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Desert Shield

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21 November 2007

Abstract

A new way of fighting for Americans evolved because Kuwait's' invasion. Why did Saddam attack Kuwait? Many American officials thought Saddam just wanted to settle the long-standing dispute over oil prices. Nevertheless, Saddam invaded Kuwait and the Americans had no choice but to help protect Saudi Arabia from a possible attack. America deployed forces on a magnitude never before attempted. Although the Army, Air Force, Marines, Navy, and Coast Guards were successful, they encounter many equipment problems.

Desert Shield

On July 25, 1990, April C. Glaspie US Ambassador to Iraq met with Saddam Hussein. An immediate message was sent to the state department. It stated that Iraq's military was positioning along the Kuwaiti border. Thinking this was cosmetic posturing, she never believed that Saddam Hussein would invade Kuwait. During the meeting Mr. Hussein did most of the talking while Mrs. Glaspie listened. He spoke mostly concerning oil prices. Ambassador Glaspie assured Mr. Hussein that the U.S. objective was not to be entwined with the Iraq-Kuwait dispute. However, many that read Ambassador Glaspies message became concerned. The Ambassador failed to include the customary final paragraph offering her personal assessment.

By the end of July, a few days after the meeting, Iraq moved approximately 200,000 troops toward Kuwait. They also positioned several hundred Iraqi tanks pointed towards the Kuwaiti refineries and rigs. At 2:00 am, Aug 2, 1990, the Armed Forces of Iraq crossed the border into Kuwait and started an invasion. The Kuwaiti Armed Forces did fight but were no match for their enemy. Soon after, Iraqi tanks were raging down a six lane highway towards Kuwait City. They began taking the city street by street. Special Operation troops from Iraq attacked broadcasting centers and microwave facilities. By noon of 2 August, 1990, Saddam Hussein had control of a fifth of the world's oil reserve. President Bush ordered immediate export and import embargos with Iraq and asked other nations to join. With the fear of Iraq devouring Saudi Arabia, American had to make some fast decisions. On the order of President Bush, Defense Secretary Dick Chaney flew to Jedda to talk with King Fahd to determine if help was needed from the US. Upon conformation from the king, President George W. Bush made the decision to deploy American forces on a magnitude never before attempted.

American troops had four goals: (1) repel further Iraqi aggression; (2) remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait; (3) bring restoration to the government of Kuwait; (4) and secure the life of Americans citizens in that region.

On August 7, 1990, the United States coalition force launched Operation Desert Shield in an attempt to protect Saudi Arabia and force Iraqi troops to withdraw from Kuwait. The United States deployed branches of the military and encouraged other allied countries to join the fight.

The initial step of deployment started with Green Ramp on Pope Air Force Base North Carolina. On August 7, 2007, the 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers anxiously awaited the opportunity to board a C-130 Hercules for deployment to the Middle East and engage in combat operations. Unlike Vietnam, this was a new breed of soldiers with a different way of thinking and fighting. Their new ways of thinking and fighting were soon tested in a war against a determined enemy. Uncertain of their foes' tactics, paratroopers checked and rechecked their equipment as often as possible in preparation of the unknown. After approaching the drop zone, their ride got bumpy, stomachs turned, and tensions grew. Hesitant of the enemy waiting below, the paratroopers began thinking of their arrival to the ground and exit. As they hit the ground, paratroopers formed a defense at the principal air base in Saudi Arabia.

The first burden fell on the Air Force to protect the soldiers on the ground. The responsibility was placed on General Michael J. Dugan, Military Airlift Commander, General Hansford T. Johnson, and Strategic Air Command General John T. Chain. These men were known as the pentagon "key players." Once deployment began, the United States was landing a plane every seven minutes.

The United States decided to build an air bridge in Saudi Arabia. The weight of this bridge came from the Lockheed C-141B Starlifter. The lizard-green C-141B's from the 47th Military Airlift

Wing at Charleston, South Carolina deployed to the region. Although these aircraft were unsung heroes of the skies, it was growing old. These aircraft flew approximately 45,000 hours. They had already passed 38,000 hours when Desert Shield began. The other heavyweight airlift wing was the Lockheed C-5. It is the largest aircraft in the U.S. service. The Galaxy is able to carry four M551 Sheridan tanks, a HUMVEE battlefield vehicle and seventy-two soldiers.

The F-15C Eagles were the first attack aircraft to deploy to the region. The C-5B was championed by the 436th Military Airlift Wing at Dover AFB, commander by Colonel M Michael G. Moffitt. On August 25, 1990, a Galaxy crashed at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. Despite the crash, Galaxy pilots continued to take off and landed over the wreckage keeping personnel and equipment moving to the region. Airlift operations continued while additional American Forces and Allies came into the Combat Theater. Civilian charters like the Lockheed L-1011 flew along with military C-5s and C141Bs. These charters deployed troops from Fort Drum and the 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron from the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing Squadron at Seymour Johnson AFB. They were the first units with a dual role in Desert Shield. Their role included both air and ground combat operations. In addition, the F-15 Strike Eagle deployed along with this unit. Later on, the 363rd Tactical Fighter Wing from Shaw AFB equipped with F-16/D Fighting Falcon jet fighters joined the deployment for combat action. In addition, Boeing E-3 Sentry AWACS was deployed to detect enemy activity and guide warplanes over the battlefield. These aircraft were no stranger to the area; they had routine operations in Saudi Arabia.

The desert conditions gave these aircraft some difficulties due to fog over Saudi Arabia. Quite a few flights were delayed from landing and taking off. The airlift of personnel and equipment

staged throughout air bases in Europe where delay continued due to the adverse weather conditions.

Unfortunately for the American Armed Forces, the Pentagon began to downsize. The U.S. troops faced a reduction in personnel, equipment, and support. This did not stop the 24th Infantry Division from arriving and setting up quarters in Saudi Arabia warehouses. They laid platforms for their tents in degrees of up to 130 degrees Fahrenheit. This area would later be called tent city. One of the principle land battle weapons was the HUMVEE with its .50 caliber machine gun. Although it was flexible and suitable for the desert, it had to be used properly. Soldiers quickly realized that they had to reduce air in the tires. After several tires exploded, they figured it out. Another principle land vehicle was the M1 Abrams tank with a 105 millimeter gun used by the Army. The 82nd Airborne unit sported the M551 Sheridan tank. The Marines were equipped with the older M60A1 tanks. The "Big Daddy" of them all was the US Army's M270 launcher Multiple Launch Rocket System. It is a self-propelled unit firing a free flight artillery rocket designed to fill a void in the conventional artillery support. The Multiple Launch Rocket System is designed to suppress enemy air defense missiles and guns and to bring counter fire to bear on enemy ground positions. With knowledge that Saddam Hussein had chemical weapons and had used them, Americans received chemical warfare masks and equipment and carried the equipment while wearing the mask often. In fear of what Saddam Hussein would do, the protective mask became the weapon of choice in the mind of most soldiers.

The aircraft carrier was the capital ship of all volunteer US forces on the eve of Desert Shield. It was led by USS Eisenhower to take up position in the Eastern Mediterranean while the USS Independence moved from the Indian Ocean to a position close to the Strait of Hormuz, at the

southern tip of the Persian Gulf. An eight-ship battle fleet was already deployed. The General's concern was if Mr. Hussein attacked, would our forces be set. Far less glamorous was the job of providing sea transport. Sealift vessels had to be brought up to readiness. Ninety-five percent of the armor, heavy equipment, ammunition and fuel for American troops had to go by means of sealift. The US began to fear that Saddam Hussein would strike knowing that they did not have enough equipment and personnel on ground to withstand an attack. These vessels would have to travel through the narrow Suez Canal and could become a possible target for Saddam's Army.

Parts of the naval mobilization were the deployment of the battle groups of the USS Eisenhower and USS Independence, which were in place on 8 August. Forty-eight F-15C/D Eagle air superiority fighters from the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, landed in Saudi Arabia and began round the clock air patrol in attempt to prevent further Iraqi advances. The U.S. also sent the battleship USS Missouri and USS Wisconsin to the region. The military buildup continued until they numbered approximately 500,000 troops in theater. With the troops in place, the military had many problems with equipment. Among the many items of equipment accused of vulnerability in the harsh desert conditions, night-vision goggles were the most controversial. The military use of NVGs to fly scout and tank killing helicopters under cover of darkness gave the US force a big edge over Iraq's huge army and tank arsenal. These NVGs did not work properly and were the cause of five crashes, none with fatalities. The helicopter, aircraft, and vehicles showed themselves highly vulnerable to heat and sand. One model of field radio could not be used in the desert because its metal handle became too hot to grasp. Despite the problems, American soldiers struggled and coped with these equipment problems and triumphed over them. On January 17, 1991, Operation Desert Storm began.

Reference

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from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/desert_shield.htm

Outline

A. Build-up

1. Saddam & Ambassador Meeting
2. President orders Defense Secretary to Jeddah

B. Air Operations

1. C-141B
2. Air Force Fighter F-15C Eagle
3. F-111E Aardwark fighter-bombers
4. Civilian Charters

C. Land Operations

1. 24th Infantry Division set up
2. Principle land battle weapons
3. M270 launcher

D. Sea Operations

1. USS Dwight D. Eisenhower
2. USS Saratoga

E. Equipment failures.

