Gulf War

This article is about the war in 1990–91. For other wars of that name, see Gulf War (disambiguation). “Desert Storm” and “Operation Desert Storm” redirect here. For other uses, see Desert Storm (disambiguation).

The Gulf War (2 August 1990 – 28 February 1991), codenamed Operation Desert Shield (2 August 1990 – 17 January 1991), for operations leading to the buildup of troops and defense of Saudi Arabia and Operation Desert Storm (17 January 1991 – 28 February 1991) in its combat phase, was a war waged by coalition forces from 34 nations led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq’s invasion and annexation of Kuwait.

The war is also known under other names, such as the Persian Gulf War, First Gulf War, Gulf War I, Kuwait War, First Iraq War, or Iraq War[13][14][15][lower-alpha 1] before the term “Iraq War” became identified instead with the 2003 Iraq War (also referred to in the U.S. as “Operation Iraqi Freedom”).[16] The Iraqi Army’s occupation of Kuwait that began 2 August 1990 was met with international condemnation, and brought immediate economic sanctions against Iraq by members of the U.N. Security Council. U.S. President George H. W. Bush deployed U.S. forces into Saudi Arabia, and urged other countries to send their own forces to the scene. An array of nations joined the Coalition, the largest military alliance since World War II. The great majority of the Coalition’s military forces were from the U.S., with Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and Egypt as leading contributors, in that order. Saudi Arabia paid around US$36 billion of the US$60 billion cost.[17]

The war was marked by the introduction of live news broadcasts from the front lines of the battle, principally by the U.S. network CNN.[18][19][20] The war has also earned the nickname Video Game War after the daily broadcast of images from cameras on board U.S. bombers during Operation Desert Storm.[21][22]

The initial conflict to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait began with an aerial and naval bombardment on 17 January 1991, continuing for five weeks. This was followed by a ground assault on 24 February. This was a decisive victory for the Coalition forces, who liberated Kuwait and advanced into Iraqi territory. The Coalition ceased its advance, and declared a cease-fire 100 hours after the ground campaign started. Aerial and ground combat was confined to Iraq, Kuwait, and areas on Saudi Arabia’s border. Iraq launched Scud missiles against Coalition military targets in Saudi Arabia and against Israel.

1 Terminology

The following names have been used to describe the conflict itself:

- Gulf War and Persian Gulf War have been the most common terms for the conflict used within western countries. A problem with these terms is that the usage is ambiguous, having now been applied to at least three conflicts: see Gulf War (disambiguation). The use of the term Persian Gulf (as opposed to Arabian Gulf) is also disputed: see Persian Gulf naming dispute. With no consensus of naming, various publications have attempted to refine the name. Some variants include:
  - Gulf War (e.g. The Gulf War, BBC television series, 2005; Modern Conflicts: The Gulf War, Discovery Channel DVD set, 2010)
  - Persian Gulf War (e.g. Encyclopedia of the Persian Gulf War, Mark Grossman, 1995; An Operational Analysis of the Persian Gulf War, U.S. Army War College, 2016)
  - First Gulf War (to distinguish it from the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the subsequent Iraq War) (e.g. Gulf War One: Real Voices from the Front Line, Hugh McManners, 2010)
  - Second Gulf War (to distinguish it from the Iran–Iraq War) (eg Iraq and the Second Gulf War: State Building and Regime Security, Mohammad-Mahmoud Mohamed, 1997)
  - Liberation of Kuwait (Arabic: تحرير الكويت (tahrīr al-kūwayt)) (to distinguish it from the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the subsequent Iraq War) (e.g. Gulf War One: Real Voices from the Front Line, Hugh McManners, 2010)
  - Other language terms include French: la Guerre du Golfe and German: Golfkrieg (Gulf War); German: Zweiter Golfkrieg (Second Gulf War); French: Guerre du Koweit (War of Kuwait)
  - The mother of all battles (Arabic: أم المعارك (umm al-ʻaṭārīk)) is a term derived from Saddam Hussein (e.g. The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein’s Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War, Kevin M. Woods, 2008).
1.1 Operational names

Most of the Coalition states used various names for their operations and the war’s operational phases. These are sometimes incorrectly used as the conflict’s overall name, especially the U.S. Desert Storm:

- **Operation Desert Shield** was the U.S. operational name for the U.S. buildup of forces and Saudi Arabia’s defense from 2 August 1990, to 16 January 1991.

- **Operation Desert Storm** was the U.S. name of the airland conflict from 17 January 1991, through 11 April 1991.

- **Operation Desert Sabre** (early name **Operation Desert Sword**) was the U.S. name for the air-land offensive against the Iraqi Army in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (the “100-hour war”) from 24–28 February 1991, in itself, part of **Operation Desert Storm**.

- **Operation Desert Farewell** was the name given to the return of U.S. units and equipment to the U.S. in 1991 after Kuwait’s liberation, sometimes referred to as **Operation Desert Calm**.

- **Operation Granby** was the British name for British military activities during the operations and conflict.

- **Opération Daguet** was the French name for French military activities in the conflict.

- **Operation Friction** was the name of the Canadian operations.

- **Operazione Locusta** (Italian for Locust) was the Italian name for the operations and conflict.

In addition, various phases of each operation may have a unique operational name.

1.2 Campaign names

The U.S. divided the conflict into three major campaigns:


- **Southwest Asia Cease-Fire** for the period 12 April 1991, through 30 November 1995, including **Operation Provide Comfort**.

2 Background

See also: Iraq–United States relations

Throughout the Cold War, Iraq had been an ally of the Soviet Union, and there was a history of friction between it and the United States. The U.S. was concerned with Iraq’s position on Israeli–Palestinian politics, and its disapproval of the nature of the peace between Israel and Egypt. The U.S. also disliked Iraqi support for many Arab and Palestinian militant groups such as Abu Nidal, which led to Iraq’s inclusion on the developing U.S. list of State Sponsors of Terrorism on 29 December 1979. The U.S. remained officially neutral after Iraq’s invasion of Iran in 1980, which became the Iran–Iraq War, although it provided resources, political support, and some “non-military” aircraft to Iraq.[23] In March 1982, Iran began a successful counteroffensive (Operation Undeniable Victory), and the U.S. increased its support for Iraq to prevent Iran from forcing a surrender. In a U.S. bid to open full diplomatic relations with Iraq, the country was removed from the U.S. list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Ostensibly this was because of improvement in the regime’s record, although former U.S. Assistant Defense Secretary Noel Koch later stated, “No one had any doubts about [the Iraqis’] continued involvement in terrorism ... The real reason was to help them succeed in the war against Iran.”[24] With Iraq’s newfound success in the war, and the Iranian rebuff of a peace offer in July, arms sales to Iraq reached a record spike in 1982. When Iraqi President Saddam Hussein expelled Abu Nidal to Syria at the U.S.’ request in November 1983, the Reagan administration sent Donald Rumsfeld to meet Saddam as a special envoy and to cultivate ties. By the time the ceasefire with Iran was signed in August 1988, Iraq was heavily debt-ridden and tensions within society were rising.[25] Most of its debt was owed to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Iraq pressured both nations to forgive the debts, but they refused.[26]

The Iraq–Kuwait dispute also involved Iraqi claims to Kuwait as Iraqi territory.[27] Kuwait had been a part of the Ottoman Empire’s province of Basra, something that Iraq claimed made it rightful Iraq territory.[27] Its ruling dynasty, the al-Sabah family, had concluded a protectorate agreement in 1899 that assigned responsibility for its foreign affairs to the United Kingdom. The UK drew the border between the two countries in 1922, making Iraq virtually landlocked.[23] Kuwait rejected Iraqi attempts to secure further provisions in the region.[27]

Iraq also accused Kuwait of exceeding its OPEC quotas for oil production. In order for the cartel to maintain its desired price of $18 a barrel, discipline was required. The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait were consistently over-producing; the latter at least in part to repair losses caused by Iranian attacks in the Iran–Iraq War and to pay for the losses of an economic scandal. The result was a slump in the oil price – as low as $10 a barrel – with a resulting loss...
of $7 billion a year to Iraq, equal to its 1989 balance of payments deficit. Resulting revenues struggled to support the government’s basic costs, let alone repair Iraq’s damaged infrastructure. Jordan and Iraq both looked for more discipline, with little success. The Iraqi government described it as a form of economic warfare, which it claimed was aggravated by Kuwait slant-drilling across the border into Iraq’s Rumaila oil field. At the same time, Saddam looked for closer ties with those Arab states that had supported Iraq in the war. This was supported by the U.S., who believed that Iraqi ties with pro-Western Gulf states would help bring and maintain Iraq inside the U.S.’ sphere of influence.

In 1989, it appeared that Saudi-Iraqi relations, strong during the war, would be maintained. A pact of non-interference and non-aggression was signed between the countries, followed by a Kuwaiti-Iraqi deal for Iraq to supply Kuwait with water for drinking and irrigation, although a request for Kuwait to lease Iraq Umm Qasr was rejected. Saudi-backed development projects were hampered by Iraq’s large debts, even with the demobilization of 200,000 soldiers. Iraq also looked to increase arms production so as to become an exporter, although the success of these projects was also restrained by Iraq’s obligations; in Iraq, resentment to OPEC’s controls mounted.

Iraq’s relations with its Arab neighbors – in particular Egypt – were degraded by mounting violence in Iraq against expatriate groups, well-employed during the war, by Iraqi unemployed, among them demobilized soldiers. These events drew little notice outside the Arab world because of fast-moving events in Eastern Europe. The U.S. did, however, begin to condemn Iraq’s human rights record, including the well-known use of torture. The UK also condemned the execution of Farzad Bazoft, a journalist working for the British newspaper The Observer. Following Saddam’s declaration that “binary chemical weapons” would be used on Israel if it used military force against Iraq, Washington halted part of its funding. A U.N. mission to the Israeli-occupied territories, where riots had resulted in Palestinian deaths, was vetoed by the U.S., making Iraq deeply skeptical of U.S. foreign policy aims in the region, combined with the U.S.’ reliance on Middle Eastern energy reserves.

In early July 1990, Iraq complained about Kuwait’s behavior, such as not respecting their quota, and openly threatened to take military action. On the 23rd, the CIA reported that Iraq had moved 30,000 troops to the Iraq-Kuwait border, and the U.S. naval fleet in the Persian Gulf was placed on alert. Saddam believed an anti-Iraq conspiracy was developing – Kuwait had begun talks with Iran, and Iraq’s rival Syria had arranged a visit to Egypt. Upon review by the Secretary of Defense, it was found that Syria indeed planned a strike against Iraq in the coming days. Saddam immediately used funding to incorporate central intelligence into Syria and ultimately prevented the impending air strike. On 15 July 1990, Saddam’s government laid out its combined objections to the Arab League, including that policy moves were costing Iraq $1 billion a year, that Kuwait was still using the Rumaila oil field, that loans made by the UAE and Kuwait could not be considered debts to its “Arab brothers.” He threatened force against Kuwait and the UAE saying “The policies of some Arab rulers are American ... They are inspired by America to undermine Arab interests and security.” The U.S. sent aerial refuelling planes and combat ships to the Persian Gulf in response to these threats. Discussions in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, mediated on the Arab League’s behalf by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, were held on 31 July and led Mubarak to believe that a peaceful course could be established.

On the 25th, Saddam met with April Glaspie, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, in Baghdad. The Iraqi leader attacked American policy with regards to Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates:
“So what can it mean when America says it will now protect its friends? It can only mean prejudice against Iraq. This stance plus maneuvers and statements which have been made has encouraged the UAE and Kuwait to disregard Iraqi rights ... If you use pressure, we will deploy pressure and force. We know that you can harm us although we do not threaten you. But we too can harm you. Everyone can cause harm according to their ability and their size. We cannot come all the way to you in the United States, but individual Arabs may reach you ... We do not place America among the enemies. We place it where we want our friends to be and we try to be friends. But repeated American statements last year made it apparent that America did not regard us as friends.”[40]

Glaspie replied:

“I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait ... Frankly, we can only see that you have deployed massive troops in the south. Normally that would not be any of our business. But when this happens in the context of what you said on your national day, then when we read the details in the two letters of the Foreign Minister, then when we see the Iraqi point of view that the measures taken by the UAE and Kuwait is, in the final analysis, parallel to military aggression against Iraq, then it would be reasonable for me to be concerned.” [40]

Saddam stated that he would attempt last-ditch negotiations with the Kuwaitis but Iraq “would not accept death”. [40]

According to Glaspie’s own account, she stated in reference to the precise border between Kuwait and Iraq, "... that she had served in Kuwait 20 years before; ‘then, as now, we took no position on these Arab affairs’."[41] Glaspie similarly believed that war was not imminent.[39]

3 Invasion of Kuwait

Main article: Invasion of Kuwait

The result of the Jeddah talks was an Iraqi demand for $10 billion to cover the lost revenues from Rumaila; the Kuwaiti response was to offer $9 billion. The Iraqi response was to immediately order the invasion.[42] On 2 August 1990, Iraq launched the invasion by bombing Kuwait’s capital, Kuwait City.

At the time of the invasion, the Kuwaiti military was believed to have numbered 16,000 men, arranged into three armored, one mechanised infantry and one understrength artillery brigade.[43] The pre-war strength of the Kuwait Air Force was around 2,200 Kuwaiti personnel, with 80 aircraft and forty helicopters.[43] In spite of Iraqi saber-rattling, Kuwait didn’t have its forces on alert; the army had been stood down on 19 July.[44]

By 1988, at the Iran–Iraq War’s end, the Iraqi Army was the world’s fourth largest army; it consisted of 955,000 standing soldiers and 650,000 paramilitary forces in the Popular Army. According to John Childs and André Corvisier, a low estimate shows the Iraqi Army capable of fielding 4,500 tanks, 484 combat aircraft and 232 combat
3.1 Kuwaiti resistance movement

Kuwaitis founded a local armed resistance movement following the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti resistance’s casualty rate far exceeded that of the coalition military forces and Western hostages. The resistance predominantly consisted of ordinary citizens who lacked any form of training and supervision.

4 Run-up to the war

4.1 Diplomatic means

A key element of U.S. political-military and energy economic planning occurred in early 1984. The Iran–Iraq war had been going on for five years and there were significant casualties on both sides, reaching hundreds of thousands. Within President Ronald Reagan’s National Security Council concern was growing that the war could spread beyond the boundaries of the two belligerents. A National Security Planning Group meeting was formed, chaired by then Vice President George H. W. Bush to review U.S. options. It was determined that there was a high likelihood that the conflict would spread into Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, but that the United States had little capability to defend the region. Furthermore, it was determined that a prolonged war in the region would induce much higher oil prices and threaten the fragile recovery of the world economy which was just beginning to gain momentum. On 22 May 1984, President Reagan was briefed on the project conclusions in the Oval Office by William Flynn Martin who had served as the head of the NSC staff that organized the study. The full declassified presentation can be seen here. The conclusions were threefold: first oil stocks needed to be increased among members of the International Energy Agency and, if necessary, released early in the event of oil market disruption; second the United States needed to beef up the security of friendly Arab states in the region and thirdly an embargo should be placed on sales of military equipment to Iran and Iraq. The Plan was approved by the President Reagan and later affirmed by the G-7 leaders headed by Great Britain’s Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the London Summit of 1984. The plan was implemented and became the basis for U.S. preparedness to respond to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1991.

Within hours of the invasion, Kuwait and U.S. delegations requested a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, which passed Resolution 660, condemning the invasion and demanding a withdrawal of Iraqi troops. On 3 August, the Arab League passed its own resolution, which called for a solution to the con-
From the beginning, U.S. officials insisted on a total Iraqi pullout from Kuwait, without any linkage to other Middle Eastern problems, fearing any concessions would strengthen Iraqi influence in the region for years to come. [61]

On 12 August 1990, Saddam “propose[d] that all cases of occupation, and those cases that have been portrayed as occupation, in the region, be resolved simultaneously”. Specifically, he called for Israel to withdraw from occupied territories in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, Syria to withdraw from Lebanon, and “mutual withdrawals by Iraq and Iran and arrangement for the situation in Kuwait.” He also called for a replacement of U.S. troops that mobilized in Saudi Arabia in response to Kuwait’s invasion with “an Arab force”, as long as that force did not involve Egypt. Additionally, he requested an “immediate freeze of all boycott and siege decisions” and a general normalization of relations with Iraq. [62] From the beginning of the crisis, President Bush was strongly opposed to any “linkage” between Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait and the Palestinian issue. [63]

On 23 August, Saddam appeared on state television with Western hostages to whom he had refused exit visas. In the video, he asks a young British boy, Stuart Lockwood, whether he is getting his milk, and goes on to say, through his interpreter, “We hope your presence as guests here will not be for too long. Your presence here, and in other places, is meant to prevent the scourge of war.” [64]

Another Iraqi proposal communicated in August 1990 was delivered to U.S. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft by an unidentified Iraqi official. The official communicated to the White House that Iraq would “withdraw from Kuwait and allow foreigners to leave” provided that the U.N. lifted sanctions, allowed “guaranteed access to the Persian Gulf through the Kuwaiti islands of Bubiyan and Warbah”, and allowed Iraq to “gain full control of the Rumaila oil field that extends slightly into Kuwaiti territory”. The proposal also “include[d] offers to negotiate an oil agreement with the United States ‘satisfactory to both nations’ national security interests,’ develop a joint plan ‘to alleviate Iraq’s economical and financial problems’ and ‘jointly work on the stability of the gulf.’” [65]

In December 1990, Iraq made a proposal to withdraw from Kuwait provided that foreign troops left the region and that an agreement was reached regarding the Palestinian problem and the dismantlement of both Israel’s and Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. The White House rejected the proposal. [66] The PLO’s Yasser Arafat expressed that neither he nor Saddam insisted that solving the Israel–Palestine issues should be a precondition to solving the issues in Kuwait, though he did acknowledge a “strong link” between these problems. [67]

Ultimately, the U.S. stuck to its position that there would be no negotiations until Iraq withdrew from Kuwait and...
4.2 Military means

4.2 Military means

“Operation Desert Shield” redirects here. For the 2006 operation by the Iraqi insurgency, see Operation Desert Shield (Iraq).

One of the West’s main concerns was the significant threat Iraq posed to Saudi Arabia. Following Kuwait’s conquest, the Iraqi Army was within easy striking distance of Saudi oil fields. Control of these fields, along with Kuwaiti and Iraqi reserves, would have given Saddam control over the majority of the world’s oil reserves. Iraq also had a number of grievances with Saudi Arabia. The Saudis had lent Iraq some 26 billion dollars during its war with Iran. The Saudis had backed Iraq in that war, as they feared the influence of Shia Iran’s Islamic revolution on its own Shia minority. After the war, Saddam felt he shouldn’t have to repay the loans due to the help he had given the Saudis by fighting Iran.

Soon after his conquest of Kuwait, Saddam began verbally attacking the Saudis. He argued that the U.S.-supported Saudi state was an illegitimate and unworthy guardian of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. He combined the language of the Islamist groups that had recently fought in Afghanistan with the rhetoric Iran had long used to attack the Saudis.[73]

Acting on the Carter Doctrine’s policy, and out of fear the Iraqi Army could launch an invasion of Saudi Arabia, U.S. President George H. W. Bush quickly announced that the U.S. would launch a “wholly defensive” mission to prevent Iraq from invading Saudi Arabia under the codename Operation Desert Shield. Operation Desert Shield began on 7 August 1990 when U.S. troops were sent to Saudi Arabia due also to the request of its monarch, King Fahd, who had earlier called for U.S. military assistance.[74] This “wholly defensive” doctrine was quickly abandoned when, on 8 August, Iraq declared Kuwait to be Iraq’s 19th province and Saddam named his cousin, Ali Hassan Al-Majid, as its military-governor.[75] The U.S. Navy dispatched two naval battle groups built around the aircraft carriers USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and USS Independence to the Persian Gulf, where they were ready by 8 August. The U.S. also sent the battleships USS Missouri and USS Wisconsin to the region. A total of 48 U.S. Air Force F-15s from the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, landed in Saudi Arabia, and immediately commenced round the clock air patrols of the Saudi–Kuwait–Iraq border to discourage further Iraqi military advances. They were joined by 36 F-15 A-Ds from the 36th Tactical Fighter Wing at Bitburg, Germany. The Bitburg contingent was based at Al Kharj

that they should not grant Iraq concessions, lest they give the impression that Iraq benefited from its military campaign.[61] Also, when U.S. Secretary of State James Baker met with Tariq Aziz in Geneva, Switzerland, for last minute peace talks in early 1991, Aziz reportedly made no concrete proposals and did not outline any hypothetical Iraqi moves.[68]

On 29 November 1990, the Security Council passed Resolution 678 which gave Iraq until 15 January 1991 to withdraw from Kuwait and empowered states to use “all necessary means” to force Iraq out of Kuwait after the deadline.

On 14 January 1991, France proposed that the U.N. Security Council call for “a rapid and massive withdrawal” from Kuwait along with a statement to Iraq that Council members would bring their “active contribution” to a settlement of the region’s other problems, “in particular, of the Arab–Israeli conflict and in particular to the Palestinian problem by convening, at an appropriate moment, an international conference” to assure “the security, stability and development of this region of the world.” The French proposal was supported by Belgium (at the moment one of the rotating Council members), Germany, Spain, Italy, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and several non-aligned nations. The U.S., the UK, and the Soviet Union rejected it; U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Thomas Pickering stated that the French proposal was unacceptable, because it went beyond previous Council resolutions on the Iraqi invasion.[69][70][71] France dropped this proposal when it found “no tangible sign of interest” from Baghdad.[72]
Air Base, approximately 1-hour southeast of Riyadh. The 36th TFW would be responsible for 11 confirmed Iraqi Air Force aircraft shot down during the war. There were also two Air National Guard units stationed at Al Kharj Air Base, the South Carolina Air National Guard’s 169th Fighter Wing flew bombing missions with 24 F-16s flying 2,000 combat missions and dropping 4 million pounds of munitions, and the New York Air National Guard’s 174th Fighter Wing from Syracuse flew 24 F-16s on bombing missions. Military buildup continued from there, eventually reaching 543,000 troops, twice the number used in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Much of the material was air-lifted or carried to the staging areas via fast sealift ships, allowing a quick buildup.

4.2.1 Creating a coalition

A series of U.N. Security Council resolutions and Arab League resolutions were passed regarding Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. One of the most important was Resolution 678, passed on 29 November 1990, which gave Iraq a withdrawal deadline until 15 January 1991, and authorized “all necessary means to uphold and implement Resolution 660”, and a diplomatic formulation authorizing the use of force if Iraq failed to comply.[76]

To ensure that economic backing, Baker went on an eleven-day journey to nine countries that the press dubbed ‘The Tin Cup Trip’. The first stop was Saudi Arabia, who a month before had already granted permission to the United States to use its facilities. However, Baker believed that Saudi Arabia, an immensely wealthy nation, should assume some of the cost of the military efforts, since one of the most decisive military objectives was defending Saudi Arabia. When Baker asked King Fahd for 15 billion dollars, the King readily agreed, with the promise that Baker ask Kuwait for the same amount. The next day, 7 September, he did just that, and the Emir of Kuwait, displaced in a Sheraton hotel outside his invaded country, easily agreed. Baker then moved to enter talks with Egypt, whose leadership he considered to be “the moderate voice of the middle east”. President Mubarak of Egypt was furious with Saddam for his invasion of Kuwait, and for the fact that Saddam had assured Mubarak that an invasion was not his intention. Therefore, he was willing to commit troops to the coalition forces to quell Saddam, as well as relieved the United States was willing to forgive his country’s 7.1 billion dollar debt.

After stops in Helsinki and Moscow to smooth out Iraqi demands for a middle-eastern peace conference with Russia (then the Soviet Union), Baker traveled to Syria to discuss its role in the crisis with its President Hafez Assad. Assad had a deep personal enmity towards Saddam, which was defined by the fact that “Saddam had been trying to kill him [Assad] for years”. Harboring this animosity and being impressed with Baker’s diplomatic initiative to visit Damascus (relations had been severed since the 1983 bombing of U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut), Assad agreed to pledge up to 100,000 Syrian troops to the coalition effort. This was a vital step in ensuring Arab states were represented in the coalition.

Baker flew to Rome for a brief visit with the Italians in which he was promised the use of some military equipment, before journeying to Germany to meet with American ally Chancellor Kohl. Although Germany’s constitution (which was brokered essentially by the United States) prohibited military involvement in outside nations, Kohl was willing to repay his gratitude for the United States with a two billion dollar contribution to the coalition’s war effort, as well as further economic and military support of coalition ally Turkey, and the execution of the transport of Egyptian soldiers and ships to the Persian Gulf.[77]

A coalition of forces opposing Iraq’s aggression was formed, consisting of forces from 34 countries: Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the U.S. itself. It was the largest coalition since World War II.[78] U.S. Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr. was designated to be the commander of the Coalition forces in the Persian Gulf area. The Soviet Union also supported United States intervention.
Although they didn’t contribute any forces, Japan and Germany made financial contributions totaling $10 billion and $6.6 billion respectively. U.S. troops represented 73% of the Coalition’s 956,600 troops in Iraq.\[79\]

Many of the Coalition’s forces were reluctant to join. Some felt that the war was an internal Arab affair, or didn’t want to increase U.S. influence in the Middle East. In the end, however, many nations were persuaded by Iraq’s belligerence towards other Arab states, offers of economic aid or debt forgiveness, and threats to withhold aid.\[80\]

### 4.2.2 Justification for intervention

The U.S. and the U.N. gave several public justifications for involvement in the conflict, the most prominent being the Iraqi violation of Kuwaiti territorial integrity. In addition, the U.S. moved to support its ally Saudi Arabia, whose importance in the region, and as a key supplier of oil, made it of considerable geopolitical importance. Shortly after the Iraqi invasion, U.S. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney made the first of several visits to Saudi Arabia where King Fahd requested U.S. military assistance. During a speech in a special joint session of the U.S. Congress given on 11 September 1990, U.S. President George H. W. Bush summed up the reasons with the following remarks: “Within three days, 120,000 Iraqi troops with 850 tanks had poured into Kuwait and moved south to threaten Saudi Arabia. It was then that I decided to act to check that aggression.”\[81\]

The Pentagon stated that satellite photos showing a buildup of Iraqi forces along the border were this information’s source, but this was later alleged to be false. A reporter for the St. Petersburg Times acquired two commercial Soviet satellite images made at the time in question, which showed nothing but empty desert.\[82\]

Other justifications for foreign involvement included Iraq’s history of human rights abuses under Saddam. Iraq was also known to possess biological weapons and chemical weapons, which Saddam had used against Iranian troops during the Iran–Iraq War and against his own country’s Kurdish population in the Al-Anfal Campaign. Iraq was also known to have a nuclear weapons program, but the report about it from January 1991 was partially declassified by the CIA on 26 May 2001.\[83\]

Although there were human rights abuses committed in Kuwait by the invading Iraqi military, the alleged incidents which received most publicity in the U.S. were inventions of the public relations firm hired by the government of Kuwait to influence U.S. opinion in favor of military intervention. Shortly after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, the organization Citizens for a Free Kuwait was formed in the U.S. It hired the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton for about $11 million, paid by Kuwait’s government.\[84\]

Among many other means of influencing U.S. opinion (distributing books on Iraqi atrocities to U.S. soldiers deployed in the region, ‘Free Kuwait’ T-shirts and speakers to college campuses, and dozens of video news releases to television stations), the firm arranged for an appearance before a group of members of the U.S. Congress in which a woman identifying herself as a nurse working in the Kuwait City hospital described Iraqi soldiers pulling babies out of incubators and letting them die on the floor.\[85\]

The story was an influence in tipping both the public and Congress towards a war with Iraq: six Congressmen said the testimony was enough for them to support military action against Iraq and seven Senators referenced the testimony in debate. The Senate supported the military actions in a 52–47 vote. A year after the war, however, this allegation was revealed to be a fabrication. The woman who had testified was found to be a member of Kuwait’s Royal Family, in fact the daughter of Kuwait’s ambassador to the U.S.\[85\] She hadn’t lived in Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion. The details of the Hill & Knowlton public relations campaign, including the incubator testimony, were published in John R. MacArthur’s Second Front: Censorship and
Propaganda in the Gulf War (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), and came to wide public attention when an Op-ed by MacArthur was published in The New York Times. This prompted a reexamination by Amnesty International, which had originally promoted an account alleging even greater numbers of babies torn from incubators than the original fake testimony. After finding no evidence to support it, the organization issued a retraction. President Bush then repeated the incubator allegations on television.

At the same time, the Iraqi Army committed several well-documented crimes during its occupation of Kuwait, such as the summary execution without trial of three brothers after which their bodies were stacked in a pile and left to decay in a public street. Iraqi troops also ransacked and looted private Kuwaiti homes; one residence was repeatedly defecated in. A resident later commented, “The whole thing was violence for the sake of violence, destruction for the sake of destruction ... Imagine a surrealistic painting by Salvador Dalí”.

5 Early battles

5.1 Air campaign

Main article: Gulf War air campaign

The Gulf War began with an extensive aerial bombing campaign on 17 January 1991. The Coalition flew over 100,000 sorties, dropping 88,500 tons of bombs, and widely destroying military and civilian infrastructure. The air campaign was commanded by USAF Lieutenant General Chuck Horner, who briefly served as U.S. Central Command’s Commander-in-Chief – Forward while General Schwarzkopf was still in the U.S.

A day after the deadline set in Resolution 678, the Coalition launched a massive air campaign, which began the general offensive codenamed Operation Desert Storm. The first priority for Coalition forces was the destruction of Iraq’s Air Force and anti-aircraft facilities. The sorties were launched mostly from Saudi Arabia and the six Coalition carrier battle groups (CVBG) in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

An Iraqi T-54A or Type 59 tank lies destroyed after a Coalition bombing attack during Operation Desert Storm.

The next Coalition targets were command and communication facilities. Saddam Hussein had closely micromanaged Iraqi forces in the Iran–Iraq War, and initiative at lower levels was discouraged. Coalition planners hoped that Iraqi resistance would quickly collapse if deprived of command and control.

The air campaign’s third and largest phase targeted military targets throughout Iraq and Kuwait: Scud missile launchers, weapons research facilities, and naval forces. About one-third of the Coalition’s air power was devoted to attacking Scuds, some of which were on trucks and therefore difficult to locate. U.S. and British special operations forces had been covertly inserted into western Iraq to aid in the search for and destruction of Scuds.

Iraqi anti-aircraft defenses, including Man-portable air-defense systems, were surprisingly ineffective against Coalition aircraft and the Coalition suffered only 75 aircraft losses in over 100,000 sorties, 44 of which were the result of Iraqi action. Two of these losses are the result of aircraft colliding with the ground while evading Iraqi ground fired weapons. One of these losses is a confirmed air-air victory.

5.2 Iraqi missile strikes on Israel and Saudi Arabia

Iraq’s government made no secret that it would attack if invaded. Prior to the war’s start, Tariq Aziz, Iraq’s English-speaking Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, was asked in the aftermath of the failed U.S.–Iraq peace talks in Geneva, Switzerland, by a reporter. “Mr. Foreign Minister, if war starts ... will you attack?” His response was, “Yes, absolutely, yes.”

Five hours after the first attacks, Iraq’s state radio broadcast declaring that “The dawn of victory nears as this great showdown begins.” Iraq fired eight missiles the next day. These missile attacks were to continue throughout
the war. A total of 88 Scud missiles were fired by Iraq during the war’s seven weeks.\textsuperscript{[96]}

Iraq hoped to provoke a military response from Israel. The Iraqi government hoped that many Arab states would withdraw from the Coalition, as they would be reluctant to fight alongside Israel.\textsuperscript{[63]} Following the first attacks, Israeli Air Force jets were deployed to patrol the northern airspace with Iraq. Israel prepared to militarily retaliate, as its policy for the previous forty years had always been retaliation. However, President Bush pressured Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir not to retaliate and withdraw Israeli jets, fearing that if Israel attacked Iraq, the other Arab nations would either desert the Coalition or join Iraq. It was also feared that if Israel used Syrian or Jordanian airspace to attack Iraq, they would intervene in the war on Iraq’s side or attack Israel. The Coalition promised to deploy Patriot missiles to defend Israel if it refrained from responding to the Scud attacks.\textsuperscript{[97]}\textsuperscript{[98]}

The Scud missiles targeting Israel were relatively ineffective, as firing at extreme range resulted in a dramatic reduction in accuracy and payload. According to the Jewish Virtual Library, a total of 74 Israelis died as a result of the Iraqi attacks: two directly and the rest from suffocation and heart attacks.\textsuperscript{[99]} Approximately 230 Israelis were injured.\textsuperscript{[100]} Extensive property damage was also caused, and according to Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Damage to general property consisted of 1,302 houses, 6,142 apartments, 23 public buildings, 200 shops and 50 cars.”\textsuperscript{[101]} It was feared that Iraq would fire missiles filled with nerve agents such as sarin. As a result, Israel’s government issued gas masks to its citizens. When the first Iraqi missiles hit Israel, some people injected themselves with an antidote for nerve gas. It has been suggested that the sturdy construction techniques used in Israeli cities, coupled with the fact that Scuds were only launched at night, played an important role in limiting the number of casualties from Scud attacks.\textsuperscript{[102]}

In response to the threat of Scuds on Israel, the U.S. rapidly sent a Patriot missile air defense artillery battalion to Israel along with two batteries of MIM-104 Patriot missiles for the protection of civilians.\textsuperscript{[102]} The Royal Netherlands Air Force also deployed a Patriot missile squadron to Israel and Turkey. The Dutch Defense Ministry later stated that the military use of the Patriot missile system was largely ineffective, but its psychological value for the affected populations was high.\textsuperscript{[103]}

Coalition air forces were also extensively exercised in “Scud hunts” in the Iraqi desert, trying to locate the camouflaged trucks before they fired their missiles at Israel or Saudi Arabia. On the ground, special operations forces also infiltrated Iraq, tasked with locating and destroying Scuds. Once special operations were combined with air patrols, the number of attacks fell sharply, then increased slightly as Iraqi forces adjusted to Coalition tactics.

As the Scud attacks continued, the Israelis grew increasingly impatient, and considered taking unilateral military action against Iraq. On 22 January 1991, a Scud missile and two Coalition Patriots that had been fired to intercept it but missed hit the Israeli city of Ramat Gan. The incident caused three elderly people to suffer fatal heart attacks. Another 96 people were injured, and 20 apartment buildings were damaged.\textsuperscript{[104]}\textsuperscript{[105]} After this attack, the Israelis warned that if the U.S. failed to stop the attacks, they would. At one point, Israeli commandos were loaded onto helicopters prepared to fly into Iraq, but the mission was called off after a phone call from U.S. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, reporting on the extent of Coalition efforts to destroy Scuds and emphasizing that Israeli intervention could endanger U.S. forces.\textsuperscript{[106]}

In addition to the attacks on Israel, 47 Scud missiles were fired into Saudi Arabia, and one missile was fired at Bahrain and another at Qatar. The missiles were fired at both military and civilian targets. One Saudi civilian was killed, and 78 others were injured. No casualties were
reported in Bahrain or Qatar. The Saudi government issued all its citizens and expatriates with gas masks in the event of Iraq using missiles with chemical or biological warheads. The government broadcast alerts and ‘all clear’ messages over television to warn citizens during Scud attacks.

On 25 February 1991, a Scud missile hit a U.S. Army barracks of the 14th Quartermaster Detachment, out of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, stationed in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 28 soldiers and injuring over 100.[107]

5.3 Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia (Battle of Khafji)

Main article: Battle of Khafji

On 29 January, Iraqi forces attacked and occupied the lightly defended Saudi city of Khafji with tanks and infantry. The Battle of Khafji ended two days later when the Iraqis were driven back by the Saudi Arabian National Guard, supported by Qatari forces and U.S. Marines. The allied forces used extensive artillery fire.

Both sides suffered casualties, although Iraqi forces sustained substantially more dead and captured than the allied forces. Eleven Americans were killed in two separate friendly fire incidents, an additional 14 U.S. airmen were killed when their AC-130 gunship was shot down by an Iraqi surface-to-air missile, and two U.S. soldiers were captured during the battle. Saudi and Qatari forces had a total of 18 dead. Iraqi forces in Khafji had 60–300 dead and 400 captured.

The Battle of Khafji was an example of how air power could single-handedly hinder the advance of enemy ground forces. Upon learning of Iraqi troop movements, 140 coalition aircraft were diverted to attack an advancing column consisting of two armored divisions in battalion-sized units. Precision stand-off attacks were conducted during the night and through to the next day. Iraqi vehicle losses included 357 tanks, 147 armored personnel carriers, and 89 mobile artillery pieces. Some crews simply abandoned their vehicles upon realizing that they could be destroyed by guided bombs without warning, stopping the divisions from massing for an organized attack on the town. One Iraqi soldier, who had fought in the Iran-Iraq War, remarked that his brigade “had sustained more punishment from allied airpower in 30 minutes at Khafji than in eight years of fighting against Iran.”[108]

6 Ground campaign

The Coalition forces dominated the air with their technological advantages. Coalition forces had the significant advantage of being able to operate under the protection of air supremacy that had been achieved by their air forces before the start of the main ground offensive. Coalition forces also had two key technological advantages:

1. Coalition main battle tanks, such as the U.S. M1 Abrams, British Challenger 1, and Kuwaiti M-84AB were vastly superior to the Chinese Type 69 and export-model T-72 tanks used by the Iraqis. Coalition crews were better trained with more highly developed armored doctrine. Iraqi tanks were mainly employed as armored self-propelled artillery, rather than maneuver warfare roles employed by the Coalition.

2. The use of GPS made it possible for Coalition forces to navigate without reference to roads or other fixed landmarks. This, along with aerial reconnaissance, allowed them to fight a battle of maneuver rather than a battle of encounter: they knew where they were and where the enemy was, so they could attack a specific target rather than searching on the ground for enemy forces.
6.2 Initial moves into Iraq

The war’s ground phase was officially designated Operation Desert Saber.[109] The first units to move into Iraq were three patrols of the British Special Air Service’s B squadron, call signs Bravo One Zero, Bravo Two Zero, and Bravo Three Zero, in late January. These eight-man patrols landed behind Iraqi lines to gather intelligence on the movements of Scud missile launchers, which couldn’t be detected from the air, as they were hidden under bridges and camouflage netting during the day.[110] Other objectives included the destruction of the launchers and their fiber-optic communications arrays that lay in pipelines and relayed coordinates to the TEL operators that were launching attacks against Israel. The operations were designed to prevent any possible Israeli intervention. Due to lack of sufficient ground cover to carry out their assignment, One Zero and Three Zero abandoned their operations, while Two Zero remained, and was later compromised, with only Sergeant Chris Ryan escaping to Syria.

Elements of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Battalion 5th Cavalry

For months, American units in Saudi Arabia had been under almost constant Iraqi artillery fire, as well as threats from Scud missile or chemical attacks. On 24 February 1991, the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions, and the 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion crossed into Kuwait and headed toward Kuwait City. They encountered trenches, barbed wire, and minefields. However, these positions were poorly defended, and were overrun in the first few hours. Several tank battles took place, but apart from that, Coalition troops encountered minimal resistance, as most Iraqi troops surrendered. The general pattern was that the Iraqis would put up a short fight before surrendering. However, Iraqi air defenses shot down nine U.S. aircraft. Meanwhile, forces from Arab states advanced into Kuwait from the east, encountering little resistance and suffering few casualties.

Despite the successes of Coalition forces, it was feared that the Iraqi Republican Guard would escape into Iraq before it could be destroyed. It was decided to send British armored forces into Kuwait fifteen hours ahead of schedule, and to send U.S. forces after the Republican Guard. The Coalition advance was preceded by a heavy artillery and rocket barrage, after which 150,000 troops and 1,500 tanks began their advance. Iraqi forces in Kuwait counterattacked against U.S. troops, acting on a direct order from Saddam himself. Despite the intense combat, the Americans repulsed the Iraqis and continued to advance towards Kuwait City.

Kuwaiti forces were tasked with liberating the city. Iraqi troops offered only light resistance. The Kuwaitis lost one soldier and one plane that was shot down, and quickly liberated the city. On 27 February, Saddam ordered a retreat from Kuwait, and President Bush declared it liberated. However, an Iraqi unit at Kuwait International Airport appeared not to have gotten the message, and fiercely resisted. U.S. Marines had to fight for hours before securing the airport, after which Kuwait was declared secure. After four days of fighting, Iraqi forces were expelled from Kuwait. As part of a scorched earth policy, they set fire to nearly 700 oil wells, and placed land mines around the wells to make extinguishing the fires more difficult.

6.1 Kuwait’s Liberation

Main article: Liberation of Kuwait campaign
See also: Gulf War order of battle ground campaign

U.S. decoy attacks by air attacks and naval gunfire the night before Kuwait’s liberation were designed to make the Iraqis believe the main Coalition ground attack would focus on central Kuwait.

U.S. tanks from the 3rd Armored Division along the Line of Departure.

Iraqi Type 69 tank on the road into Kuwait City during the Gulf War.

Two Iraqi tanks lie abandoned near Kuwait City on 26 February 1991.
Iraqi T-62 knocked out by 3rd Armored Division fire

Destroyed LAV-25

of the 1st Cavalry Division of the U.S. Army performed a direct attack into Iraq on 15 February 1991, followed by one in force on 20 February that led directly through 7 Iraqi divisions which were caught off guard. From 15–20 February, the Battle of Wadi Al-Batin took place inside Iraq; this was the first of two attacks by 1 Battalion 5th Cavalry of the 1st Cavalry Division. It was a feint attack, designed to make the Iraqis think that a Coalition invasion would take place from the south. The Iraqis fiercely resisted, and the Americans eventually withdrew as planned back into the Wadi Al-Batin. Three U.S. soldiers were killed and nine wounded as well with only one M2 Bradley IFV turret destroyed, but they had taken 40 prisoners and destroyed five tanks, and successfully deceived the Iraqis. This attack led the way for the XVIII Airborne Corps to sweep around behind the 1st Cav and attack Iraqi forces to the west. On 22 February 1991, Iraq agreed to a Soviet-proposed ceasefire agreement. The agreement called for Iraq to withdraw troops to pre-invasion positions within six weeks following a total cease-fire, and called for monitoring of the cease-fire and withdrawal to be overseen by the UN Security Council.

The Coalition rejected the proposal, but said that retreating Iraqi forces wouldn’t be attacked, and gave twenty-four hours for Iraq to begin withdrawing forces. On 23 February, fighting resulted in the capture of 500 Iraqi soldiers. On 24 February, British and American armored forces crossed the Iraq–Kuwait border and entered Iraq in large numbers, taking hundreds of prisoners. Iraqi resistance was light, and 4 Americans were killed.\[111\]

6.3 Coalition forces enter Iraq

Destroyed Iraqi civilian and military vehicles on the Highway of Death.

Aerial view of destroyed Iraqi T-72 tank, BMP-1 and Type 63 armored personnel carriers and trucks on Highway 8 in March 1991

The oil fires caused were a result of the scorched earth policy of Iraqi military forces retreating from Kuwait
Remains of downed F-16C

Bradley IFV burns after being hit by Iraqi T-72 fire

Shortly afterwards, the U.S. VII Corps, in full strength and spearheaded by the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, launched an armored attack into Iraq early on 24 February, just to the west of Kuwait, taking Iraqi forces by surprise. Simultaneously, the U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps launched a sweeping “left-hook” attack across southern Iraq’s largely undefended desert, led by the U.S. 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized). This movement’s left flank was protected by France’s 6th Light Armoured Division Daguet.

The French force quickly overcame Iraq’s 45th Infantry Division, suffering light casualties and taking a large number of prisoners, and took up blocking positions to prevent an Iraqi counter-attack on the Coalition’s flank. The movement’s right flank was protected by the United Kingdom’s 1st Armoured Division. Once the allies had penetrated deep into Iraqi territory, they turned eastward, launching a flank attack against the elite Republican Guard before it could escape. The Iraqis resisted fiercely from dug-in positions and stationary vehicles, and even mounted armored charges.

Unlike many previous engagements, the destruction of the first Iraqi tanks did not result in a mass surrender. The Iraqis suffered massive losses and lost dozens of tanks and vehicles, while U.S. casualties were comparatively low, with a single Bradley knocked out. Coalition forces pressed another ten kilometers into Iraqi territory, and captured their objective within three hours. They took 500 prisoners and inflicted heavy losses, defeating Iraq’s 26th Infantry Division. A U.S. soldier was killed by an Iraqi land mine, another five by friendly fire, and thirty wounded during the battle. Meanwhile, British forces attacked Iraq’s Medina Division and a major Republican Guard logistics base. In nearly two days of some of the war’s most intense fighting, the British destroyed 40 enemy tanks and captured a division commander.

Meanwhile, U.S. forces attacked the village of Al Busayyah, meeting fierce resistance. They suffered no casualties, but destroyed a considerable amount of military hardware and took prisoners.


The Coalition’s advance was much swifter than U.S. generals had expected. On 26 February, Iraqi troops began retreating from Kuwait, after they had set its oil fields on fire (737 oil wells were set on fire). A long convoy of retreating Iraqi troops formed along the main Iraq-Kuwait highway. Although they were retreating, this convoy was bombed so extensively by Coalition air forces that it came to be known as the Highway of Death. Hundreds of Iraqi troops were killed. American, British, and French forces continued to pursue retreating Iraqi forces over the border and back into Iraq, eventually moving to within 150 miles (240 km) of Baghdad before withdrawing back to Iraq’s border with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

One hundred hours after the ground campaign started, on 28 February, President Bush declared a ceasefire, and he also declared that Kuwait had been liberated.

7 The end of active hostilities

Main article: 1991 uprisings in Iraq

In Coalition-occupied Iraqi territory, a peace conference was held where a ceasefire agreement was negotiated and signed by both sides. At the conference, Iraq was approved to fly armed helicopters on their side of the temporary border, ostensibly for government transit due to the damage done to civilian infrastructure. Soon after, these helicopters and much of Iraq’s military were used to fight an uprising in the south. The rebellions were encouraged by an airing of “The Voice of Free Iraq” on 2 February 1991, which was broadcast from a CIA-run radio station out of Saudi Arabia. The Arabic service of the Voice of America supported the uprising by stating that the rebellion was large, and that they soon would be liberated from Saddam.[113]

In the North, Kurdish leaders took American statements
In Kuwait, the Emir was restored, and suspected Iraqi collaborators were repressed. Eventually, over 400,000 people were expelled from the country, including a large number of Palestinians, due to PLO support of Saddam. Yasser Arafat didn’t apologize for his support of Saddam, but after his death, the Fatah under Mahmoud Abbas’ authority formally apologized in 2004.[114]

There was some criticism of the Bush administration, as they chose to allow Saddam to remain in power instead of pushing on to capture Baghdad and overthrowing his government. In their co-written 1998 book, *A World Transformed*, Bush and Brent Scowcroft argued that such a course would have fractured the alliance, and would have had many unnecessary political and human costs associated with it.

In 1992, the U.S. Defense Secretary during the war, Dick Cheney, made the same point:

> I would guess if we had gone in there, we would still have forces in Baghdad today. We’d be running the country. We would not have been able to get everybody out and bring everybody home.

> And the final point that I think needs to be made is this question of casualties. I don’t think you could have done all of that without significant additional U.S. casualties, and while everybody was tremendously impressed with the low cost of the (1991) conflict, for the 146 Americans who were killed in action and for their families, it wasn’t a cheap war.

> And the question in my mind is, how many additional American casualties is Saddam (Hussein) worth? And the answer is, not that damned many. So, I think we got it right, both when we decided to expel him from Kuwait, but also when the President made the decision that we’d achieved our objectives and we were not going to go get bogged down in the problems of trying to take over and govern Iraq.[115]

> — Dick Cheney

Instead of a greater involvement of its own military, the U.S. hoped that Saddam would be overthrown in an internal coup d’état. The CIA used its assets in Iraq to organize a revolt, but the Iraqi government defeated the effort.


8 Coalition involvement

Main article: Coalition of the Gulf War
Coalition members included Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Italy, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. Germany and Japan provided financial assistance and donated military hardware, but didn't send direct military assistance. This later became known as checkbook diplomacy.

8.1 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom committed the largest contingent of any European state that participated in the war’s combat operations. Operation Granby was the code name for the operations in the Persian Gulf. British Army regiments (mainly with the 1st Armoured Division), Royal Air Force squadrons and Royal Navy vessels were mobilized in the Persian Gulf. The Royal Air Force, using various aircraft, operated from airbases in Saudi Arabia. Almost 2,500 armored vehicles and 53,462 troops were shipped for action.

Chief Royal Navy vessels deployed to the Persian Gulf included Broadword-class frigates, and Sheffield-class destroyers, other R.N. and R.F.A. ships were also deployed. The light aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal was deployed to the Mediterranean Sea.

Special operations forces were deployed in the form of several SAS squadrons.

8.2 France

The second largest European contingent was from France, which committed 18,000 troops. Operating on the left flank of the U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps, the main French Army force was the 6th Light Armoured Division, including troops from the French Foreign Legion. Initially, the French operated independently under national command and control, but coordinated closely with the Americans (via CENTCOM) and Saudis. In January, the Division was placed under the tactical control of the XVIII Airborne Corps. France also deployed several combat aircraft and naval units. The French called their contribution Opération Daguet.

8.3 Canada

See also: Operation FRICTION

Canada was one of the first countries to condemn Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, and it quickly agreed to join the U.S.-led coalition. In August 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney committed the Canadian Forces to deploy a Naval Task Group. The destroyers HMCS Terra Nova and HMCS Athabaskan joined the maritime interdiction force supported by the supply ship HMCS Protecteur in Operation Friction. The Canadian Task Group led the Coalition’s maritime logistics forces in the Persian Gulf. A fourth ship, HMCS Huron, arrived in-theater after hos-
Canadian CF-18 Hornets participated in combat during the Gulf War.

Following the U.N.-authorized use of force against Iraq, the Canadian Forces deployed a CF-18 Hornet and CH-124 Sea King squadron with support personnel, as well as a field hospital to deal with casualties from the ground war. When the air war began, the CF-18s were integrated into the Coalition force and were tasked with providing air cover and attacking ground targets. This was the first time since the Korean War that Canada’s military had participated in offensive combat operations. The only CF-18 Hornet to record an official victory during the conflict was an aircraft involved in the beginning of the Battle of Bubiyan against the Iraqi Navy.\[^{[117]}\]

The Canadian Commander in the Middle East was Commodore Kenneth J. Summers.

### 8.4 Australia

**HMAS Sydney in the Persian Gulf in 1991.**

Main article: Australian contribution to the 1991 Gulf War

Australia contributed a Naval Task Group, which formed part of the multi-national fleet in the Persian Gulf and

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Gulf of Oman, under Operation Damask. In addition, medical teams were deployed aboard a U.S. hospital ship, and a naval clearance diving team took part in de-mining Kuwait’s port facilities following the end of combat operations. While the Australian forces did not see combat, they did play a significant role in enforcing the sanctions put in place against Iraq following Kuwait’s invasion, as well as other small support contributions to Operation Desert Storm. Following the war’s end, Australia deployed a medical unit on Operation Habitat to northern Iraq as part of Operation Provide Comfort.\[^{[118]}\]

### 8.5 Argentina

Argentina was the only Latin American country to participate in the 1991 Gulf War sending a destroyer, ARA Almirante Brown (D-10), a corvette, ARA Spiro (P-43) (later replaced by another corvette, ARA Rosales (P-42)) and a supply ship (ARA Bahía San Blas (B-4)) to participate on the United Nations blockade and sea control effort of the Persian Gulf. The success of Operación Alfil (“English: Operation Bishop”) as it was known, with more than 700 interceptions and 25,000 miles sailed in the theatre of operations helped to overcome the so-called "Malvinas syndrome". Argentina was later classified as major non-NATO ally due to its contributions during the war.

### 9 Casualties

#### 9.1 Civilian

Over 1,000 Kuwaiti civilians were killed by Iraqis.\[^{[119]}\]

More than 600 Kuwaitis went missing during Iraq’s occupation.\[^{[120]}\] and approximately 375 remains were found in mass graves in Iraq. The increased importance of air attacks from both Coalition warplanes and cruise missiles led to controversy over the number of civilian deaths caused during Desert Storm’s initial stages. Within
Desert Storm’s first 24 hours, more than 1,000 sorties were flown, many against targets in Baghdad. The city was the target of heavy bombing, as it was the seat of power for Saddam and the Iraqi forces’ command and control. This ultimately led to civilian casualties.

In one noted incident, two USAF stealth planes bombed a bunker in Amiriyah, causing the deaths of 408 Iraqi civilians who were in the shelter.[121] Scenes of burned and mutilated bodies were subsequently broadcast, and controversy arose over the bunker’s status, with some stating that it was a civilian shelter, while others contended that it was a center of Iraqi military operations, and that the civilians had been deliberately moved there to act as human shields.

Saddam’s government gave high civilian casualty figures in order to draw support from Islamic countries. The Iraqi government claimed that 2,300 civilians died during the air campaign.[122] According to the Project on Defense Alternatives study, 3,664 Iraqi civilians were killed in the conflict.[123] An investigation by Beth Osborne Daponte estimated total civilian fatalities at about 3,500 from bombing, and some 100,000 from the war’s other effects.[124][125][126]

9.2 Iraqi

The exact number of Iraqi combat casualties is unknown, but is believed to have been heavy. Some estimate that Iraq sustained between 20,000 and 35,000 fatalities.[124] A report commissioned by the U.S. Air Force, estimated 10,000–12,000 Iraqi combat deaths in the air campaign, and as many as 10,000 casualties in the ground war.[127] This analysis is based on Iraqi prisoner of war reports.

According to the Project on Defense Alternatives study, between 20,000 and 26,000 Iraqi military personnel were killed in the conflict while 75,000 others were wounded.[122]

9.3 Coalition

The DoD reports that U.S. forces suffered 148 battle-related deaths (35 to friendly fire[137]), with one pilot listed as MIA (his remains were found and identified in August 2009). A further 145 Americans died in non-combat accidents.[128] The U.K. suffered 47 deaths (9 to friendly fire, all by U.S. forces), France 2,[128] and the other countries, not including Kuwait, suffered 37 deaths (18 Saudis, 1 Egyptian, 6 UAE, and 3 Qataris).[128] At least 605 Kuwaiti soldiers were still missing 10 years after their capture.[138]

The largest single loss of life among Coalition forces happened on 25 February 1991, when an Iraqi Al Hussein missile hit a U.S. military barrack in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 28 U.S. Army Reservists from Pennsylvania. In all, 190 Coalition troops were killed by Iraqi fire during the war, 113 of whom were American, out of a total of 358 Coalition deaths. Another 44 soldiers were killed, and 57 wounded, by friendly fire. 145 soldiers died of exploding munitions, or non-combat accidents.[139]

The largest accident among Coalition forces happened on 21 March 1991, a Royal Saudi Air Force C-130H crashed in heavy smoke on approach to Ras Al-Mishab Airport, Saudi Arabia. 92 Senegalese soldiers and 6 Saudi crew members were killed.[132]

The number of Coalition wounded in combat was 776, including 458 Americans.[140]

190 Coalition troops were killed by Iraqi combatants, the rest of the 379 Coalition deaths being from friendly fire or accidents. This number was much lower than expected. Among the American dead were three female soldiers.

9.3.1 Friendly fire

While the death toll among Coalition forces engaging Iraqi combatants was very low, a substantial number of deaths were caused by accidental attacks from other Allied units. Of the 148 U.S. troops who died in battle, 24% were killed by friendly fire, a total of 35 service personnel.[141] A further 11 died in detonations of coalition munitions. Nine British military personnel were killed in a friendly fire incident when a USAF A-10 Thunderbolt II destroyed a group of two Warrior IFVs.

10 Controversies

10.1 Gulf War Illness

Main article: Gulf War syndrome

Many returning Coalition soldiers reported illnesses following their action in the war, a phenomenon known as Gulf War syndrome or Gulf War illness. Common symptoms that were reported are chronic fatigue, Fibromyalgia, and Gastrointestinal disorder.[142] There has been widespread speculation and disagreement about the causes of the illness and the reported birth defects. Researchers found that infants born to male veterans of the 1991 war had higher rates of two types of heart valve defects. Gulf War veterans’ children born after the war had a certain kidney defect that was not found in Gulf War veterans’ children born before the war. Researchers have said that they did not have enough information to link birth defects with exposure to toxic substances.[143] Some factors considered as possibilities include exposure to depleted uranium, chemical weapons, anthrax vaccines given to deploying soldiers, and/or infectious diseases.

Major Michael Donnelly, a USAF officer during the War, helped publicize the syndrome and advocated for veterans’ rights in this regard.
10.2 Effects of depleted uranium

Depleted uranium was used in the war in tank kinetic energy penetrators and 20–30 mm cannon ordnance. Significant controversy regarding the long term safety of depleted uranium exists, although detractors claim pyrophoric, genotoxic, and teratogenic heavy metal effects. Many have cited its use during the war as a contributing factor to a number of instances of health issues in the conflict’s veterans and surrounding civilian populations. However, scientific opinion on the risk is mixed.[144][145]

Some say that depleted uranium is not a significant health hazard unless it is taken into the body. External exposure to radiation from depleted uranium is generally not a major concern because the alpha particles emitted by its isotopes travel only a few centimeters in air or can be stopped by a sheet of paper. Also, the uranium-235 that remains in depleted uranium emits only a small amount of low-energy gamma radiation. However, if allowed to enter the body, depleted uranium, like natural uranium, has the potential for both chemical and radiological toxicity with the two important target organs being the kidneys and the lungs.[146]

10.3 Highway of Death

Main article: Highway of Death

On the night of 26–27 February 1991, some Iraqi forces began leaving Kuwait on the main highway north of Al Jahra in a column of some 1,400 vehicles. A patrolling E-8 Joint STARS aircraft observed the retreating forces and relayed the information to the DDM-8 air operations center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.[147] These vehicles and the retreating soldiers were subsequently attacked, resulting in a 60 km stretch of highway strewn with debris—the Highway of Death. New York Times reporter Maureen Dowd wrote, “With the Iraqi leader facing military defeat, Mr. Bush decided that he would rather gamble on a violent and potentially unpopular ground war than risk the alternative: an imperfect settlement hammered out by the Soviets and Iraqis that world opinion might accept as tolerable.”[148]

Chuck Horner, Commander of U.S. and allied air operations has written:

[By February 26], the Iraqis totally lost heart and started to evacuate occupied Kuwait, but airpower halted the caravan of Iraqi Army and plunderers fleeing toward Basra. This event was later called by the media “The Highway of Death.” There were certainly a lot of dead vehicles, but not so many dead Iraqis. They’d already learned to scamper off into the desert when our aircraft started to attack. Nevertheless, some people back home wrongly chose to believe we were cruelly and unusually punishing our already whipped foes.

[...]

By February 27, talk had turned toward terminating the hostilities. Kuwait was free. We were not interested in governing Iraq. So the question became “How do we stop the killing.”[149]

10.4 Bulldozer assault

An armored bulldozer similar to the ones used in the attack.

Another incident during the war highlighted the question of large-scale Iraqi combat deaths. This was the “bulldozer assault”, wherein two brigades from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) were faced with a
large and complex trench network, as part of the heavily fortified “Saddam Hussein Line”. After some deliberation, they opted to use anti-mine plows mounted on tanks and combat earthmovers to simply plow over and bury alive the defending Iraqi soldiers. Not a single American was killed during the attack. Reporters were banned from witnessing the attack, near the neutral zone that touches the border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Every American in the assault was inside an armored vehicle. One newspaper story reported that U.S. commanders estimated thousands of Iraqi soldiers surrendered, escaping live burial during the two-day assault 24–26 February 1991. Patrick Day Sloyan of Newsday reported, “Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Vulcan armored carriers straddled the trench lines and fired into the Iraqi soldiers as the tanks covered them with mounds of sand. ‘I came through right after the lead company,’ [Col. Anthony] Moreno said. ‘What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with peoples’ arms and things sticking out of them...’” However, after the war, the Iraqi government said that only 44 bodies were found. In his book The Wars Against Saddam, John Simpson alleges that U.S. forces attempted to cover up the incident. After the incident, the commander of the 1st Brigade said: “I know burying people like that sounds pretty nasty, but it would be even nastier if we had to put our troops in the trenches and clean them out with bayonets.” Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney did not mention the First Division’s tactics in an interim report to Congress on Operation Desert Storm. In the report, Cheney acknowledged that 457 enemy soldiers were buried during the ground war.

10.5 Palestinian exodus from Kuwait

A Palestinian exodus from Kuwait took place during and after the Gulf War. During the Gulf War, more than 200,000 Palestinians voluntarily fled Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait due to harassment and intimidation by Iraqi security forces, in addition to getting fired from work by Iraqi authority figures in Kuwait. After the Gulf War, the Kuwaiti authorities forcibly pressured nearly 200,000 Palestinians to leave Kuwait in 1991. Kuwait’s policy, which led to this exodus, was a response to alignment of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the PLO with Saddam Hussein.

The Palestinians who fled Kuwait were Jordanian citizens. In 2013, there were 280,000 Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin in Kuwait. In 2012, 80,000 Palestinians (without Jordanian citizenship) lived in Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia expelled Yemeni workers after Yemen supported Saddam during the Gulf War.

10.6 Coalition bombing of Iraq’s civilian infrastructure

In the 23 June 1991 edition of The Washington Post, reporter Bart Gellman wrote: “Many of the targets were chosen only secondarily to contribute to the military defeat of [Iraq]... Military planners hoped the bombing would amplify the economic and psychological impact of international sanctions on Iraqi society... They deliberately did great harm to Iraq’s ability to support itself as an industrial society...” In the Jan/Feb 1995 edition of Foreign Affairs, French diplomat Eric Rouleau wrote: “[T]he Iraqi people, who were not consulted about the invasion, have paid the price for their government’s madness... Iraqis understood the legitimacy of a military action to drive their army from Kuwait, but they have had difficulty comprehending the Allied rationale for using air power to systematically destroy or cripple Iraqi infrastructure and industry: electric power stations (92 percent of installed capacity destroyed), refineries (80 percent of production capacity), petrochemical complexes, telecommunications centers (including 135 telephone networks), bridges (more than 100), roads, highways, railroads, hundreds of locomotives and boxcars full of goods, radio and television broadcasting stations, cement plants, and factories producing aluminum, textiles, electric cables, and medical supplies...” However, the U.N. subsequently spent billions rebuilding hospitals, schools, and water purification facilities throughout the country.

10.7 Abuse of Coalition POWs

During the conflict, Coalition aircrew shot down over Iraq were displayed as prisoners of war on TV, most with visible signs of abuse. Amongst several testimonies to poor treatment, Air Force Captain, Richard Storr was allegedly tortured by Iraqis during the Persian Gulf War. Iraqi secret police broke his nose, dislocated his shoulder and punctured his eardrum. Royal Air Force Tornado crew John Nichol and John Peters have both alleged that they were tortured during this time. Nichol and Peters were forced to make statements against the war in front of television cameras. Members of British Special Air Service Bravo Two Zero were captured while providing information about an Iraqi supply line of Scud missiles to Coalition forces. Only one, Chris Ryan, evaded capture while the group’s other surviving members were violently tortured. Flight surgeon (later General) Rhonda Cornum was raped by one of her captors after the Black Hawk she was riding in was shot down while searching for a downed F-16 pilot.

10.8 Operation Southern Watch

Main article: Operation Southern Watch
Since the war, the U.S. has had a continued presence of 5,000 troops stationed in Saudi Arabia – a figure that rose to 10,000 during the 2003 conflict in Iraq. Operation Southern Watch enforced the no-fly zones over southern Iraq set up after 1991; oil exports through the Persian Gulf’s shipping lanes were protected by the Bahrain-based U.S. Fifth Fleet.

Since Saudi Arabia houses Mecca and Medina, Islam’s holiest sites, many Muslims were upset at the permanent military presence. The continued presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia after the war was one of the stated motivations behind the 11 September terrorist attacks,[168] the Khobar Towers bombing, and the date chosen for the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings (7 August), which was eight years to the day that U.S. troops were sent to Saudi Arabia.[169] Osama bin Laden interpreted the Islamic prophet Muhammad as banning the “permanent presence of infidels in Arabia”.[170] In 1996, bin Laden issued a fatwa, calling for U.S. troops to leave Saudi Arabia. In a December 1999 interview with Rahimullah Yusufzai, bin Laden said he felt that Americans were “too near to Mecca” and considered this a provocation to the entire Islamic world.[171]

10.9 Sanctions

Main articles: United Nations Security Council Resolution 661 and Iraq sanctions

On 6 August 1990, after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 661 which imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, providing for a full trade embargo, excluding medical supplies, food and other items of humanitarian necessity, these to be determined by the Council’s sanctions committee. From 1991 until 2003, the effects of government policy and sanctions regime led to hyperinflation, widespread poverty and malnutrition.

During the late 1990s, the U.N. considered relaxing the sanctions imposed because of the hardships suffered by ordinary Iraqis. Studies dispute the number of people who died in south and central Iraq during the years of the sanctions.[172][173][174]

10.10 Draining of the Qurna Marshes

Main article: Draining of the Qurna Marshes

The draining of the Qurna Marshes was an irrigation project in Iraq during and immediately after the war, to drain a large area of marshes in the Tigris–Euphrates river system. Formerly covering an area of around 3,000 square kilometers, the large complex of wetlands were almost completely emptied of water, and the local Shi’ite population relocated, following the war and 1991 uprisings. By 2000, United Nations Environment Programme estimated that 90% of the marshlands had disappeared, causing desertification of over 7,500 square miles (19,000 km²).

The draining of the Qurna Marshes also called The Draining of the Mesopotamian Marshes occurred in Iraq and to a smaller degree in Iran between the 1950s and 1990s to clear large areas of the marshes in the Tigris–Euphrates river system. Formerly covering an area of around 20,000 km² (7,700 sq mi), the large complex of wetlands was 90% drained prior to the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. The marshes are typically divided into three main sub-marshes, the Hawizeh, Central, and Hammar Marshes and all three were drained at different times for different reasons. Initial draining of the Central Marshes was intended to reclaim land for agriculture but later all three marshes would become a tool of war and revenge.[175]

Many international organizations such as the U.N. Human Rights Commission, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the Wetlands International, and Middle East Watch have described the project as a political attempt to force the Marsh Arabs out of the area through water diversion tactics.[175]

10.11 Oil spill

Main article: Gulf War oil spill

On 23 January, Iraq dumped 400 million US gallons (1,500,000 m³) of crude oil into the Persian Gulf,[176] causing the largest offshore oil spill in history at that time.[177] It was reported as a deliberate natural resources attack to keep U.S. Marines from coming ashore (Missouri and Wisconsin had shelled Failaka Island during the war to reinforce the idea that there would be an amphibious assault attempt).[178] About 30–40% of this came from allied raids on Iraqi coastal targets.[179]

10.12 Kuwaiti oil fires

Main article: Kuwaiti oil fires

See also: Environmental impact of war

The Kuwaiti oil fires were caused by the Iraqi military setting fire to 700 oil wells as part of a scorched earth policy while retreating from Kuwait in 1991 after conquering the country but being driven out by Coalition forces. The fires started in January and February 1991 and the last one was extinguished by November 1991.[180]

The resulting fires burned out of control because of the dangers of sending in firefighting crews. Land mines had been placed in areas around the oil wells, and a military cleaning of the areas was necessary before the fires could be put out. Somewhere around 6 million barrels (950,000 m³) of oil were lost each day. Eventually, pri-
Oil well fires rage outside Kuwait City in 1991

vately contracted crews extinguished the fires, at a total cost of US$1.5 billion to Kuwait.[181] By that time, however, the fires had burned for approximately ten months, causing widespread pollution.

11 Cost

The cost of the war to the United States was calculated by the U.S. Congress to be $61.1 billion.[182] About $52 billion of that amount was paid by other countries: $36 billion by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states of the Persian Gulf; $16 billion by Germany and Japan (which sent no combat forces due to their constitutions). About 25% of Saudi Arabia’s contribution was paid in the form of in-kind services to the troops, such as food and transportation.[182] U.S. troops represented about 74% of the combined force, and the global cost was therefore higher.

11.1 Effect on developing countries

Apart from the impact on Arab States of the Persian Gulf, the resulting economic disruptions after the crisis affected many states. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) undertook a study in 1991 to assess the effects on developing states and the international community’s response. A briefing paper finalized on the day that the conflict ended draws on their findings which had two main conclusions: Many developing states were severely affected and while there has been a considerable response to the crisis, the distribution of assistance was highly selective.[183]

The ODI factored in elements of “cost” which included oil imports, remittance flows, re-settlement costs, loss of export earnings and tourism. For Egypt, the cost totaled $1 billion, 3% of GDP. Yemen had a cost of $830 million, 10% of GDP, while it cost Jordan $1.8 billion, 32% of GDP.

International response to the crisis on developing states came with the channeling of aid through The Gulf Crisis Financial Co-ordination Group. They were 24 states, comprising most of the OECD countries plus some Gulf states: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait. The members of this group agreed to disperse $14 billion in development assistance.

The World Bank responded by speeding up the disbursement of existing project and adjustment loans. The International Monetary Fund adopted two lending facilities – the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) and the Compensatory & Contingency Financing Facility (CCFF). The European Community offered $2 billion in assistance.[183]

12 Media coverage

Main article: Media coverage of the Gulf War

The war was heavily televised. For the first time, people all over the world were able to watch live pictures of missiles hitting their targets and fighters departing from aircraft carriers. Allied forces were keen to demonstrate their weapons’ accuracy.

In the United States, the “big three” network anchors led the war’s network news coverage: ABC’s Peter Jennings, CBS’s Dan Rather, and NBC’s Tom Brokaw were anchoring their evening newscasts when air strikes began on 16 January 1991. ABC News correspondent Gary Shepard, reporting live from Baghdad, told Jennings of the city’s quietness. But, moments later, Shepard was back on the air as flashes of light were seen on the horizon and tracer fire was heard on the ground.

On CBS, viewers were watching a report from correspondent Allen Pizzey, who was also reporting from Baghdad, when the war began. Rather, after the report was finished, announced that there were unconfirmed reports of flashes in Baghdad and heavy air traffic at bases in Saudi Arabia. On the “NBC Nightly News”, correspondent Mike Boettcher reported unusual air activity in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Moments later, Brokaw announced to his viewers that the air attack had begun.

Still, it was CNN whose coverage gained the most popularity and indeed its wartime coverage is often cited as one of the landmark events in the network’s history (ultimately leading to the establishment of CNN International). CNN correspondents John Holliman and Peter Arnett and CNN anchor Bernard Shaw relayed audio reports from Baghdad’s Al-Rashid Hotel as the air strikes began. The network had previously convinced the Iraqi government to allow installation of a permanent audio circuit in their makeshift bureau. When the telephones of all of the other Western TV correspondents went dead during the bombing, CNN was the only service able to provide live reporting. After the initial bombing, Arnett remained behind and was, for a time, the only American TV correspondent reporting from Iraq.
In the United Kingdom, the BBC devoted the FM portion of its national speech radio station BBC Radio 4 to an eighteen-hour rolling news format creating Radio 4 News FM. The station was short lived, ending shortly after President Bush declared the ceasefire and Kuwait’s liberation. However, it paved the way for the later introduction of Radio Five Live.

Two BBC journalists, John Simpson and Bob Simpson (no relation), defied their editors and remained in Baghdad to report on the war’s progress. They were responsible for a report which included an “infamous cruise missile that travelled down a street and turned left at a traffic light.”[184]

Newspapers all over the world also covered the war and Time magazine published a special issue dated 28 January 1991, the headline “WAR IN THE GULF” emblazoned on the cover over a picture of Baghdad taken as the war began.

U.S. policy regarding media freedom was much more restrictive than in the Vietnam War. The policy had been spelled out in a Pentagon document entitled Annex Fox trot. Most of the press information came from briefings organized by the military. Only selected journalists were allowed to visit the front lines or conduct interviews with soldiers. Those visits were always conducted in the presence of officers, and were subject to both prior approval by the military and censorship afterward. This was ostensibly to protect sensitive information from being revealed to Iraq. This policy was heavily influenced by the military’s experience with the Vietnam War, in which public opposition within the U.S. grew throughout the war’s course. It was not only the limitation of information in the Middle East; media were also restricting what was shown about the war with more graphic depictions like Ken Jarecke’s image of a burnt Iraqi soldier being pulled from the American AP wire whereas in Europe it was given extensive coverage.[185][186][187]

At the same time, the war’s coverage was new in its instantaneousness. About halfway through the war, Iraq’s government decided to allow live satellite transmissions from the country by Western news organizations, and U.S. journalists returned en masse to Baghdad. NBC’s Tom Aspell, ABC’s Bill Blakemore, and CBS News’ Betsy Aaron filed reports, subject to acknowledged Iraqi censorship. Throughout the war, footage of incoming missiles was broadcast almost immediately.

A British crew from CBS News (David Green and Andy Thompson), equipped with satellite transmission equipment traveled with the front line forces and, having transmitted live TV pictures of the fighting en route, arrived the day before the forces in Kuwait City, broadcasting live television from the city and covering the entrance of the Arab forces the next day.

Alternative media outlets provided views in opposition to the war. Deep Dish Television compiled segments from independent producers in the U.S. and abroad, and produced a ten-hour series that was distributed internationally, called The Gulf Crisis TV Project. The series’ first program War, Oil and Power was compiled and released in 1990, before the war broke out. News World Order was the title of another program in the series; it focused on the media’s complicity in promoting the war, as well as Americans’ reactions to the media coverage. In San Francisco, as a local example, Paper Tiger Television West produced a weekly cable television show with highlights of mass demonstrations, artists’ actions, lectures, and protests against mainstream media coverage at newspaper offices and television stations. Local media outlets in cities across the country screened similar oppositional media.

The organization Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) critically analyzed media coverage during the war in various articles and books, such as the 1991 Gulf War Coverage: The Worst Censorship was at Home.[188]

13 Technology

The USS Missouri launches a Tomahawk missile. The Gulf War was the last conflict in which battleships were deployed in a combat role (as of 2014)

Precision-guided munitions, such as the U.S. Air Force’s AGM-130 guided missile, were heralded as key in allowing military strikes to be made with a minimum of civilian casualties compared to previous wars, although they were not used as often as more traditional, less accurate bombs. Specific buildings in downtown Baghdad could be bombed while journalists in their hotels watched cruise missiles fly by.

Precision-guided munitions amounted to approximately 7.4% of all bombs dropped by the Coalition. Other bombs included cluster bombs, which disperse numerous submunitions,[189] and daisy cutters, 15,000-pound bombs which can disintegrate everything within hundreds of yards.

Global Positioning System units were relatively new at the time and were important in enabling Coalition units to easily navigate across the desert. Since military GPS receivers were not available for most troops, many used...
commercially available units. To permit these to be used to best effect, the “selective availability” feature of the GPS system was turned off for the duration of Desert Storm, allowing these commercial receivers to provide the same precision as the military equipment.\[^{190}\]

Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and satellite communication systems were also important. Two examples of this are the U.S. Navy’s Grumman E-2 Hawkeye and the U.S. Air Force’s Boeing E-3 Sentry. Both were used in command and control area of operations. These systems provided essential communications links between air, ground, and naval forces. It is one of several reasons why Coalition forces dominated the air war.

American-made color photocopiers were used to produce some of Iraq’s battle plans. Some of the copiers contained concealed high-tech transmitters that revealed their positions to American electronic warfare aircraft, leading to more precise bombings.\[^{191}\]

### 13.1 Scud and Patriot missiles

The role of Iraq’s Scud missiles featured prominently in the war. Scud is a tactical ballistic missile that the Soviet Union developed and deployed among the forward deployed Red Army divisions in East Germany. The role of the Scuds which were armed with nuclear and chemical warheads was to destroy command, control, and communication facilities and delay full mobilization of Western German and Allied Forces in Germany. It could also be used to directly target ground forces.

Scud missiles utilize inertial guidance which operates for the duration that the engines operate. Iraq used Scud missiles, launching them into both Saudi Arabia and Israel. Some missiles caused extensive casualties, while others caused little damage. Concerns were raised of possible chemical or biological warheads on these rockets, but if they existed, they were not used.

The U.S. Patriot missile was used in combat for the first time. The U.S. military claimed a high effectiveness against Scuds at the time, but later analysis gives figures as low as nine percent, with forty-five percent of the 158 Patriot launches being against debris or false targets.\[^{192}\]

The Dutch Ministry of Defense, which also sent Patriot missiles to protect civilians in Israel and Turkey, later disputed the higher claim.\[^{103}\] Further, there is at least one incident of a software error causing a Patriot missile’s failure to engage an incoming Scud, resulting in deaths.\[^{193}\]

Both the U.S. Army and the missile manufacturers maintained the Patriot delivered a “miracle performance” in the Gulf War.\[^{192}\]

### 14 See also

- Kuwait–Iraq 1973 Sanita border skirmish
- Iraq War (2003–2011)
- War on Terror
- War in Afghanistan (2001–present)
- Kuwait–Iraq barrier
- Gulf War military awards
- Iraq disarmament timeline 1990–2003
- Iraq–Russia relations
- Lion of Babylon tank
- List of Gulf War military equipment
- Operation Simoom
- Organization of United States Air Force Units in the Gulf War
- Timeline of the Gulf War

### Regional wars:

- Iran–Iraq War
- Al-Anfal Campaign
- List of modern conflicts in the Middle East

### General:

- Loss of Strength Gradient
- Military history of the United States
- Post–World War II air-to-air combat losses

### Games:
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- Used in retconned backstory for *The Punisher* (2004)

17.2 Novels

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- *Hogs* dime novel series by James Ferro
- *Savant* (by James Follett)
- *Summer 1990* (by Firyal AlShalabi)
- *Third Graders at War* (by Felix G)
- *To Die in Babylon* by Harold Livingston
18 External links

- Gulf War Discussion from the Dean Peter Krogh Foreign Affairs Digital Archives
- Historical Context from the Dean Peter Krogh Foreign Affairs Digital Archives
- CBC Digital Archives – The 1991 Gulf War
- Master Index of Desert Storm Oral History Interviews by the United States Army Center of Military History
- Bibliography of the Desert Shield and Desert Storm compiled by the United States Army Center of Military History (via Wayback Machine)
- Desert Shield/Desert Storm Photographs US Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, Pennsylvania
- Persian Gulf War
- 20th Anniversary of Desert Storm in Photos
- Air Force and Air Defense of Iraq before the war (not translated) exact list of the technical details
- Liberating Kuwait United States Marine Corps
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