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Arab Reaction to a US Military Presence  
in the Middle East

1. Ever since the 1952 Egyptian Revolution the stationing of non-Arab troops in Arab countries has been anathema to all but the most conservative of Arab states. With the closure of the US communications facility in Morocco this year and the cosmetic change of the COMIDEASFOR "Base" in Bahrain to a "porting facility," independent American military presence no longer exists in the Arab World, even in the conservative states. Nonalignment, positive neutrality, the Third World, anti-colonialism, etc. are the shibboleths on which the structure of modern Arab policy has been built. Inherent in all of these phrases is freedom from non-Arab military pacts and the denial of base rights to a second country. Even such staunch Soviet supporters as the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen have never risked their Third World and Arab credentials by granting formal base rights or an independent military presence to a second party. Any Arab state that permitted a US base to be established on its territory would be subjected to a series of propaganda and political acts that none would be willing to accept.

2. There are, of course, types of presence that would be less than a base. These could include the interpositional stationing of US units between combatants or in demilitarized zones either independently or as part of a multinational force. An independent force would likely be perceived as a protector of Israel and not a neutral peace-keeping force. In a multinational force, the US would still be seen as protecting Israeli interests unless the force included Soviet troops. In October 1973 Egypt called on the US and the Soviet Union, as cosponsors of Resolution 338, to send troops to the area to enforce the ceasefire. The US declined at that time; the Soviets were willing to accept. The Egyptians see Soviet intentions as more insidious now than they did in 1973 and would oppose increased Soviet presence or prestige in the Middle East.

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[redacted]. Even the moderates have been very critical of the growing Soviet and Cuban presence in certain Arab countries. A US presence would effectively nullify this campaign.

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