Eight days before his Aug. 2, 1990, invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein met with April Glaspie, then America's ambassador to Iraq. It was the last high-level contact between the two countries before Iraq went to war.

From a translation of Iraq's transcript of the meeting, released that September, press and pundits concluded that Ms. Glaspie had (in effect) given Saddam a green light to invade.

"We have no opinion on your Arab-Arab conflicts," the transcript reports Glaspie saying, "such as your dispute with Kuwait. Secretary [of State James] Baker has directed me to emphasize the instruction ... that Kuwait is not associated with America."

The Persian Gulf War began Jan. 17, 1991. But before the official end of the war (April 11), Glaspie was called to testify informally before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

She said she was the victim of "deliberate deception on a major scale," and denounced the Iraqi transcript as "a fabrication" that distorted her position, though it contained "a great deal" that was accurate.

The veteran diplomat awaited her next assignment, later taking a low-profile job at the United Nations.

In November 1992, Iraq's former deputy prime minister, Tarik Aziz, gave Glaspie some vindication. He said she had not given Iraq a green light. "She just listened and made general comments," he told USA Today. "We knew the United States would have a strong reaction."

Glaspie is now US consul general in Cape Town, South Africa.

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