

# ON TARGETING THE **ACHILLES HEEL** OF WESTERN ECONOMIES

■ Hamza Khalid



**F**rom the coasts of Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco facing the Atlantic to Indonesia at the junction of the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, the Muslim world sits astride some of the most strategic sea passages of the world. Five of the world's most strategic naval chokepoints<sup>1</sup> are located within the Muslim world, while the sixth, the Strait of Gibraltar, which connects the Mediterranean with the Atlantic, lies between Muslim Morocco and Spain.

Throughout history, the sea has been a relatively anarchic domain (compared to land); even today, it is barely policed. Approximately 80% of the world's traded cargo is

transported by sea<sup>2</sup>; while 60% of the world's oil is transported by a few thousand slow-moving tankers<sup>3</sup> that are cumbersome to navigate and difficult to protect. Transporting oil from refineries to the service station depends on a complex system involving oil terminals, pipelines, oil tankers and trucks. The energy umbilical cord which sustains western economies stretches across hundreds of miles of pipelines and sea lanes. It represents the Achilles heel not just of the energy market, but also of western economies dependant on oil from the Muslim world. A sustained disruption in this supply system would not only increase insurance costs for international shipping, but also affect the price of oil globally, making the theft of our petroleum resources an expensive venture for the West.

1 In military strategy, a chokepoint is a narrow geographical feature, either on land (such as a valley, defile or a bridge) or at sea (such as a strait) through which an armed force is forced to pass with a narrow front, thereby greatly reducing its combat power and allowing a numerically inferior defender to successfully defend its position, or even annihilate an attacker unable to bring his superior numbers to bear.

2 Anne Korin, Gal Luft, Terrorism Goes to Sea, Foreign Affairs, Nov/Dec 2004 ([www.cfr.org/world/terrorism-goes-to-sea/p7545](http://www.cfr.org/world/terrorism-goes-to-sea/p7545))

3 World Oil Transit Chokepoints, US Energy Information Administration ([www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/World-Oil-Transit-Chokepoints/wotc.pdf](http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/World-Oil-Transit-Chokepoints/wotc.pdf))



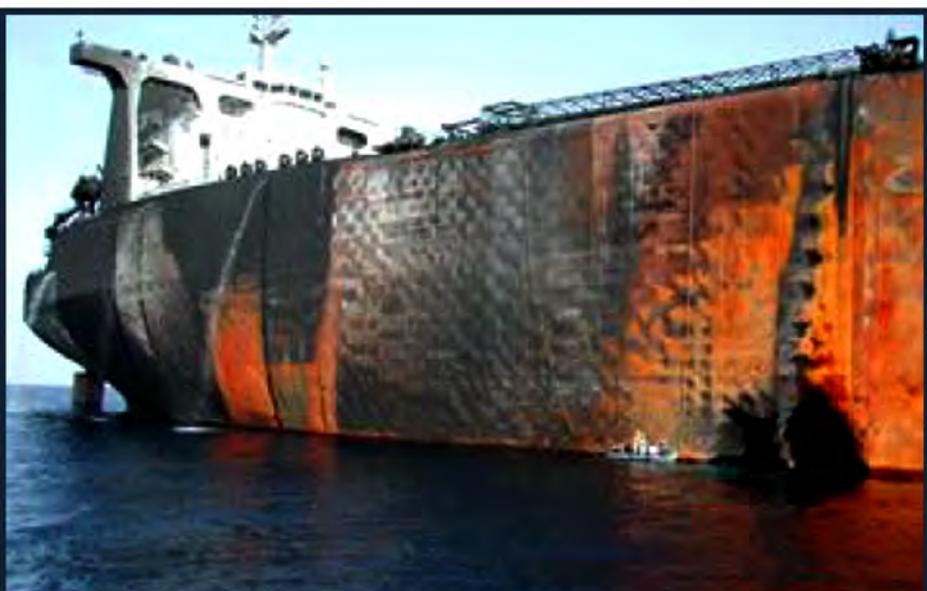
## FROM HORMUZ TO THE SUEZ: VULNERABLE SEA LANES

Geography forces oil shipments to pass through a number of strategic chokepoints. The Strait of Hormuz, which lies between Oman and Iran, and connects the Persian Gulf with the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea, has immense strategic importance in this regard. At its narrowest point, the Strait is 21 miles wide; the available channel for shipping in either direction being only 2 miles wide.

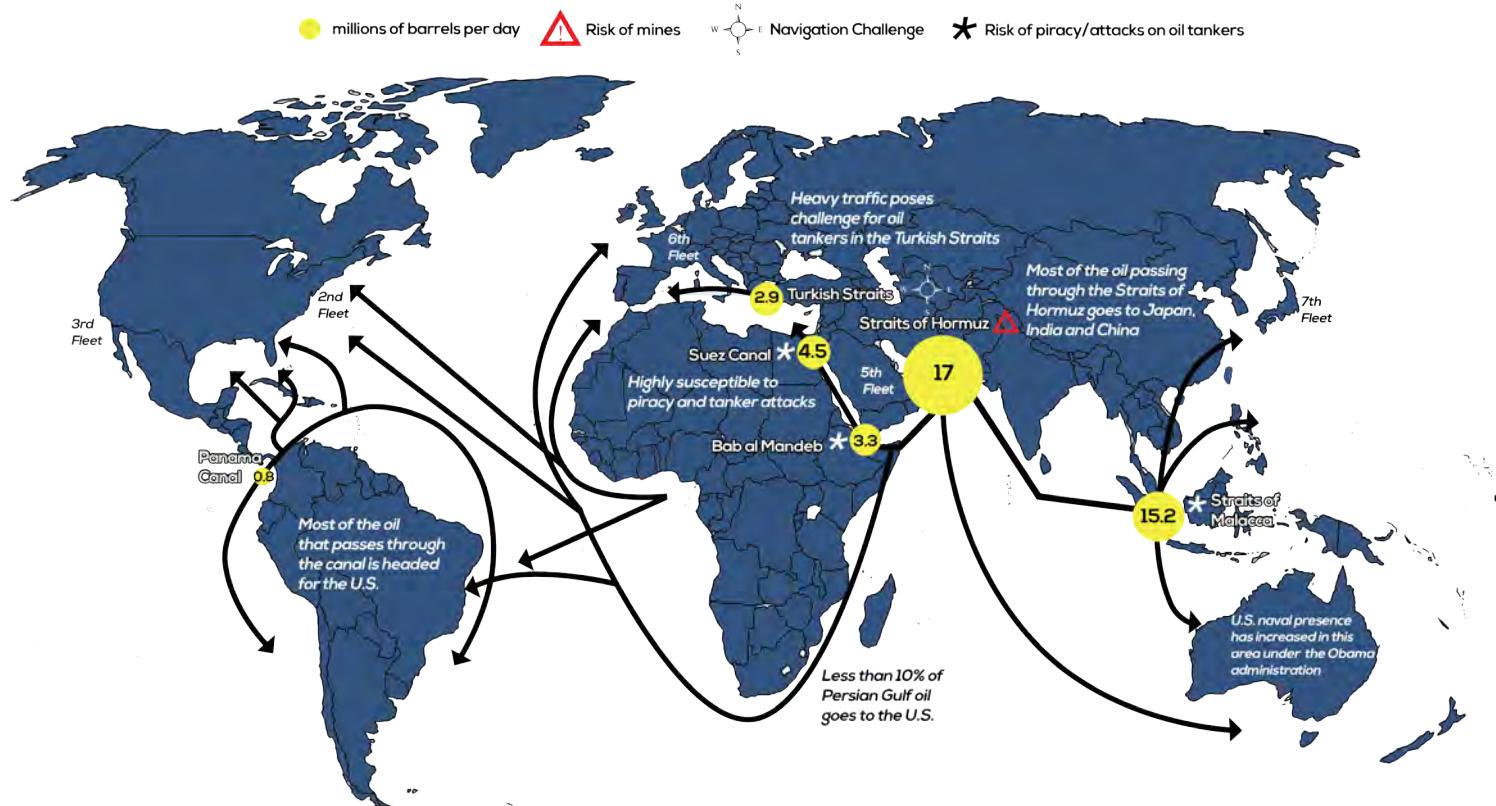
According to available statistics, around 17 million barrels of oil passed through this Strait daily

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In 2002, the Mujahideen attacked a French oil tanker, the Limburg, off the coast of Yemen in the Bab el Mandeb. The attack caused a short-term collapse of international shipping in the strait.



## GLOBAL CHOKEPOINTS AND OIL ROUTES



in 2011, accounting for 20% of oil traded worldwide and 35% of all seaborne traded oil. 85% of these oil shipments were destined for Asian economies, with Japan, India and China being the major destinations.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that between 1984 and 1987, due to frequent attacks in the Straits, oil shipments dropped by 25 percent, forcing the United States to intervene militarily.<sup>5</sup>

Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the UAE have oil pipelines that can circumvent the Strait of Hormuz. However, the total capacity of these pipelines is far below the daily flow of oil through the Straits. One such alternative is the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. In 2011, Iraq was able to transport 0.4 million barrels of oil to the Turkish port of Ceyhan through this pipeline.<sup>6</sup> The Kirkuk-Ceyhan

Pipeline coupled with the Strategic Pipeline, which runs from the southern oil wells to storage depots in the north, have been subjected to frequent attacks, rendering them an ineffective alternative.<sup>7</sup>

Another potential alternative to the Hormuz is the 745 mile long (and vulnerable) pipeline known as the East-West Pipeline, which runs from the Abqaiq in eastern Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea Port of Yanbu in the west of the peninsula. However, only 2.8 million barrels per day can circumvent the Strait of Hormuz if this pipeline is used as an alternative.<sup>8</sup>

The third alternative is the pipeline from Habshan to the Fujairah Port Terminal in UAE. Its

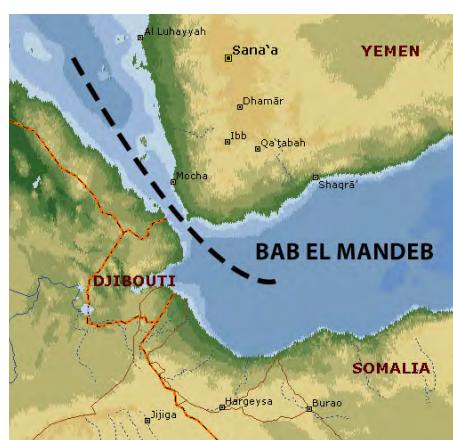
([www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/World-Oil-Transit-Chokepoints/wotc.pdf](http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/World-Oil-Transit-Chokepoints/wotc.pdf))

<sup>7</sup> In the light of the recent military successes of the Mujahideen in Iraq, we hope that oil supplies to western countries from northern Iraq would seriously decline.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. (Oil from Abqaiq is also transported to the Ras Tanura Terminal on the East Coast. An attempted attack on the oil pipeline feeding the Ras Tanura Terminal was foiled in 2001.)

net capacity is 1.5 million barrels per day<sup>9</sup>. (Fujairah port is also used by the US Navy; therefore it is doubly important for the Mujahideen). However, the capacity of all these alternative pipelines does not even come near the volume of oil traded through the Strait of Hormuz.

The next chokepoint for west-bound shipping is the Bab el Mandeb. Located between the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia) and the Middle East (Yemen), the Bab el Mandeb connects the Red Sea with the



<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Location	2009	2010	2011
Strait of Hormuz	15.7	15.9	17.0
Bab al Mandeb	2.9	2.7	3.4
Suez Canal and Sumed Pipeline	3.0	3.1	3.8
Straits of Malacca	---	---	15.2
Turkish Straits	2.8	2.9	N/A



Estimates are in million barrels per day. N/A is not available. (Source: US Department of Energy)

Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. It represents a strategic link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. In

shipping in the Strait.<sup>12</sup> The insurance premium for a single supertanker carrying two million barrels of oil tripled from

cases, the alternative channel for transporting oil from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean is the SUMED (Suez-Mediterranean) pipeline, which bypasses the Canal. The SUMED pipeline begins at the Ain Sukhna Terminal on the Red Sea and connects with Sidi Kerir Terminal on the Mediterranean. It has a

**A closure of the Suez and SUMED pipeline would add 2700 miles of transit from Saudi Arabia to the United States, increasing the shipping time by 15 days for Europe and 10 days for the United States.**

2011, 3.8 million barrels of oil passed through the Bab el Mandeb daily, out of which at least 2.0 million barrels/day were north-bound for Europe and the United States.<sup>10</sup>

The Bab el Mandeb is 18 miles wide at its narrowest point, with the available sea lane only 2 miles wide.<sup>11</sup> Closure of the Bab el Mandeb would prevent oil shipments from the Persian Gulf from reaching the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal and the SUMED (Suez-Mediterranean) Pipeline. Disruptions could force shipping to adopt the much longer route along the Cape of Good Hope (round the southern tip of Africa), adding to shipping costs and transportation time.

In 2002, the Mujahideen attacked a French oil tanker, the Limburg, off the coast of Yemen in the Bab el Mandeb Strait. The attack caused a short-term collapse of international

150,000\$ per trip to 450,000\$ per trip, adding 15 cents a barrel to the delivered cost of oil.<sup>13</sup> (This insurance premium was for the ships only; the cargo was insured separately). The attack killed one Bulgarian crew member, while the damage to the tanker was estimated at 45 million US \$.<sup>14</sup>

At the northern terminus of the Red Sea is the Suez Canal. Completed in 1869, the 193 km long and 205 meters wide canal allows transportation by sea between Europe and Asia, without navigating around Africa. In 2012, an average of 2.97 million barrels of oil were transported daily using the canal, out of which 1.6 million barrels/day were north-bound for Europe and the United States. Some supertankers, however, are too large to travel through the Canal. In such



capacity of 2.3 million bbl/d. A closure of the Suez and SUMED pipeline would add 2700 miles of transit from Saudi Arabia to the United States, increasing the shipping time by 15 days for Europe and 10 days for the United States.<sup>15</sup>

## OIL SUPPLIES FOR EUROPE THROUGH THE BOTTLENECK AT BOSPORUS

There are two important chokepoints in the Mediterranean: the Turkish

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica (see Bab-el-Mandeb)

<sup>12</sup> Preliminary Investigation Indicates Oil Tanker was Attacked ([www.nytimes.com/2002/10/11/international/middleeast/11YEME.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/11/international/middleeast/11YEME.html))

<sup>13</sup> Threats to Oil Transport ([www.iags.org/oiltransport.html](http://www.iags.org/oiltransport.html))

<sup>14</sup> See Wikipedia: Maritime Jewel

<sup>15</sup> [www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/World-Oil-Transit-Chokepoints/wotc.pdf](http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/World-Oil-Transit-Chokepoints/wotc.pdf)



Straits and the Strait of Gibraltar. The Turkish Straits consist of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, which divide Europe from Asia. The Dardanelles is a 40 mile long channel that links the Sea of Marmara with the Aegean and the Mediterranean Seas; while the Bosphorus is a 17 mile long waterway that connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara and eventually the Mediterranean. The Bosphorus is only half a mile wide at its narrowest point.<sup>16</sup> It is considered to be one of the most difficult sea channels to navigate.

Annually, some 50,000 vessels, including 5500 oil tankers pass through the Turkish Straits. Oil from the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions is transported from ports on the Black Sea through the Turkish Straits to Southern and Western Europe. In 2010, 2.9 million barrels/day were supplied to Europe from Russia and the former Soviet Republics.<sup>17</sup> Due to heavy traffic, bottlenecks are not so uncommon in the Turkish straits. It is worth noting that presently there are few viable alternatives for Russian oil shipments to Southern and Western Europe. Any attack on West-bound Russian oil shipments would therefore have serious repercussions for both Russian as well as European economies.

The other strategic chokepoint in the Mediterranean region is the Strait of Gibraltar. The Strait forms the opening of the Mediterranean into the Atlantic. At its narrowest point, the Strait is 7.7 nautical miles (14.3 km wide).<sup>18</sup> On the Spanish side of the Strait, Britain maintains a permanent military presence in the form of the British Enclave at Gibraltar. Oil tankers from the Red Sea or the Suez Canal that are destined for Western Europe or the United States pass through the Straits.<sup>19</sup>

### LIFELINE FOR EAST ASIAN ECONOMIES: THE MALACCA STRAITS

In terms of the sheer volume of trade however, the Strait of Malacca stands out as one of the most significant sea lanes in the world. Situated between the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia, the Strait is the shortest route



between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. It links the economies of the Persian Gulf region and India with China, Japan, Indonesia and the Pacific Rim. Every year, some 50,000 vessels carrying one quarter of the world's traded goods pass through this 805 km long waterway. More than 15 million barrels of oil/day passed through the Strait during 2011.

The Strait is difficult to navigate; the narrowest point, Phillips Channel, is only 2.8 km wide.<sup>20</sup> It is an outlet of several small rivers and contains hundreds of islets, making it an ideal place for pirates to hide and avoid capture. According to the International Maritime Bureau, the Malacca Strait is the world's most pirate-struck region.<sup>21</sup> For insurance purposes, it is considered a high-risk area.



**Every year, some 50,000 vessels carrying one quarter of the world's traded goods pass through the 805 km long Malacca Straits.**

18 Encyclopedia Britannica (Strait of Gibraltar)

19 It is worth noting that in June 2002, a group of Mujahideen were arrested in Morocco for plotting attacks on western shipping in the Straits of Gibraltar.

20 Ibid.

21 International Herald Tribune www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=7907480



## USAF BASES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

1. Afghanistan (Bagram, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Shindand)
2. Bahrain International Airport (US Navy, Aviation Support Unit)
3. Shaykh Isa Air Base, Bahrain (379th Air Expeditionary Wing)
4. Ahmad al Jabir Air Base, Kuwait
5. Ali al Salem Air Base, Kuwait (386th Air Expeditionary Wing)
6. Masirah Air Base (on the island of Masirah off the east coast of Oman )
7. Thumrait Air Base, Oman (War Reserve Material Storage, Contractor: DynCorp)
8. Manas International Airport, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (376th Air Expeditionary Wing)
9. Al Udeid Air Base, Doha, Qatar (Forward Headquarter of US CENTCOM )
10. Eskan, near Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (64th Air Expeditionary Group)
11. Incirlik Air Base, Adana, Turkey (39th Air Base Wing, USAF, 5000 airmen)
12. Al Dhafra Air Base, Abu Dhabi, UAE (380th Air Expeditionary Wing)

## US NAVAL INSTALLATIONS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

13. Camp Justice/Thunder Cove/Naval Support Facility, Diego Garcia
14. Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti (United States Naval Expeditionary Base, Horn of Africa of the USAFCOM)
15. Naval Support Activity, Juffair, Bahrain (Home to US Naval Forces Central Command and US Fifth Fleet)
16. Camp Patriot/Kuwait Naval Base (Eastern coast of Kuwait)
17. Fujairah Naval Base, UAE
18. Port Jebel Ali, Dubai (Largest man-made harbor in the world )

## THE STRANGLEHOLD

After this brief overview of the world's most critical sea lanes, one cannot fail to appreciate the strategic opportunity that geography presents for the Mujahideen. Even if we were to underestimate its importance, our enemies understand just how vital it is for them to control all of these sea passages and ensure the unhindered theft of our resources. A cursory look at the placement of American military bases in the Muslim world and US naval fleets in our seas reveals the stranglehold that the US has developed on the Muslim world.

From West Africa to East Asia, the US has established a network of bases that spans the Muslim world. The US military employs the concept of Unified Combatant Commands. Under each Command, forces from different military departments (Navy, Air Force, Army) are placed under a single command structure so as to provide effective command and control for operations. There are a total of nine Commands, six of which are regional. Thus the US has divided the world into six Commands, each with a specific area of responsibility. From the enemy's perspective, most of the Muslim world comes under the 'responsibility' of the Central Command (CENTCOM), with

the exception of the Islamic Maghreb, where the African Command (AFCOM) operates. Under this division of roles, the US Navy's Sixth Fleet operates in the Mediterranean. It is commanded by the US Naval Forces European Command. In the Islamic Maghreb, the US has established facilities for drone operations in North Africa and the Saharan region. Most of the training, funds and equipment for the Senegalese military come from the US; while countries in the Saharan region and the Islamic Maghreb also receive training and support for 'anti-terrorism' operations from the US. The US is reportedly establishing a base at Sao Tome and Principe islands off the western coast of Africa. This base would allow the US to monitor and protect the movement of oil tankers along the southern and western coasts of Africa.

In Turkey, Incirlik Air Base at Adana is home to 5000 airmen of the 39<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing.<sup>22</sup> The US also maintains a small military presence in Sinai, known as the Task Force Sinai<sup>23</sup>, which is a part of the Multinational Force and Observers Mission present in Sinai to oversee the terms of the peace treaty between Israel and

22 United States Department of Defense, Base Structure Reports, quoted by National Post News Service

23 See Wikipedia: Task Force Sinai

Egypt.

South of the Mediterranean region, a network of bases guards American interests in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. In the Horn of Africa region, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) has its headquarters at Camp Lemonnier, a US Naval Expeditionary Base situated at the Djibouti-Ambouli International Airport. The CJTF is part of the US Africa Command (USAFCOM). From its headquarters in Djibouti, the US conducts drone strikes and raids against Al-Shabab in Somalia. The base serves as the headquarters for US Navy's operations off the coast of Somalia. The official 'area of responsibility' for the CJTF includes Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Seychelles, and Kenya.

On the other side of the Bab el Mandeb, the US conducts drone operations in Yemen, probably from bases inside Saudi Arabia, as well as Djibouti. The US is reportedly preparing four airstrips for drones in the Horn of Africa region: one in Djibouti, one in Ethiopia, another in Seychelles, and a fourth in either Saudi Arabia or Oman.<sup>24</sup>

The Combined Task Force 151 (a

24 National Post News Service



# Port Jebel Ali

is not only  
the world's largest  
man-made harbor,  
but also the most  
frequented port by the  
US Navy outside the  
United States.



US Air Force Base at Diego Garcia :-)

multinational task force involving 20 countries) operates in the Gulf of Aden. It was set up by the US Naval Forces Central Command to combat 'piracy and terrorism' in the Gulf of Aden, specially off the coast of Somalia. (It is interesting to note that a Pakistan Navy officer, Rear Admiral Kaleem Shaukat, commanded CTF-151 in 2012<sup>25</sup>! One is justified in asking: what has Pakistan to do with piracy in Somalia or countering Mujahideen in the Horn of Africa?)

In the Persian Gulf region, the US Navy base at Juffair, Bahrain (known as 'US Naval Support Activity', Juffair) serves as the Headquarters of the US Naval Forces Central Command and

the US Fifth Fleet.<sup>26</sup> The 'area of responsibility' of the Fifth Fleet includes the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the east coast of Africa. In the Persian Gulf region, the US Navy also uses Camp Patriot (Kuwait Naval Base), Fujairah Naval Base (UAE) and Port Jebel Ali in Dubai. Port Jebel Ali is not only the world's largest man-made harbor, but also the most frequented port by the US Navy outside the United States.<sup>27</sup> Almost every American

operations, besides hosting black sites for the CIA's rendition program.

Close to the Straits of Malacca, the US makes use of the Sembawang Naval Base in Singapore for logistic support of its Seventh Fleet. The United States has also established a Special Operations Command (SOCOPAC), headquartered in Okinawa, Japan. In recent years, it has been deployed in southern Philippines as Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines to conduct 'anti-terrorist' operations in Mindanao.

Besides installations of the US Navy, a network of airbases is present in the Muslim world. Most of these bases are concentrated in the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula, particularly in the Persian Gulf region (see map of US military placement in the Muslim world). Besides these, the US also maintains air bases in Turkey (Incirlik), Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan (Manas, Bishkek) and Pakistan (Jacobabad, Pasni, Dalbadin).

With strategic placement of its forces around key objectives, the US has developed a stranglehold around the Muslim world.

This stranglehold is not just military, but also economic. The primary objective of the military component of this stranglehold is deterrence. The US generally uses an indirect approach to achieve its strategic objectives, relying more on economic measures, diplomacy and the threat of overwhelming use of force. It is only where this system of deterrence fails that the US actually engages its foes militarily. By the grace of Allah, the Mujahideen have exposed the weakness of the US military in Afghanistan and Iraq. As the

navy sailor who has completed a shipboard tour would have visited the port at least once. The port has berthing facilities for a Nimitz-class<sup>28</sup> Aircraft carrier along with warships of the accompanying battle group.

In the Indian Ocean, the US uses the strategic island of Diego Garcia as a naval and submarine support base. The island serves as a fixed aircraft carrier for air operations. It also provides storage facilities for regional

26 The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), a 25 nation naval coalition to counter 'terrorism' in the Arabian Ocean, Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea is also based in Bahrain (at Manama). The CMF comes under the purview of the US Naval Forces, Central Command.

27 See Wikipedia: Jebel Ali

28 The Nimitz Class aircraft carriers are a class of ten nuclear-powered aircraft carriers in service with the US Navy. These carriers generally have a length of 333 meters and a displacement of 100,000 tons. Nimitz Class carriers are one of the largest warships in the world.

**Even** if a single supertanker were to be attacked in one of the chokepoints or hijacked and scuttled in one of these narrow sea lanes, the consequences would be phenomenal.



experiences of these two wars aptly demonstrate, the indirect approach or reliance on deterrence fails when dealing with the Mujahideen.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The challenge that poses itself for the Mujahideen is weakening this stranglehold of the enemy to the

point that it is no longer able to effectively meddle in the Muslim world. This requires a multi-pronged strategy that focuses not only on attacking American military presence in the Muslim world, but also targeting the super-extended energy supply line that fuels their economies and helps to sustain their military strength.

### SELECTED OIL AND GAS PIPELINE INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



In this context, attacks on west-bound oil shipments in the chokepoints situated in the Muslim world are of immense importance. As we have mentioned earlier, the transportation of oil from refineries and oil terminals in the Muslim world to gasoline stations/service stations in western countries represents the Achilles heel of the oil industry. Even if a single supertanker (or even an ordinary west-bound cargo-vessel) were to be attacked in one of the chokepoints or hijacked and scuttled in one of these narrow sea lanes, the consequences would be phenomenal: a spike in oil prices, an increase in shipping rates, more expensive maritime insurance, and increased military spending to ensure the safety of these sea passages. Simultaneous attacks on western shipping or western oil tankers (a sea-based version of the cargo-plane bomb plot) in more than one chokepoint would bring international shipping to a halt

and create a crisis in the energy market. West-bound oil tankers docked at ports/oil terminals also present a valuable target.

The choice of targets in this regard is actually quite diverse, and not limited to targeting western shipping at sea. Western workers working in oil companies in the Muslim world may be targeted. The attacks carried out during May 2004 by the Mujahideen on the Yanbu al Bahr Petro-Chemical Plant and oil facilities in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, stand out as a good example. These attacks left 28 foreigners dead, most of whom were westerners, besides causing a spike in global oil prices.<sup>29</sup> Oil facilities, including terminals and pipelines, which export oil to western countries may also be sabotaged. An example of this is the attempted attack on the Abqaiq oil facility in February 2006. Two explosive-laden vehicles attempted to enter the

<sup>29</sup> Anne Korin, Gal Luft, Terrorism Goes to Sea, Foreign Affairs, Nov/Dec 2004 ([www.cfr.org/world/terrorism-goes-to-sea/p7545](http://www.cfr.org/world/terrorism-goes-to-sea/p7545))

oil facility, which accounts for the bulk of Saudi Arabia's west-bound oil exports. Although the attack was unsuccessful, because the cars exploded outside the complex when fired upon by guards; but had it succeeded, it would have seriously crippled oil production, possibly bringing down production levels from 6.8 million barrels/day to anywhere around 1 million barrels/day or even less.<sup>30</sup> The string of attacks carried out by the Mujahideen in Sinai in the recent past, which targeted gas pipelines that supply LNG to Israel, are also a good example of economic warfare against the enemy.

Attacks on the US Navy are not in the realm of the impossible either. Some targets, like Port Jebel Ali in Dubai, are too obvious to escape notice. While others, such as Camp Thunder Clove in Diego Garcia, Naval Support Activity in Juffair, Bahrain, and Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti may require a

<sup>30</sup> ([www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/060227\\_abqaiqattack.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/060227_abqaiqattack.pdf))



more complex effort to target. However, such targets are no longer beyond the reach and capability of the Mujahideen. The recent attempt by a group of Mujahid officers of the Pakistan Navy to carry out a complex and coordinated attack on the American Navy in the Indian Ocean using warships of the Pakistan Navy aptly demonstrates this point.

By the grace of Allah, the Mujahideen have a presence near most of the strategic chokepoints. The Mujahideen are active in the Atlas Mountains in northern Algeria, with access to the Atlantic. In Sinai, a full-fledged Jihadi movement is taking root. In Somalia, the Mujahideen have access to the coast, and have demonstrated the ability to carry out attacks in the Horn of Africa region outside Somalia. Al Qa'eda in the Arabian Peninsula is active in Aden and has the operational ability to attack western targets in the Gulf. Oil pipelines in Iraq have been sabotaged by the Mujahideen for years. The Bosphorus is not beyond the reach of the Mujahideen either. In Nigeria- the United State's

fifth largest oil supplier<sup>31</sup>- oil facilities have undergone several attacks (and more sustained attacks would further hurt the US). In Syria, the Mujahideen have recently gained access to the Mediterranean coast. In the Subcontinent, the Mujahideen have only recently demonstrated their ability to plan complex attacks even on 'hard targets' such as the US Navy. And in East Asia, several Jihadi groups have been active in the Philippines and Indonesia.

A coordinated effort to disrupt enemy shipping in the future in all of these regions would not only hurt the enemy economically, but also stretch their resources further in this global war. It is worth noting that the damage caused to the global economy due to piracy (loss of ships, cargo and insurance payments) amounts to some 16 billion dollars annually.

It is narrated on account of Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "I was presented with some of my nation who were going out to fight in the cause of Allah

<sup>31</sup> [www.cfr.org/world/terrorism-goes-to-sea/  
p7545](http://www.cfr.org/world/terrorism-goes-to-sea/p7545)

riding the sea like kings on thrones"<sup>32</sup> Umm Haraam heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) saying: "The first of my nation to ride the sea in the cause of Allah are forgiven." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said: "The first army of my Ummah to attack the city of Caesar are forgiven." The scholars say that this *hadith* is indicative of the special virtue of naval warfare and fighting the Romans (European Christians). It is also narrated that Abdullah bin Amr said: "Allah smiles at the Mujahideen of the sea many times. He first smiles at them when they first ride the ship leaving their families and wealth behind. He smiles at them when the ship starts to rock in the sea. And He smiles at them when they first see the shore."<sup>33,34</sup>

So let us strive to evict the enemy not just from our lands, but also our seas, and in the process earn the reward and honour promised by Allah to those who fight in His cause on the seas. □

<sup>32</sup> Saheeh Ahmad (See Mashari al Ashwaq by Ibn-e-Nuhas, Abridged Version, Translated by Noor Yamani, p. 55)

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Abi Shaybah [Mawqoof] (*Ibid.*, p.56)

<sup>34</sup> It is mentioned in a *hadith* that when Allah (swt) smiles at a person, he will not be punished in the Hellfire.

