PDF was likely to perpetuate itself in power. In Thurman's view, it was "better to take it all down."⁴

Egypt's president, Hosni Mubarak, rejected the plan in part because he did not believe the United States could "keep such a sensitive undertaking secret." See Martin and Walcott (1988), pp. 264–266.

²American and South Korean military commanders reportedly plan "not only to repel any possible North Korean invasion but to respond by demolishing North Korea's armed forces and capturing Pyongyang, the capital." See Richard Halloran, "S. Korea, U.S. Draft Deadly Response Plan: If North Invades, Destruction Is Goal," *Washington Times*, November 19, 1998.

³See Powell (1995), p. 420.

⁴See GEN Maxell Thurman, former Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Southern Command, USAWC/USAMHI Senior Officer Oral History interview transcript, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., Project No. 1992-1, 1992, p. 344. LTG Carl W. Stiner, who commanded the takedown in Panama, also believed there was "a requirement to go for the head of the snake at the same time you go for his power base: i.e., his armed forces." See Stiner (1990), p. 3.

Takedowns may also be required to ensure a fundamental and lasting change in a nation's policy. The Allies' insistence on the unconditional surrender, occupation, and reform of Germany and Japan in World War II was intended to prevent a repetition of the resurgence of militarism and aggression that followed the negotiated end to World War I. President Roosevelt saw unconditional surrender as a means to rid the German people "once and for all of Nazism and Prussian militarism and the fantastic and disastrous notion that they constitute the 'Master Race.'"⁵ British Prime Minister Winston Churchill put it more broadly:

We, the United Nations, demand from the Nazi, Fascist, and Japanese tyrannies unconditional surrender. By this we mean that their willpower to resist must be completely broken, and that they must yield themselves absolutely to our justice and mercy. It also means that we must take all those far-sighted measures which are necessary to prevent the world from being again convulsed, wrecked, and blackened by their calculated plots and ferocious aggressions.⁶

In the context of the present day, there is reason to question whether Saddam's removal from power would necessarily lead to the long-term changes in Iraqi policy the United States and its allies desired. Iraq's interest in absorbing Kuwait predates Saddam's rise to power, having become openly manifest in December 1961, when the Iraqi regime of Brigadier General Kassim threatened to annex the country.⁷

Iraq's determination to acquire WMD similarly appears to reflect more than a personal idiosyncrasy of Saddam Hussein. There is reason to believe that important elements of the Iraqi security establishment see WMD as a necessary "equalizer" to guard Iraqi national security against formidable neighbors such as Iran, Turkey, Syria,

⁵See Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Hinge of Fate*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950, p. 688. For a discussion of the background and military effects of unconditional surrender in World War II, see Anne Armstrong, *Unconditional Surrender*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1961, pp. 5–58, 109–167.

⁶Churchill (1950), p. 688.

⁷In December 1961, Britain dispatched naval reinforcements to the Persian Gulf to deter Kassim from carrying out his threat to annex Kuwait.

and Israel. Moreover, most of Iraq's potential opponents already possess WMD. The United States and Israel are already nuclear powers, and Iran is working hard to become one. Saddam may believe that the retention of WMD is vital to maintain the loyalty of his key military followers. This would help explain why retaining WMD has taken precedence for Saddam over having the UN Security Council's embargo lifted even though that embargo has cost Iraq more than \$120 billion in oil revenues since the end of the Gulf War. Any successor to Saddam who is still beholden to the same Iraqi security establishment might be equally reluctant to give up Iraq's WMD capabilities.⁸

Takedowns May Have Greater Deterrent and Coercive Potential. For leaders of enemy states, the threat of overthrow and punishment by external military forces may have a greater deterrent and coercive effect than the threat of death or removal by other means. As previously noted, such leaders as Saddam and Qaddafi are likely to believe that they can evade direct attacks and can successfully put down coups. The prospect of an invasion and occupation by an external military power, however, may appear to these leaders to be a more serious and credible threat—so long as they believed that the external power possessed the military capability, political will, and freedom of action to take down their regimes. It should be recalled that it was the perceived threat of a possible military invasion by the United States that caused Guatemalan army leaders in 1954 to force the ouster of the Arbenz government.⁹ The Gulf War, the Bosnian conflict, and the invasion of Grenada also provide examples of the deterrent and coercive potential of takedown threats.

Threat to March on Baghdad. The United States used the threat of a takedown to deter Saddam's use of WMD during the Gulf War. In a meeting with Tariq Aziz on January 9, 1991, Secretary of State Baker warned the Iraqi foreign minister:

If the conflict involves your use of chemical or biological weapons against our forces, the American people will demand vengeance. We have the means to exact it. With regard to this part of my pre-

⁸For a discussion of why such weapons are important to Iraq's political and military establishments, see Baram (1998), pp. 80–83.

⁹See above, p. 53.

sentation, this is not a threat, it is a promise. If there is any use of weapons like that, our objective won't just be the liberation of Kuwait, but the elimination of the current Iraqi regime, and anyone responsible for using those weapons would be held accountable.¹⁰

This warning was reiterated on February 20 by an unnamed senior U.S. official who declared that Iraq's use of chemical weapons would cross a

red line beyond which all bets are off. . . . It's a red line that would compel the Coalition to change its own objectives—adopting, for instance, a march on Baghdad to find Saddam and eliminate his regime.

Whereas the Bush administration official spoke of a war crimes trial for the Iraqi leader, an unnamed senior Arab official warned of drumhead justice: "We'll use the unimaginable short of nuclear weapons" and will go to Baghdad "to find Saddam and kill him."¹¹

While warnings of a possible march on Baghdad no doubt helped stay Saddam's hand with respect to the use of WMD, the most persuasive deterrent was the Iraqi expectation that the United States would employ nuclear weapons in the event that chemical or biological weapons were used against Coalition forces. Even though they never explicitly threatened the use of nuclear weapons, American field commanders made a concerted effort to stimulate Iraqi fears about possible nuclear retaliation. Without explicitly mentioning nuclear weapons during his meeting with Aziz, Baker "purposely left the impression that the use of chemical or biological agents by Iraq could invite tactical nuclear retaliation." However, these implied threats of nuclear retaliation were a bluff in that President Bush had already decided at Camp David in December 1990 that U.S. forces would not retaliate with nuclear or chemical weapons if the Iraqis attacked with WMD. According to Secretary Baker, President Bush believed that "the best deterrent of the use of weapons of mass

¹⁰Baker (1995), p. 359.

¹¹Melissa Healy, "Chemical Attack Would Escalate Allied Retaliation," *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1991, p. A1.

destruction by Iraq would be a threat to go after the Ba'ath regime itself."¹²

Toward the end of the Gulf War when Coalition forces entered Iraq, the possibility of a takedown greatly worried Saddam. At this point, Iraqi forces were so demoralized and weakened by the Coalition air campaign that they offered little concerted resistance to the Coalition ground offensive. According to General Wafic Al Samarraï, the former head of Iraqi military intelligence who met with Saddam after the 100-hour Coalition ground campaign was under way, the Iraqi leader became "quite desperate and frightened" at the Coalition advance, thinking "that his downfall was imminent." He asked General Samarraï whether he thought the allies would come as far as Baghdad. When Saddam subsequently learned that President Bush had called for a cease-fire, Saddam's morale rose from "zero to 100."¹³ However, according to General Samarraï, Saddam—still worried about a resumption of the Coalition advance—personally ordered the Iraqi generals he sent to Safwan to negotiate the terms of the cease-fire with General Schwarzkopf and Saudi General Khaled bin Sultan to accommodate Coalition demands:

Saddam wanted to consolidate the cease-fire in any way he could and he ordered his officers to give any information they knew about the minefields and the prisoners of war. He didn't want to give the West any excuse to resume fighting. He wanted to sign a cease-fire agreement at any price.¹⁴

1995 Bombing in Bosnia. The coercive potential of air operations that might weaken a hostile actor's defenses against an eventual takedown was manifest by the Bosnian Serb reaction to the NATO bombing in Bosnia-Herzegovina in September 1995. The immediate trigger for the bombing was the Bosnian Serb mortaring of a market in Sarajevo on August 28, 1995, that killed 37 people. To force Bosnian Serb leaders to pull their heavy weapons out of the Sarajevo weapons' exclusion zone and to cease firing on Bosnian Muslim positions in the capital city, the United States and other NATO allies

¹²See Baker (1995), p. 359, and Ed Offley, "N-Threat 'Deterred Saddam,'" *Seattle Post Intelligence*, May 17, 1991, p. 1.

¹³*Frontline* interview with General Samarraï ("The Gulf War," 1997).

¹⁴*Frontline* interview with General Samarraï ("The Gulf War," 1997).

launched sustained air attacks (Operation Deliberate Force) against a number of Bosnian Serb strategic targets, including command-and-control centers, air defense facilities, ammunition dumps, truck parks, and bridges.

By the time these air attacks were launched, Croat and Bosnian Muslim forces had already made considerable headway in retaking territory previously seized by the Bosnian Serbs and were advancing on other key Bosnian Serb positions. While the air attacks were in no way collusive or coordinated with these Croat and Bosnian Muslim ground offensives, they nevertheless threatened to significantly reduce Bosnian Serb combat power. The attacks aimed to erode the military capabilities that had previously made the outnumbered Bosnian Serb forces “dominant”: the command-and-control network, lines of communication, and scattered ammunition dumps and vehicle parks that allowed the Bosnian Serbs to redeploy their combat forces “quickly to where they were needed.”¹⁵ As one USAF officer put it:

Just as the Bosnian Serbs were facing their greatest military challenge on the ground, the air campaign drastically undermined their ability to command, supply, and move their forces. The combination of effects placed them in a much more immediate danger of military collapse than would have the land or air offensives separately.¹⁶

According to the account of U.S. negotiator Richard Holbrooke, the Bosnian Serbs were stunned by the bombing and clearly viewed it as air support to their battlefield foes. When the Croats captured the key town of Donji Vakuf, thereby opening a large area of western Bosnia to further Croat advances, Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic “charged that the NATO air strikes had assisted the offensive.” This charge was echoed at the various meetings Holbrooke had with the Serb leadership. The Bosnian Serb military commander, General Ratko Mladic, suddenly erupted at one point in a meet-

¹⁵See the statements of General Michael E. Ryan—then the commander of NATO southern air forces who oversaw Deliberate Force—in John A. Tirpak, “Deliberate Force,” *Air Force*, Vol. 80, No. 10, October 1997.

¹⁶Robert C. Owen, (Col, USAF), “The Balkans Air Campaign Study: Part 2,” *Airpower Journal*, No. 3, Fall 1997.

ing with Holbrooke and charged that NATO was “supporting the regular Croatian Army inside our nation.”¹⁷ Serb President Slobodan Milosevic was even more specific in another meeting, claiming that NATO aircraft were “giving close air support to the Muslims and Croats.”¹⁸

NATO’s air attacks—and the prospect that further attacks might follow—not only led the Bosnian Serb leaders to accede to NATO demands relating to Sarajevo but also encouraged them to propose a general cease-fire and to enter into the negotiating process that led to the Dayton Accords. The bombing, combined with the concurrent victories of the Croat and Bosnian Muslim ground forces, the U.S. diplomatic initiatives, and “Serbia’s political pressure on its Bosnian Serb cousins,” persuaded the Bosnian Serb leaders to make significant concessions.¹⁹

The Ripple Effects of Grenada. The potential coercive effect of take-downs has also been manifest in the reaction of enemy governments to actual U.S. takedowns. The October 1983 U.S. invasion of Grenada, which demonstrated both the United States’ resolve to defend its interests and Cuba’s inability to defend its clients, produced immediate policy changes in Surinam and Nicaragua. The Surinam leader, Desi Bouterse, who had appeared to be moving his country “on a forced march toward Cuban-style communism,” abruptly changed course a few days after the Grenada operation. Apparently fearing that his regime might also become a target of U.S. takedown, Bouterse abruptly expelled the large Cuban contingent in Surinam and “all but broke diplomatic relations with Cuba.”²⁰

¹⁷See Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York: Random House, 1998, pp. 144, 150.

¹⁸Holbrooke (1998), p. 147.

¹⁹Every diplomat and senior commander interviewed in one study of Deliberate Force “believed that the air campaign distinctly affected the moral resistance of the Serb leaders and, consequently, the pace of negotiations.” Holbrooke perceived that the bombing caused the Serbian diplomatic resistance to weaken rapidly, “to the verge of collapse.” See Owen (1997).

²⁰See Shultz (1993), pp. 393, 344. The Reagan administration had become so concerned that Surinam might evolve into the first communist state on the mainland of South America, that it actively explored different options for ousting the Bouterse regime by covert means. None of the schemes—including a CIA proposal that a force of 50 to 175 South Koreans be employed to overthrow the regime—proved practical.

Nicaragua also made immediate overtures to reduce tensions with the United States. Thomas Borge, the Sandinista interior minister, said he was certain that the United States and Nicaragua could settle their differences without much trouble and suggested that the two countries should talk as soon as possible.²¹ Borge also asked U.S. ambassador Anthony Quainton to let him know if the United States ever wanted to evacuate Americans from Nicaragua, as he would facilitate their departure.²² The Sandinistas also went out of their way to reassure the United States that they would not permit the Soviets to establish bases on Nicaraguan soil.²³

Frank McNeil, who was a U.S. State Department Latin America specialist at the time, believed that the takedown of Grenada had “created a magnificent opportunity for a durable peace in Central America”:

Managua feared President Reagan would invade them next, and gave every appearance of being prepared to go to considerable lengths to achieve settlement.²⁴

Secretary of State Shultz reported that he and the president “stewed in frustration” at the U.S. inability to produce effective counteraction against a government that was “virtually defenseless.” Shultz (1993), pp. 292–297.

²¹Frank McNeil, *War and Peace in Central America*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988, p. 175.

²²Shultz (1993), p. 344.

²³McNeil (1988), p. 175. William LeoGrande asserts that the U.S. invasion of Grenada caused the Sandinistas to take other unilateral steps as well:

They asked a large number of Salvadoran revolutionary leaders who had been living in Nicaragua to leave the country, and they sent home approximately a thousand Cubans, most of them civilians. Internally, the Sandinistas eased press censorship, opened a new dialogue with the Church hierarchy, released some 300 Miskito Indians imprisoned for political reasons, and offered an amnesty to the Contras including all but their leadership. Privately, the Sandinistas communicated to Washington that they had slowed the flow of material moving through Nicaraguan territory to Salvadoran guerrillas and were seeking a reciprocal gesture from the United States.

See William M. LeoGrande, “Rollback or Containment? The United States, Nicaragua, and the Search for Peace in Central America,” *International Security*, Fall 1986, pp. 102–103.

²⁴McNeil goes on to report that by the time the Reagan administration got around to talks with Nicaragua in 1984, “Managua had recovered its confidence as a result of the administration fiasco in mining Nicaraguan harbors and the consequent congres-

POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS ON CONDUCTING TAKEDOWNS

Concerns About U.S. Casualties

American decisionmakers may find it too difficult or costly to conduct a takedown of an enemy regime possessing substantial military forces. The U.S. domestic support for a takedown may be marginal; as a consequence, decisionmakers may be reluctant to commit the necessary forces and absorb the casualties that might result from such an operation. An invasion and occupation of Iraq, for example, with its 380,000-man armed forces and several thousand armored vehicles, would prove far more testing for U.S. forces than were the takedowns of Grenada, Panama, and Haiti.

Should the hostile regime possess biological weapons or, even more threatening, nuclear weapons, and an effective means of delivering them, the potential costs of a takedown could increase significantly. American decisionmakers might hesitate to back the leaders of such a regime into a corner where, facing capture and execution, they might conclude that they had nothing more to lose and order the use of the weapons.

Saddam's former head of military intelligence, General Samarrai, opined that Saddam might use WMD in a conflict if he thought he was about to die: "Perhaps he would say to himself that he will be immortalized in history textbooks."²⁵ Iraqi officers interrogated by officials of the UN Special Commission in Baghdad reported that Saddam had ordered the commanders of Iraq's missile batteries armed with WMD to launch their missiles in the event that communications with Baghdad were severed, as a result either of a nuclear attack or of allied ground attacks on the capital city.²⁶

Proximate Bases May Not Be Available

Another factor that might discourage decisionmakers from pursuing a takedown in some contingencies would be the absence of nearby

sional termination of assistance to the Contras." However, McNeil still believed the Sandinistas were ready to "deal on security issues." McNeil (1988), p. 175.

²⁵*Frontline* interview with General Samarrai ("The Gulf War," 1997).

²⁶Baram (1998), p. 81.

bases from which to conduct and support an invasion. America's allies in the region might not see the need or justification for a take-down or might be reluctant to allow their territory to be used, because they feared WMD retaliatory attacks. As a consequence, U.S. assault forces might face unacceptably high casualties if an attempt were made to conduct an opposed landing without adequate air support and aerial preparation of the battlefield.

Concerns About Longer-Term Military, Political, and Economic Costs

Decisionmakers might also worry about longer-term costs. The Vietnam experience has made U.S. leaders leery of becoming involved in situations where U.S. forces might become bogged down in protracted guerrilla warfare. Thus, the prospect that resistance might continue against American occupation forces could help deter U.S. intervention. U.S. leaders might also be loath to accept the long-term obligations and costs of an occupying power. Here, U.S. leaders might be mindful of the manpower costs associated with the protracted U.S. occupations of Germany and Japan after World War II.²⁷ Finally, U.S. leaders might be concerned that international support and sanction for a takedown would be lacking.

Why U.S. Forces Did Not Go to Baghdad

It will be recalled that many of the above concerns inhibited the United States from marching on Baghdad at the end of the Gulf War.²⁸ One reason U.S. decisionmakers did not occupy all of Iraq

²⁷The U.S. Army-administered military government in Germany lasted some four years, and the occupation ten years. Whereas the United States had 61 divisions and 1,622,000 men in Germany on V-E Day, the occupying force had shrunk to some 200,000 troops before the end of 1946. At its peak, the U.S. occupation force in Japan numbered around 450,000 but fell to 200,000 by February 1946. Throughout the six and one-half years of the U.S. occupation, the Army maintained an average of slightly more than 100,000 troops on duty in Japan. See Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944–1946*, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990, pp. 320, 423, and John Curtis Perry, *Beneath the Eagle's Wings: Americans in Occupied Japan*, New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1980, pp. 48, 168.

²⁸The following discussion draws upon Stephen T. Hosmer, *Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Persian Gulf War*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MR-334-AF, 1994 pp. 22–23. Government publication, not for public release.,

and remove Saddam from power is that this would have exceeded the objectives mandated in UN Security Council Resolutions 660 and 678 to secure the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and “restore international peace and security in the area.”²⁹ But even in the unlikely event that the Security Council had sanctioned a redefined mission to occupy Iraq and capture Saddam, U.S. and other Coalition leaders might still have been reluctant to commit their forces to the pursuit of such expanded objectives.

In General Schwarzkopf’s view, a move on Baghdad would have alienated the Arab people and fractured the Coalition, as none of the Arab members would have participated in such an operation. Among the Coalition partners, only the United Kingdom might have agreed to join the United States in capturing Baghdad. Had this occurred, America and Britain would have been considered occupying powers under the provisions of the Geneva and Hague conventions and would have been responsible for restoring and maintaining an Iraqi government and for providing basic services for the Iraqi people. In Schwarzkopf’s view, any occupation would have proved protracted: “Had we taken all of Iraq, we would have been like the dinosaur in the tar pit—we would still be there.”³⁰

The commander of the United Kingdom’s forces in the Gulf War, General Sir Peter de la Billiere, estimated that Coalition forces could have reached Baghdad in another 36 hours of campaigning and would probably have encountered little resistance on the way. But he also thought it would have been a mistake to have attempted to do so: By pressing on to Baghdad, the Coalition “would have achieved nothing except to create even wider problems.” Coalition troops would have appeared as “foreign invaders of Iraq,” and the whole of the Gulf War would have come to be seen “purely as an operation to further Western interests in the Middle East.”³¹

In May 1992, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney offered several reasons for not having gone to Baghdad. Running Saddam to

²⁹For the relevant Security Council resolutions, see U.S. News & World Report, *Triumph Without Victory*, New York: Times Books, 1992, pp. 416, 429–430.

³⁰Schwarzkopf (1992), pp. 497–498.

³¹General Sir Peter de la Billiere, *Storm Command: A Personal Account of the Gulf War*, London: HarperCollins, 1992, pp. 304–305.

ground, he said, could have taken a long time, involved large U.S. forces, cost additional American lives, and entangled the United States in Iraqi internal politics:

Once we had rounded up Saddam, then the question is what do you do. . . . You'd have to put some kind of a government in place, and then the question comes is it going to be a Shia government or a Kurdish government. Or maybe a Sunni government, or maybe it ought to be based on the old Baathist party regime or some combination thereof. How long is that government going to be able to stay in power without U.S. military support to keep it there. . . . I would guess if we'd have gone to Baghdad I'd still have forces in Iraq today. I don't know how we would have let go of that tar baby once we grabbed hold of it.³²

President Bush and General Brent Scowcroft not only shared these concerns but also saw a broader strategic cost to U.S. national security policy in a march on Baghdad:

[W]e had been self-consciously trying to set a pattern for handling aggression in the post-Cold War world. Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations' mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of the international response to oppression that we hoped to establish.³³

American leaders saw no real need to go to Baghdad because they believed Saddam would shortly be overthrown anyway as a result of the disastrous defeat Iraq had suffered. According to Richard Haass, a former member of the Bush administration's National Security Council staff, senior officials expected surviving Iraqi troops to return home and "together with their fellow citizens, rise up against the government of Saddam Hussein."³⁴

³²Richard Cheney, Address to a National Press Club Luncheon, transcript, Washington, D.C., Reuters, May 20, 1992.

³³Bush and Scowcroft (1998), p. 489.

³⁴Richard N. Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War Period*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994, p. 35.

PREREQUISITES OF EFFECTIVE AIR SUPPORT TO EXTERNAL OVERTHROW

A Sufficient Triggering Event

Because of the military, economic, and diplomatic costs that are likely to attend a takedown, U.S. decisionmakers will require one or more triggering events to mobilize U.S. domestic and international support for an invasion and occupation. In the event of a takedown against a state with large and well-trained military forces, whose defeat might require time and cost substantial U.S. casualties, the triggering event would also have to be of great significance: one that would be perceived by the American public as causing grave damage to vital U.S. interests.

A Takedown by a Third Country Must Serve U.S. Interests

For the United States to support a takedown of a enemy state by third-country forces, two conditions would need to be met: (1) the third country would require the will and capability (if provided U.S. air support) to invade and occupy the enemy country successfully, and (2) the United States would have to be content to see that happen. It is obvious, for example, that the United States would not consider abetting or sanctioning military attacks from Iraq's neighbors that might fragment Iraq and weaken its potential as a barrier to Iranian aggression as being in the strategic interests of the United States.

Sufficient Capability to Adequately Prepare the Battlefield

Since the minimization of friendly casualties is likely to be essential to sustaining public support for a takedown, the United States will require the capability to gain air supremacy and prepare the battlefield through aerial attack so that organized opposition to the invasion and occupation will be limited and short lived. This will require proximate bases or long-range strike capabilities and sufficient aircraft, missiles, and munitions to destroy enemy C³, armor, artillery, and fixed defenses and to decisively erode the enemy's will to fight.³⁵

³⁵To ensure sufficient psychological damage to enemy morale, enemy troops may have to be kept under attack or the threat of attack 24 hours a day for several weeks.

To conduct sustained air operations in high-threat air-defense environments, the United States will need to maintain a robust force of penetrating bombers and other attack aircraft and a large inventory of precision-guided standoff weapons.

Robust Defenses Against Possible WMD Attacks

If a hostile regime possessed nuclear or biological weapons and the means for their effective delivery, American decisionmakers might be reluctant to attempt to pursue a takedown unless they have high confidence that U.S. forces could deter or successfully defeat attacks by these weapons. The United States will also need to be able to assure the allies providing the bases for or contributing troops to the operation that the capability exists—through a combination of preventive strikes and active and passive defenses—to deter or defeat WMD attacks against their territory and forces. Among other implications, this suggests the need for robust defenses—including near-leakproof ballistic and cruise missile defenses—against all likely delivery modes.³⁶

Adequate Airlift and Air Support for Ground Forces

Finally, the United States would require the capability to provide necessary C³I, airlift, interdiction, and close support to attacking ground forces. If third-country troops were involved, U.S. commanders and air units would need to be able to communicate and interact closely on the battlefield with such forces.

ENHANCING THE THREAT OF EXTERNAL OVERTHROW

During conflict, allied statements and military operations might be orchestrated to convince enemy leaders that their regime is likely to be ousted by U.S. or other external forces unless the leaders accede to the policy changes the United States demanded. Enemy leaders are likely to give credence to the threat of a possible external overthrow if the following apply:

The Coalition air campaign that so demoralized Iraqi troops in the KTO during the Gulf War lasted 38 days. See Hosmer (1996), pp. 141–205.

³⁶Hosmer (1994), p. 36.

- Statements of war aims allow for the possible total defeat and occupation of the enemy if an acceptable settlement cannot be rapidly achieved. At a minimum, senior allied officials must avoid categorical statements denying an intention to remove an enemy government forcibly.³⁷
- Allied air, ground, and naval deployments and military operations against enemy deployed forces are consistent with an ultimate objective of achieving a total military victory and occupying the enemy's homeland. At a minimum, there should be a sustained air campaign to prepare the battlefield for a later ground invasion.
- The pattern of air operations against strategic targets in the enemy's rear areas is also consistent with a possible march on the enemy's capital and a subsequent military occupation.³⁸

In situations in which U.S. ground forces do not become involved in the fighting and an immediate invasion of the enemy's homeland by other friendly forces is as yet militarily infeasible, the United States might seek to destroy sufficient enemy military power to weaken its capability to defend its territory from a future invasion by one or more of its neighbors or by a rebel force. In this coercive variant, air attacks would be employed to systematically reduce the enemy's armor, artillery, and aircraft inventories, munition stockpiles, and war production and repair facilities.³⁹

The aim would be to persuade the enemy government and its military leaders that the local balance of military forces was likely to turn decisively against their country unless they acceded to U.S. demands. To successfully disarm an opponent, the U.S. air attacks might have to be prolonged and intensive, and the operations would require sus-

³⁷In some past conflicts, U.S. decisionmakers have reduced their potential leverage on an enemy regime by attempting to reassure enemy leaders about the limited and benign objectives of the U.S. military involvement. One such case was the Vietnam War, when the Johnson administration went out of its way (both publicly and privately) to assure the North Vietnamese and their Chinese and Soviet allies that the United States would not attempt to overthrow the Hanoi regime or to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of North Vietnam. See Hosmer (1987), p. 28.

³⁸Hosmer (1996), pp. 79–80.

³⁹Hosmer (1996), p. 80.

tained U.S. domestic support. The U.S. forces would also require the sensors, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, target processing and dynamic control measures, weapon systems, and concepts of operation that would enable them to effectively attack enemy armored and artillery forces when such forces were widely dispersed, hidden under foliage, and located in hardened bunkers or civilian settings. The potential coercive effects of the attacks would, of course, be substantially reduced if the enemy expected to receive major military resupply from an outside power.⁴⁰ It would also be necessary that the target of the attack be adjoined by one or more neighbors or rebel groups with both the incentive and potential military capability to conduct an invasion.⁴¹

⁴⁰Hosmer (1996), p. 80.

⁴¹Part of the coercive strategy pursued against Serbia from April to June 1999 had a rationale similar to that suggested above. Defense Secretary William S. Cohen and General Henry H. Shelton, Chairman JCS, told Congress on April 15 that NATO could effect the removal of Serb forces from Kosovo by degrading the Serbian military to the point where a “resurgent” Kosovo Albanian movement—the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA—or UCK, as it is known in Yugoslavia)—would have the “wherewithal” to start pushing the Serb forces out of Kosovo. General Shelton argued that the bombing could produce one of two outcomes:

One is that Milosevic would decide that there’s got to be a better way, i.e., that he would like to either start negotiating or settle with NATO; or until such time as the balance of power shifts between the uniform members of the Serbs and the KLA or UCK, that he sees his resources being diminished, his military being decimated or degraded to the point that the UCK is starting to have the wherewithal to move against him and to basically start pushing him out of Kosovo.

Secretary Cohen and General Shelton presented their views in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 15, 1999. See Bill Gertz, “Cohen, Shelton See Victory in Kosovo Without a Treaty: Bombing Can Reduce Enemy Power to That of KLA,” *Washington Times*, April 16, 1999, p. A11. NATO’s attempts to “systematically” and “progressively” destroy Milosevic’s military forces and thereby pressure him to come to terms proved largely unsuccessful. The Serbs were able to preserve intact the vast bulk of their ground forces by dispersing them before the NATO bombing began and by making extensive use of concealment, camouflage, and hardened underground shelters. The Serb forces in Kosovo remained far stronger than their KLA antagonists and continued to dominate the battlefield throughout the course of the conflict. See Hosmer (2001), pp. 71–82.