



**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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DID DESERT STORM COMPLETE THE MISSION?

BY

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ABSTRACT

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On 16 January 1991, the United States, along with its coalition partners began offensive operations to remove the Iraqi Army from Kuwait. Beginning in August 1990, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, defensive forces deployed along the Northern Saudi Arabian border to halt a possible Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. After several months of offensive preparations, the ground attack begun on 24 February was halted after, 100 hours of combat, by President Bush. Massive losses were inflicted on the Iraqi Army to the point the war became a "turkey shoot." Driving Iraqi forces out of Kuwait achieved United Nations goals, but five years after Desert Storm ended issues remain. Should the coalition have continued the attack into Baghdad to forcibly remove Saddam Hussein from power? Would the complete annihilation of the Iraqi Army contributed to a power vacuum in the region? This project examines these issues and attempts to provide the answers.

On 16 January 1991 the United States, along with its coalition partners, began offensive operations to remove Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Army from Kuwait. This operation was designated Desert Storm - - an appropriate follow-on to the defensive operations Desert Shield begun the previous August. Desert Storm became a major historical event. On the fifth anniversary of the initiation of offensive operations, controversy persists over whether President Bush halted the war prematurely. In a 12 December 1995 interview with David Frost, President Bush continues to contend not only that it would have been a mistake to press forward to Baghdad to capture Saddam Hussein but also that it was appropriate to halt the war after Iraqi forces vacated Kuwait. President Bush, however, admits that,

The ending wasn't quite as clean as it might have been if Saddam Hussein had come to that tent, (Safwan 3 March 1991) laid down his thing and maybe left office. ¹

This issue will be discussed for years to come. It will be examined in the context of military operations *going too far or not going far enough*. The two most significant questions that will be debated for the foreseeable future are:

1. Should the United States and its coalition partners have continued the attack into Baghdad, with the objective of removing Saddam Hussein as Iraq's head of state?
2. Would a massive defeat of the Iraqi Army, along with destruction of its military equipment, have created a power vacuum in the Middle East Region?

This paper attempts to answer these questions.

In an effort to set *the stage*, it is necessary to review the reasons for the initial Iraqi invasion into Kuwait, the United States response to the invasion, the Arab nation's response leading to the buildup of the coalition, and the development of offensive operations.

After concluding its war with Iran, Iraq reportedly fielded the fourth largest army in the world. Obviously, Iraq had the strongest military in the Middle East: over one million men under arms; modern military equipment, consisting mostly of new Soviet equipment, especially T-72 tanks; large quantities of long-range artillery; and armored personnel carriers. It also had a large Air Force with many modern aircraft (F-1s, MIG- 29s). But its most disturbing capabilities included the ability and will to employ weapons of mass destruction. Iraqi use of chemical weapons had been aptly demonstrated in numerous operations against Iranian forces. Its forces especially Iraqi Army commanders, had been battle tested for over eight years. They knew the requirements of mechanized warfare. With such capabilities, Saddam Hussein was determined to take advantage of his new position.

Iraq had emerged from the war as the dominant Arab power in ... the region, and Saddam Hussein wasted little time making it clear that he intended to exact his dues.²

Even though Iraq had emerged from the Iranian war with the fourth largest

military in the world, the country was in deep economic straits. Iraq owed Saudi Arabia over \$80 billion for loans the Saudis had made to Iraq during the Iranian War. Other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council had contributed over \$37 billion in loans.³ Even with these huge debts, Saddam Hussein continued to pour money into his military forces. This military spending exacerbated Iraq's financial distress and intimidated his weaker neighbor, Kuwait. Saddam initially demanded more money from Kuwait but instead was offered a small long term loan. Saddam escalated his demands on Kuwait. He demanded control of the Bubiyan and Warbah islands. If these islands were controlled by a hostile government, Iraq would not have access to the Persian Gulf for its large oil export vessels. He also demanded the reduction of Kuwait's oil production quota, which would have kept international oil prices high, thereby helping Iraq gain income for its military purposes; and resolution of the ownership of the Al-Rumaylah oil field, located along the Kuwaiti - Iraqi border. Kuwait, for its part, tried to negotiate these demands with Iraq and was doing so right up to Iraq's invasion.

On 4 August 1991, during a briefing to President Bush, General Norman Schwarzkopf provided a succinct analysis of Saddam Hussein's reasons for attacking Kuwait:

... adjustments of the Iraq - Kuwait border in favor of Iraq, debt forgiveness, payment of \$4 billion and control of two tiny Kuwaiti controlled islands, Warba and Bubiyan, at the northwest corner of the Gulf. ... the islands block Iraqi access to the Gulf.⁴

Regardless of Saddam Hussein's rhetoric about Kuwait being the 19th province of Iraq, which he later used to legitimize his invasion, the actual reasons for the invasion were for economic:

The central immediate cause of the Iraqi invasion can be seen to have been the pressing economic straights Iraq was finding itself in as a result ... of the cost of the war with Iran.⁵

As tensions mounted between Iraq and Kuwait, other Arab countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council attempted to bring about a compromise between the two countries. But as these discussions were being conducted, Saddam Hussein began moving his military forces toward the border of Kuwait.

On 17 July, Saddam accused Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates of complicity with the United States to cheat on oil production quotas. He blamed this overproduction for driving down the price of oil, causing losses of billions of dollars to Iraq.⁶

Although Saddam's accusations were correct, Iraq was spending huge sums of money for military research and development programs, including nuclear development. Oil revenues would have been expended toward the military budget versus domestic.

Saddam's saber rattling was seen as a bluff. His heavy-handed tactics were well known. He had extracted a great deal of money from the Gulf states both during and after the Iraq - Iran War, and his latest accusations against Kuwait and the UAE were seen as another act of extortion. It was assumed he would be bought off, and that things would then calm down.⁷

By 19 July, three Republican Guard divisions were within 10 - 30 miles of

the border. Many intelligence analysts saw this as a threatening gesture by Saddam to get his way in the oil negotiations. Even as an additional 100,000 Iraqi troops, amounting to eight divisions, were moved into the border region, Arab leaders still believed Saddam would not attack Kuwait. President Mubarak of Egypt had even sent a personal message to President Bush contending that Saddam would not take any military action and advising the United States to relax and not antagonize the situation.

Then in the early morning hours of 2 August 1990, Saddam Hussein did the unexpected: One Arab nation attacked a brother Arab nation. Three Republican Guard Forces Command divisions launched the initial attack across the border. Heliborne assault, amphibious units, and Special Operation Forces attacked government targets in Kuwait City. The Iraqi forces faced minor opposition as they sliced southward to link up with the units in Kuwait City. Within twenty four hours Kuwaiti military resistance had ended. Thus began the occupation of Kuwait, which would last for the next 210 days.

Even though the United States had been closely monitoring the developing situation in the Middle East, only one DIA analyst, Pat Lang, actually expected Iraqi forces to attack. The closest prediction of Iraqi intent came from General Schwarzkopf, Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command, to the Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney, on 1 August 1990. But he didn't get

it completely right either.

I think they're going to attack, ... but added that I didn't believe Saddam would grab the entire country. I anticipated he'd move to positions just south of the 30th parallel, taking Kuwait's part of the Rumaila oil field, as well as Bubiyan Island, which controlled the sea-lane to Iraq's new port, Umm Qasi, and then he would stop.⁸

The United Nations reacted quickly to the Iraqi invasion by passing UN Security Council Resolution 660, which condemned the Iraqi invasion and demanded the withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from the sovereign country of Kuwait. This action had little affect on Saddam Hussein: By 3 August, Iraqi forces had begun to take up positions along the Kuwaiti-Saudi Arabian border. His Kuwaiti invasion demonstrated that no one could reasonably predict Saddam's intentions. The United States did not want to play a waiting game with Saddam. If Saudi Arabia fell, Saddam would control 40% of the world's proven oil reserves. Oil prices would have escalated to exorbitant levels, or production would have lowered, giving Saddam leverage over the rest of the world. Protecting Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf Area was of vital national interest to the United States. The situation required a definitive response.

On 5 August, Secretary of Defense Cheney and General Schwarzkopf flew to Saudi Arabia to meet with King Fahd. During their meeting on 6 August, the King was shown recent satellite reconnaissance photos detailing the building of Iraqi forces along his northern border. After several hours of discussion, King

Fahd agreed to the military assistance offered by the United States. Desert Shield officially began.

When the Iraqi invasion began on 2 August, the United States responded immediately by ordering a carrier battle group to move from the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Oman. A second carrier battle group was ordered to sail to the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The two carrier groups consisted of 100+ fighter and attack aircraft and approximately 12 surface combatant ships. After the 6 August meeting with King Fahd, combat forces began to deploy into Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Units were notified of their immediate deployments. The Air Force's 1st Tactical Fighter Wing, based at Langley AFB, Virginia, flew nonstop to Daharan, arriving on 8 August. The "ready" brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division deployed by air, arriving on 9 August. Given a continuing threat of an Iraqi attack on Saudi Arabia, the United States concentrated on deploying its combat forces. The flow of military forces continued around the clock. Defensive positions were established around the air and sea terminals in Daharan. If Saddam attacked Saudi Arabia by proceeding southward along the coastal highway and capturing these vital lines of communication, U.S. forces would have a difficult time forcing an entry into Saudi Arabia. Over the next few weeks the Army deployed an airborne division, an air assault division, a mechanized infantry division, an armored division, and an armored cavalry regiment to secure these lines of communication and to

avert significant casualties in the event of their loss. The total forces and major combat equipment included over 115,000 soldiers, 700+ tanks, 1000+ armored personnel carriers, 145 AH - 64 Apache helicopters, and 294 155mm self-propelled howitzers.⁹ Forces from the other military components responded just as quickly.

While these forces were deploying into Saudi Arabia, President Bush quickly built a coalition comprised of traditional U.S. - European allies, as well as Arab countries. President Bush articulated U.S. National Policy Objectives and vowed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait would be repelled. He specified four objectives:

U.S. National Policy Objectives

- Immediate, and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait;**
- Restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government;**
- Assurance of security and stability in the Gulf; and**
- Protection of American citizens.¹⁰**

Realizing that the United States could not (for economic and political reasons) unilaterally provide for the entire defense of Saudi Arabia, President Bush worked closely with the United Nations to build global support. During this crisis, the United Nations passed 12 resolutions. First, Resolution 660 condemned the invasion, passing on 2 August. The final resolution, Resolution 678, passed on 29 November, authorized "all necessary means" to expel Iraq from Kuwait if Resolution 660 was not fulfilled by 15 January 1991.

Meanwhile, the 21-member Arab League was conducting an emergency meeting in an effort to resolve the crisis among Arab brothers. It passed a resolution calling for a withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Although 12 members voted for the resolution, Iraq, Libya, and Palestine voted against it, while Yemen and Algeria abstained. Jordan, Sudan, and Mauritania expressed reservations, while Tunisia had not attended the meeting.

For the Arabs, it had long been a guiding principle that their leaders could engage in any treachery as long as 1) they were polite about it, calling one another brother, and 2) they left the post-World War I borders intact. Saddam Hussein broke the second rule.¹¹

Although a coalition of nations had been developing since the 2 August invasion, there were pockets of support for Saddam's actions. On 8 August 1990, however, Saddam made a huge political blunder: He proclaimed Kuwait as the 19th province of Iraq. This coercive annexation served to "jell" the coalition against him. British Prime Minister Thatcher's statement typifies the reaction:

Iraq has violated and taken over the territory of a country which is a full member of the United Nations. That is totally unacceptable, and if it were allowed to endure, then there would be many other small countries that could never feel safe.¹²

Saddam's annexation of Kuwait, eliminating it as a sovereign state, could not be condoned. If the United Nations had acquiesced, it would relinquish its role of fostering peaceful settlements of international disputes. Additionally, if no action was taken, the UN would send a message to Saddam that Saudi

Arabia also would not be defended. On 8 August, there were virtually no U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia. On 9 August the United Nation's Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 662, condemning the annexation and declaring it illegal. This measure was also supported by pro-Iraqi states. Saddam's blunder thus,

... made it possible for Bush to assemble a coalition that included Arab royals, like the kings of Saudi Arabia and Morocco; moderate pro-Western, ..., leaders like Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and radical, anti-Western dictators like Hafiz al-Assad of Syria. ¹³

This enormous and diverse response to the Iraqi invasion was much more than Saddam expected. The Iraqi leader assumed lingering Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States would preclude intervention by American combat forces. He was also convinced the Arab nations would unite against any type of Western intervention. The annexation blunder really isolated Iraq.

The influx of coalition forces, including European, Arab, and Islamic members, began to steamroll. Twenty-four countries made force commitments, other countries like Germany and Japan provided monetary payments. By 21 September 1990, over a half-million coalition forces had assembled in and around Saudi Arabia, are depicted below.

Country	Troops	War Ships	Tanks	Combat Aircraft
U.S.	400,000	50	2100	1900
Arab-Islamic	150,000	35	1150	380
Britain	35,000	26	163	96
France	5,500	8	72	42

TOTAL	590,000	119	3485	2418
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In the following three months, the force increased steadily.

While the number of forces grew, it became apparent that the worldwide economic sanctions were having little or no effect on Saddam. The citizens of Iraq were accustomed to shortages of commodities; they had made great sacrifices during the prolonged eight-year war with Iran. On 8 November 1990, President Bush announced that additional combat forces including (1 Corps Headquarters, 2 armored divisions, 1 infantry division, 450 USAF aircraft, three more carrier battle groups, and a marine division) were being deployed to Saudi Arabia. It was increasingly clear that this massive deployment of additional force structure was being deployed to support an offensive military option to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

U.S. diplomacy was spectacularly successful in two overlapping respects: assembling a coalition and engineering the United Nations resolutions and sanctions. President Bush fairly quickly came to believe that diplomatic means - sanctions, embargoes, political isolation, and pressure - would not work and that war would be necessary to dislodge Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.¹⁴

Since September 1990, Coalition forces, while building a creditable defensive force against a possible Iraqi offensive into Saudi Arabia, were also planning for their own offensive action to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. After numerous sessions with political and military leaders of the coalition forces, the offensive plan developed by Central Command (CENTCOM) evolved

into four specific phases.

- I. A Strategic Air Campaign
- II. Attainment of Air Supremacy in the Kuwait Theater of Operations
- III. Battlefield Preparation
- IV. Offensive Ground Campaign¹⁵

As additional forces deployed from Europe, the offensive plan gained increasing momentum. The overall goal of CENTCOM was to inflict massive damage on the Iraqi forces so they could not conduct a protracted war.

The offensive plan focused on the two Iraqi centers of gravity. First, the strategic center of gravity was the political and military high command in Baghdad, which included its ability to maintain command and control of the Iraqi forces located throughout Kuwait, along with Iraqi forces in Southern Iraq. The command structure in Baghdad would be eliminated primarily through a massive air campaign in Phase I. Secondly, the destruction of the Republican Guard located in Southern Iraq and Northern Kuwait was identified as the theater/operational center of gravity. The Republican Guard included best-equipped and most highly trained Iraqi force. It was also the most loyal to Saddam Hussein. Destruction of the Republican Guard was critically important to the offensive operations. Although Phase I and Phase III would include air

attacks on the Republican Guard forces, the Phase IV Ground Offensive would

be the primary instrument of their destruction.

The Ground Offensive Phase was under the control of the Third United States Army, which was the Army component of Central Command (ARCENT). LTG John Yeosock was the commander of ARCENT during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. During the ground offensive he commanded over 330,000 soldiers: consisting of two Army Corps, seven divisions, two armored cavalry regiments, augmented by French and British units. (See Figure 1)¹⁶

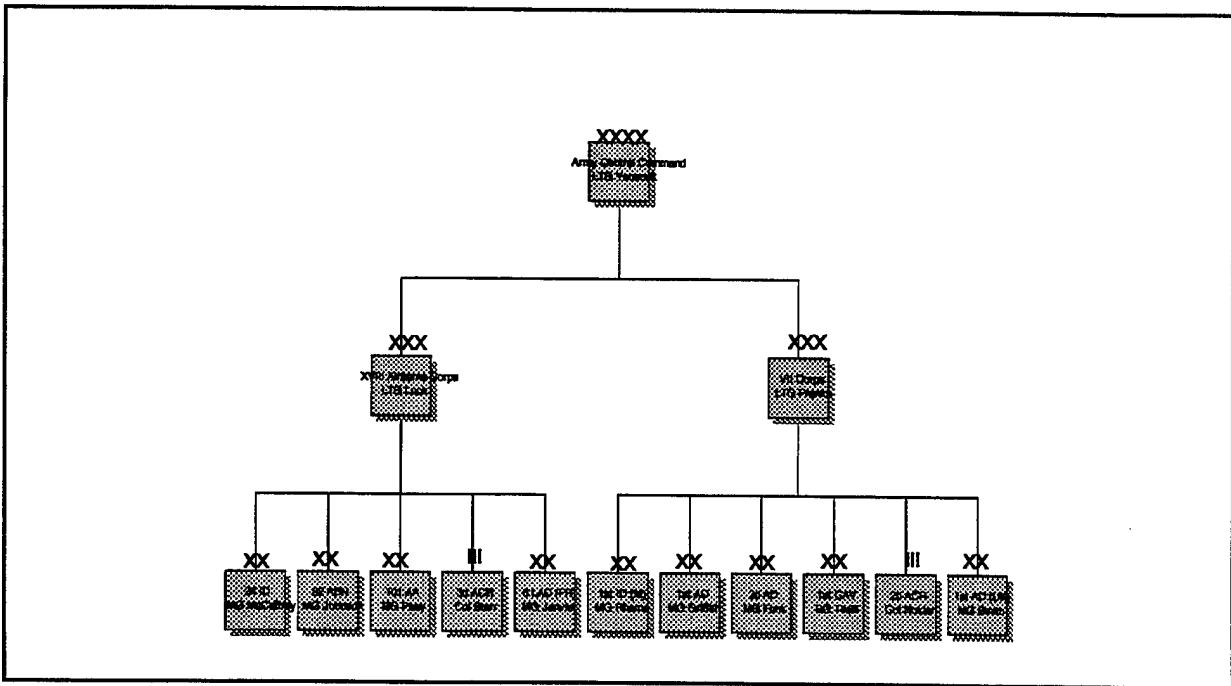


Figure 1 ARCENT CHAIN OF COMMAND

During the ground war, General Yeosock intended to destroy Iraq's will and

ability to occupy Kuwait. Additionally, he deemed it necessary to destroy Iraq's ability to threaten regional peace and stability in the near future.

ARCENT - CAMPAIGN PLAN OBJECTIVES

- Cut off elite Republican Guard
- Iraqi Army units trapped in Kuwait be forced to surrender or attempt a desperate retreat
- Iraqi forces would not be allowed to escape with their equipment intact. ¹⁷

As the ground offensive plan matured, it called for a wide end-run attack from the western Iraqi desert into the rear of the Iraqi forces in Southern Iraq, with the mission of destroying the Republican Guard. Simultaneously, the Marines and Arab Coalition forces would attack from the Kuwaiti-Saudi-Arabian border to hold the Iraqi forces in place. Saddam fully expected that any offensive operations into Kuwait would include attacks from the southern border of Kuwait and amphibious operations along the east coast. The Iraqi forces had built strong defensive fortifications, fire trenches, and placed thousands of landmines to thwart these anticipated attacks. Saddam expected to inflict massive casualties on the coalition forces, hoping to destroy *their will* for a war.

Unknown to Saddam, coalition forces had designed effective deception measures, reinforcing Saddam's expectations that the main ground attacks would come against his strengths. Beginning in November, U.S. Navy and Marine forces conducted numerous amphibious rehearsals and exercises. Army and Marine forces also practiced minefield breaching operations and

trench warfare training. Sun Tzu, over 2000 years ago, spoke of the value of such deception:

All warfare is based on deception. A skilled general must be master of the complementary arts of simulation and dissimulation; while creating shapes to confuse and delude the enemy he conceals his true dispositions and ultimate intent.¹⁸

As VII Corps forces started to arrive in theater in December 1990, the primary deception plan was initiated. VII Corps was convoyed on a heavily travelled two-lane highway, designated MSR Dodge, over 150 miles into Saudi Arabia. Concurrently, XVIII Airborne Corps was displaced from their defensive positions, occupied since mid August, to Tactical Assembly Areas 260 miles deeper in western Saudi Arabia. The force repositioning was conducted simultaneously with the beginning of the Air Campaign and continued for over a month as the air war continued against Iraq. Even after the air war started, but prior to the initiation of ground combat, the deception plan continued. The 1st Cavalry Division conducted border probe operations and artillery raids along the Wadi-al-Batin. Another of Sun Tzu's lessons proved pertinent.

The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know where I intend to give battle he must prepare in a great many places.¹⁹

General Luck, XVIII Airborne Corps Commander best summarized the success of the deception plan in an Executive Summary Memorandum to the Commander of CENTCOM, dated 24 June 1991.

Prior to G-Day (Ground Attack), XVIII Airborne Corps deception operations, cross border reconnaissance, surveillance, and deep operations - all in

conjunction with the theater air campaign - effectively confused and demoralized enemy forces and significantly reduced Iraqi resistance.²⁰

In the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO), Desert Storm officially began at 0300 hours on 17 January 1991 with the initiation of the Phase I Air Campaign. The UN proclaimed deadline for Saddam to leave Kuwait had passed on 15 January. According to Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analysts, the Iraqi forces in the KTO exceeded 545,000 soldiers.

- 43 Divisions (7 Republican Guard/12 Armored)**
- 4280 Tanks**
- 3,100 Artillery pieces**
- 2,800 Armored Personnel Carriers²¹**

The three phases of the air campaign were conducted almost simultaneously. Over the next 38 days, the air war successfully paralyzed the Iraqi Command, Control, and Communications system, while destroying Iraqi air defenses. This allowed effective air attacks on Iraqi ground forces, and gave the coalition forces indisputable air superiority, so Saddam was unable to collect intelligence on the coalition ground forces moving to the west.

On 22 February, President Bush again gave Saddam an ultimatum to withdraw from Kuwait within seven days. After Saddam rejected the offer, President Bush authorized commencement of ground operations. After thirty eight days of heavy bombing, the Iraqi divisions in Kuwait and along the Saudi

Arabia-Iraqi border had sustained major battle losses. The Third U.S. Army Battle Damage Assessment Briefing on 23 February offered this assessment:

**13 Divisions <50% combat effective
10 Divisions 50 - 74% combat effective
18 Divisions 75 - 100% combat effective²²**

The air campaign had proven successful in causing significant losses to the Iraqi Army, but coalition planners estimated 450,000 Iraqi troops remained in the KTO.

At 0400 24 February, the ground assault to drive the Iraqi Army out of Kuwait began. The Marine attacks towards the center of the Iraqi defenses in Kuwait, as expected by Iraqi defenders, led the way. Since these were actually diversionary attacks, the main enveloping attack on the western flank into Iraq was completely unexpected.

Within a day of the opening of the offensive, the Iraqi army was in a complete rout, with only a few units standing to fight in uncoordinated and unsuccessful efforts to slow the attack.²³

The ground war continued for four days of intense, rapid advance in conjunction with violent suppression of enemy forces. On 27 February The Third Army reported "A total of 37 divisions have been rendered combat ineffective or destroyed in 96 hours of ground combat"²⁴ By 18 March, CENTCOM released the final estimates of Iraqi battle losses for the entire Desert Storm campaign: 3847 tanks, 1450 armored personnel carriers, and 2917 artillery pieces.

By the evening of 27 February, Iraqi forces had been removed from Kuwait, while remaining Republican Guard Forces in Iraq were cut off, totally exposed to further attacks on 28 February. In Washington, President Bush went on national television and declared Kuwait had been *liberated*. He also stated there would be a *suspension of all combat operations* effective 0800 28 February, KTO time. Four Republican Guard Forces divisions were then retreating toward Basra. The United States forces were poised to attack; they certainly would have defeated the remaining Iraqi forces. The coalition, however, had achieved its goal of liberating Kuwait while causing significant damage to Iraq's war machine. But the Republican Guard Forces retreated into Basra and were not destroyed.

Many critics charge that the end of Desert Storm came too soon. Should the coalition have continued the attack onto Baghdad? It is clear the Arab - Islamic members of the coalition had no intent to drive onto Baghdad to topple Saddam or his government. Prince Sultan, Commander of the Arab Coalition Forces, comments in his book, *Desert Warrior*,

There were limits to our agenda. We had no wish to destroy Iraq's domestic economy or inflict unnecessary suffering on its population, still less to invade or conquer its territory. Troops under my command had strict orders not to set one foot inside Iraq. We fought Iraq only in so far as it was necessary to free Kuwait and protect our own independence.²⁵

Even after the deceit and damage caused by Saddam, the other Arab nations still considered Iraq to be a *brotherly Arab country*.

In his book *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, General Schwarzkopf offers his view on this issue:

It should be clearly understood that the option of going all the way to Baghdad was never considered ... at the time the war ended there was not a single head of state, diplomat, Middle East expert, or military leader, ... who advocated continuing the war and seizing Baghdad ... we had no authority to invade Iraq for the purpose of capturing the entire country or its capitol.²⁶ (Note: area underlined is added for emphasis)

General Schwarzkopf also agrees with Prince Sultan that the Arab force coalition members would never have attacked into Iraq. In Schwarzkopf's opinion, the coalition would have been fractured by any decision to capture Baghdad and occupy Iraq. This would have expanded the war aims, which the Arab coalition would not condone. General Schwarzkopf also points out a strong economic reason for not occupying Iraq:

Had the United States and the United Kingdom gone on alone to capture Baghdad, under the provisions of the Geneva and Hague conventions we would have been considered occupying powers and would have been responsible for all the costs of maintaining and restoring government, education, and other services for the people of Iraq.²⁷

President Bush had several reasons for a quick end to the war, especially after having attained the goals prescribed in the U.N. resolutions. He saw no sufficient reason to prolong the war by capturing Baghdad and occupying Iraq. He also believed this would have expanded our stated war aims. It would have definitely increased U.S. casualties. And it would have surely required a long

term occupation force, placing us in a *Vietnam like quagmire*. Furthermore, all the important allies were pressing the President for a quick end to the war, rather than a continued *turkey shoot* against the weaker Iraqi forces as demonstrated along the *highway of death* leading out of Kuwait toward Basra. He achieved all the goals that he initially listed as his policy objectives.

There were already the first political calls to hold back. The military was becoming uncomfortable with unnecessary killing and saw little reason to accept additional American deaths.²⁸

If the United States had unilaterally taken action to attack onto Baghdad, there is little doubt the coalition would have been destroyed. The United States would have been subjected to worldwide condemnation for escalating the conduct of the war after soundly defeating Iraqi forces. Japan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates had contributed over \$53 billion in both cash and supplies²⁹ to the United States to conduct both Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The United States did not have the economic means to sustain an occupation force by itself since it is doubtful the Arab coalition would have continued to provide money for an action they did not support. For these reasons the United States and its allies did not continue the offensive to capture Baghdad.

Even though the Coalition should not have attacked Baghdad, many critics have stated Saddam retained too much of his military forces, especially

four to five divisions of Republican Guard forces. However, from a geopolitical viewpoint, many coalition allies feared a total destruction of the Iraqi military would have produced a power vacuum in the Middle East. The Arab nations were extremely concerned Iran would emerge as the dominant regional power had the Iraqi Army been destroyed. When the Ayatollah Khomeini took control of the government upon the fall of the Shah in 1979, he had espoused Islamic fundamentalism. He had immediately called for an Islamic revolution. Riots broke out in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait. The established Arab governments were definitely worried that a renewal of religious riots would begin if Iran became dominant.

The Islamic Republic of Iran had developed as a threat to regional order, committed to subverting governments by an Islamic order. The Ayatollah Khomeini had called for a removal of Gulf regimes - 'Islam proclaims monarchy and hereditary succession wrong and invalid. We will export our revolution throughout the world because it is an Islamic revolution.'³⁰

Even Jordan, who supported Iraq but opposed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, was fearful of Iran growing in regional power. In a document dated 28 February, Jordan's King Hussein "expressed fears of a vacuum which might be filled by politicized muslim fundamentalism."³¹ Additionally, "the Bush Administration came under a barrage of appeals from foreign leaders both inside and outside the coalition not to do anything that would precipitate the breakup of Iraq."³² They feared the reemergence of Iran as a dominant Middle East player and

believed the Arab nations and Western powers would need Iraq to counterbalance Iran's spread of muslim fundamentalism.

Now that Saddam Hussein seemed to have been cut down to size, the Gulf Arabs began to fret anew over the old specter of Iranian hegemony, which had led them to back Saddam Hussein against Iran in the 1980s.³³

Even though the allies were delighted over Saddam's defeat, none of them wanted Iraq to be dismembered, possibly annexed by neighboring states, or held indefinitely by occupying forces. The Arab coalition wanted Iraq to retain enough military capability to offset the growth in Iranian influence.

No doubt we would have welcomed Saddam's overthrow, as we had no wish to see Iraq itself devastated. Despite our quarrel with its leader, Iraq was a brotherly country whom we had helped in its war against Iran, and whose regional role we valued as a counterweight to both Iran and Israel.³⁴

Had the Iraqi military been totally devastated, the Kurds in Northern Iraq would have expanded their territory while Shiite-Iranian groups would have dominated Southern Iraq. None of the Arab governments wanted Iraq to be subdivided into three sections with different power bases. The balance of power in the Middle East region would then have shifted in favor of Iran.

The Gulf monarchies, fearful of Iranian - supported radical Islamic movements, were loath to see Iran's influence enhanced by the rise of a Shi'ite regime in Baghdad.³⁵

General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, also made a strong point against the total destruction of Iraq in his autobiography, *My American Journey*:

However much we despised Saddam and what he had done, the United States had little desire to shatter his country. For the previous ten years, Iran, not Iraq, had been our Persian Gulf nemesis. We wanted Iraq to continue as a threat and a counterweight to Iran.³⁶

From a strategic perspective, Desert Shield and Desert Storm protected the vital interests of the United States. The free flow of oil at moderate prices continued from the Middle East. Additionally, the United States had demonstrated its resolve to come to the aid of its Middle Eastern allies to protect their security and the regional balance of power:

... the destruction of much of Iraq's offensive capabilities now matches the destruction of Iran's offensive capabilities in the Iran - Iraq war. Thus, for the time being, the balance of power has been reestablished in the Gulf at a much lower level of military capability.³⁷

Undoubtedly, the controversy over the Gulf War's ending will continue. This is especially relevant since Saddam still reigns as the leader of Iraq, five years after the conclusion of Desert Storm. Some argue that the ground campaign should have continued one more day in an effort to destroy the remaining Republican Guard Forces near Basra. Would this additional loss have been enough to topple Saddam? Such what-if questions, of course, are never adequately answered.

Military objectives and national objectives will not always coincide ... war is an extension of politics, and as wars draw to a close, political considerations will often emerge predominant to dictate the nature of the outcome.³⁸

The security of the Middle East will remain politically and economically important to U.S. national interests. The Gulf War provided many lessons for any future conflicts in the region. Ultimately, Desert Storm was a decided success. Perhaps it would have been more successful if Saddam had been forced to attend negotiations at Safwan as a condition of calling off the offense. But what would it have taken to force Saddam to sign off on a humiliating military defeat? The argument goes on ...

NOTES

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5. Ken Matthews, The Gulf Conflict and International Relations, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 41.
6. Conduct of the Persian Gulf War, 5.
7. HRH General Khaled bin Sultan with Patrick Seale, Desert Warrior, (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 175.
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9. Conduct of the Persian Gulf War, 383.
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12. Ibid., 21.
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