“The Middle East has abruptly reached a new and critical stage in its long and important history,” U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower explained to Congress in January 1957. “In past decades many of the countries in that area were not fully self-governing. Other nations exercised considerable authority in the area and the security of the region was largely built around
their power. But since the First World War there has been a steady evolution toward self-government and independence. This development the United States has welcomed and has encouraged. Our country supports without reservation the full sovereignty and independence of each and every nation of the Middle East.”¹ Eisenhower’s commitment to an independent Middle East was the cornerstone of the Eisenhower Doctrine announced shortly after the 1956 Suez Crisis when Egypt’s leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, had seized and nationalized the Suez Canal. Britain, France, and Israel launched retaliatory strikes against Egypt, but Eisenhower did not support the raids. Instead, he warned old colonial powers that he would not allow them to maintain an imperial stance in the Middle East. More importantly, Eisenhower declared that the United States would not stand “idly by to see the southern flank of NATO completely collapse through Communist penetration and success in the Mid East.”² Eisenhower believed that the Soviet Union’s interest in the Middle East was “solely that of power politics. Considering her announced purpose of Communizing the world, it is easy to understand her hope of dominating the Middle East.”³

Indeed, Eisenhower’s deepest concern was that the United States might be losing ground to the Soviets in the Middle East. He feared that the loss of any country in the region to communism would so endanger American interests and those of its allies that the United States would be forced to alter its own political and economic systems. Eisenhower explained that the Middle East “contains about two thirds of the presently known oil deposits of the world and it normally supplies the petroleum needs of many nations of Europe, Asia and Africa.” Even the United States, a net exporter of oil at the time, depended on cheap oil from the Middle East to maintain economic growth and production. If the Soviets captured the region or any part of it, Eisenhower worried that it would “have the most adverse, if not disastrous, effect upon our own nation’s economic life and political prospects.”⁴ To counteract the Soviets, therefore, Eisenhower announced U.S. support for any nation feeling the communist threat. Specifically, the Eisenhower Doctrine pledged to “authorize the United States to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence.” It would also approve “military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations which desires such aid.” Finally, it would commit “the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.”⁵ Congress, obviously moved by the president’s speech, eventually approved Eisenhower’s request for an additional $200,000,000 in discretionary funds in 1958 and 1959 to combat communism in the Middle East.
Much of Eisenhower’s attention was devoted to Israel and her neighbors, but he was most worried about communist advances in what he called the “northern tier,” Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. These vulnerable states were of significant geo-strategic importance, and Iraq and Iran held significant economic resources. Eisenhower bound them together in a mutual defense agreement known as the Baghdad Pact. Each of the four nations (with aid from Britain and the United States) pledged to support each other against communist advances. The Soviets called the Baghdad Pact “an appendage of NATO,” proving to Eisenhower that the league was the right move. Eisenhower made other diplomatic moves to shore up the alliance. Early in his presidency, Eisenhower had at least tacitly supported a coup against Iranian leader, Mohammed Mossadegh, returning the conservative shah to power in Iran. In Iraq, John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower’s secretary of state, feared that the Soviets had turned more aggressive and that Baghdad leaders could feel “the hot breath of the Soviet Union on their necks.” He urged Eisenhower to take a more aggressive stance in supporting the conservative monarchy led by King Faisal II and his deputy, Prime Minister Nuri al-Said. Eisenhower concurred, and the United States poured millions of dollars into Iraq to support the Baghdad government.

Thus was born America’s commitment to Iraq and the beginning of the U.S. effort to influence and control politics in Baghdad. Like those that would follow it, Eisenhower’s attempt to shore up the government in Baghdad against its many critics failed miserably. Within months of the passage of the Eisenhower Doctrine, on July 14, 1958, the conservative government was overthrown in a military coup. An unstable republic replaced the monarchy and ushered in a decade of rebellion. The new military government, led by General Abdul Karem Qassim, quickly abolished the monarchy, dissolved parliament, and officially recognized the Soviet Union and China. But Qassim’s government also felt tremendous pressures that threatened to tear it apart. Kurds in northern Iraq launched an independence movement, and Qassim felt he was the target of constant coup plots instigated by Nasser in Egypt. Iraqi leaders were caught between their strong anti-Western feelings and the fear of U.S. intervention. In the summer of 1961, a dispute between Iraq and Britain over the right to Kuwaiti independence also threatened the Qassim government. Only a Soviet veto at the United Nations Security Council of a British resolution claiming Kuwait’s full independence kept war at bay. The Arab League also played a pivotal role in the crisis, eventually inviting Kuwait to join its ranks, thus ensuring that Qassim’s government would leave Kuwait alone. When President Kennedy officially received Kuwait’s new ambassador to the United States in June 1962, Qassim withdrew Iraq’s ambassador from Washington, downgraded its embassy in Washington to a consulate, and ordered the U.S. ambassador to leave Iraq.6 Though he did not cut off all diplomatic
The First Gulf War, 1990–1991
relations completely, it was clear by 1962 that relations between Iraq and the United States were severely strained.

Diplomatic relations did not improve, even after Qassim was removed from power in another bloody coup. On February 8, 1963, Baathist army officers arrested Qassim and assassinated him, along with thousands of communists. There is some evidence, though not substantiated in documents, to suggest that U.S. intelligence officials aided the Baathists in their anti-communist raids. The Baathists were predominantly Sunni, but were more secular than religious. They believed in Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism, a juggling act of national priorities and regional loyalties. They tended to be socialist, but had an almost allergic reaction to communism. The Baathists were also decidedly against Nasser’s Egypt and its growing regional influence. The new Baghdad government was also a sworn enemy of Israel. The Baathists promised an Iraq free from old imperial ties and Western influence, but would come to depend on Western aid to support its government. For these reasons, U.S. policymakers trod lightly in Iraq.

In July 1968, a group of disaffected Baathist officers launched another coup and installed General Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as leader of Iraq. These officers had grown increasingly despondent over the weak Iraqi economy and the failure of the previous Abdul Arif government to secure the northern regions of Iraq from Kurdish rebels. Shortly after taking power, al-Bakr secured complete authority by organizing a “select fraternity of political allies united by tribal and familial loyalties originating in common ancestry around the village of Tikrit.” At the heart of this group was an extended clan, the al-Bu Nasir. Among the young officers in this inner circle was Saddam Hussein, a relative of al-Bakr from the village of al-Auja, near Tikrit. Hussein was born in poverty on April 28, 1937. At age 10 he left his home for Baghdad, where he lived with an uncle and attended a local school. He joined the Baathist Party in 1957 and participated in anti-Qassim and anti-communist activity. He was a strong supporter of al-Bakr and had particular expertise in coopting or breaking tribal groups to extend the total control of the Baathists. Though other Baathist leaders experimented with the forced collectivization of land ownership and nationalization of land, Hussein focused his energies on securing power. He coordinated the activities of the Republican Guard, an elite military unit, using them for internal policing and national security issues. He was not afraid to use the Guard to eliminate potential political rivals or to destroy the Communist Party within Iraq. For his efforts, al-Bakr made Saddam Hussein the second most powerful figure in the Iraqi government.

Hussein used this position to further consolidate Baathist power inside Iraq, but also to reposition Baghdad in the international system. Though a
sworn enemy of communism, Hussein moved Iraq closer to the Soviet orbit in the 1970s by signing several agreements on oil development and allowing the Soviets to use Iraqi ports in exchange for military weapons. Still, relations between Moscow and Baghdad never developed beyond these preliminary agreements in the early 1970s, allowing U.S. policymakers to watch Iraq from a calculated distance. Initial U.S. support for Kurds in northern Iraq never amounted to much either, allowing Baghdad to talk tough against the Americans but little else. By the end of 1978, Iraq was a secondary concern for U.S. policymakers.

All of that changed in 1979. First, the Iranian revolution of that year, that had ushered radical Shiites into power in Tehran, threatened to engulf Iraq. The Shiite majority in Iraq had lived in fear of Baathist power since the 1963 coup, but took great solace in the Iranian revolution. Riots in the predominantly Shiite areas of Iraq, especially east Baghdad, led many Shiites to question al-Bakr’s policies. Furthermore, there was talk in Baghdad of an alliance between Iraq and Syria that would move Saddam Hussein down the chain of command, replacing him with Syrian premier Hafez al-Assad. In a pattern that would become typical of his rule over the next twenty-five years, Hussein moved quickly against both groups. He ousted al-Bakr and declared himself president of the republic, chief of the army, and leader of the Baathist Party. He ordered the assassination of hundreds of political rivals, attacked Shiite radicals all over Iraq, and brutally suppressed the Kurdish independence movement in northern Iraq. By the end of the year, Saddam’s control over Iraqi political life was complete.

In the first months of his rule, Saddam Hussein came to suspect that a radical Iran was Iraq’s greatest threat. Ironically, officials in Washington were beginning to believe that U.S. policy toward Iraq had to be altered significantly to deal with the new Iranian regime. The Reagan administration made a concerted effort to improve relations with Baghdad, even though Saddam had committed horrendous human rights violations against his own people. Reagan officials, narrowly focused on U.S. national security needs, feared that continued Iranian attacks against Iraqi oil facilities threatened U.S. interests. The Reagan White House was also concerned that “sustained Iranian pressure could . . .  bring about Iraq’s political collapse.” The last thing the Reagan administration wanted was Iranian revolutionary influence to spread in the region, and therefore it believed that Iraq could serve as a useful corrective to Iran’s growing power and ambitions. There was also considerable support among western European allies for a new U.S. policy toward Iraq. France especially believed that Saddam Hussein was a moderate Arab in a radical region and the most secular nationalist in the Middle East. Reagan officials likewise held that the time was right to move Iraq away from its dependence on Soviet
The First Gulf War, 1990–1991

weapons. For nearly two decades Iraq had relied on Soviet arms shipments to shore up its military. By the mid-1980s, with the Soviets bogged down in Afghanistan, policymakers in Washington believed that the United States could drive a wedge between Moscow and Baghdad. Such thinking was predicated on the fact that the Iraqi government was making new overtures to the West based on its geo-strategic needs brought about in part by its war against Iran.

Iran and Iraq had been at war since 1980, after Iranian leaders rebuked Saddam’s initial overtures of public support for the 1979 Iranian revolution. Iran’s new revolutionary leaders, all Shiites, rejected the Sunni leadership in Iraq and encouraged Iraqi Shiites, a majority of the population, to rise up against their Sunni oppressors. Hussein responded by attacking Shiites inside Iraq, especially those belonging to the Dawa Party. The Baghdad government also verbally assailed Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of Iran’s revolutionary movement. In April 1980 an Iranian-inspired assassination attempt against Saddam’s closest Baghdad ally, Deputy Premier Tariq Aziz, led to further attacks against Iraq’s Shiites and more harsh words for Iran. In a daring show of strength, Saddam Hussein ordered the execution of Ayatollah Mohammed Bakr al-Sadr, a popular Iraqi Shiite leader, who had been living under house arrest for months following the Iranian revolution. Baghdad also deported nearly 100,000 Shiites and closed off some of the holiest Shiite shrines inside Iraq. Finally, in September 1980, Saddam ordered limited attacks against key Arab regions inside Iran, especially in Shatt al-Arab and Khuzestan, hoping to destabilize the Shiite government in Tehran.

For two years Iraq held the upper hand. Slowly, however, as the revolutionary government solidified its hold on power in Tehran, Iran began a counteroffensive that would eventually push Iraqi troops back. For six years, in what it called the “Imposed War,” Iran was on the offensive, often attacking and occupying territory inside Iraq. The United Nations finally brokered a ceasefire in July 1988, but not before hundreds of thousands of casualties and near-economic collapse for both nations. By the time of the ceasefire, it was clear that the Reagan administration had gone to great lengths to bring Iraq into the U.S. orbit. The Reagan White House had extended huge agricultural credits to Iraq during the war, and by 1987 those credits topped $1 billion, “the largest loan of its kind to any single country worldwide.” Throughout the war the U.S. had also sent arms to Iraq against the protocols of several existing treaties and had even shared high-level intelligence cables and photographs of Iranian military movements with Baghdad. There were several reports that supplies and material sent to Iraq under agricultural trade agreements were actually dual-purpose goods that Baghdad could, and did, use in the war against Iran. The Department of Agriculture was famous for ignoring Saddam’s abuses, and
often stood in the way of economic sanctions against Baghdad for poor treatment of its Kurdish population and other human rights abuses inside Iraq.15

The ultimate expression of U.S. support for Iraq came in 1984, however, when the Reagan administration restored full ambassadorial relations with Baghdad. After U.S. support for Israel in the 1967 “Six Day War,” the United States and Iraq had broken off formal diplomatic relations. As Baghdad moved closer to Moscow in the 1970s, it appeared as if relations between the United States and Iraq were damaged beyond repair. Reagan’s gradual increase of support of Iraq in the mid-1980s reversed this course, however, and the full normalization of relations in 1984 helped Saddam’s government ignore the fact that the Reagan administration had actually sent arms to Iran during its war against Iraq. In a desperate move to free American hostages in Lebanon, and to illegally fund the Contras in Nicaragua who were trying to overthrow the Sandinista government there, Reagan officials had agreed to secretly send Iran arms. Key White House officials believed that the revolutionary government in Iran had influence among the radicals in Lebanon and could work quietly for the release of the Americans being held against their will. The U.S. press quickly found out about the illegal exchange, and soon the Reagan administration had a full-blown scandal on its hands: The Iran-Contra Affair. Saddam Hussein was furious with Reagan for supporting Iran, and clearly believed that the United States was trying to support both sides to increase its influence in the region. Only intervention by Iraq’s key allies in the region, particularly Saudi Arabia and, ironically, Kuwait, kept the Iran-Contra Affair from permanently damaging relations between Washington and Baghdad. In retrospect, the Iran-Contra Affair may have even given Saddam the upper hand in negotiations with Americans over his continued human rights abuses inside Iraq.

By the end of the Reagan years, despite Baghdad’s continued attacks on Kurds and Shiites inside Iraq and its extended war against Iran, the National Security Council concluded that, “normal relations between the United States and Iraq would serve our longer term interests and promote stability in both the Gulf and the Middle East.”16 The Reagan administration had gradually shifted its weight to Saddam Hussein’s Baathist government in Baghdad, though it never fully abandoned the idea of also influencing events in Iran. Normalization of relations with Iraq in 1984 ushered in an era of unusual cooperation between governments, and it appeared at the end of Reagan’s eight years in office that the United States had reoriented its power and prestige in the Middle East by drastically changing course with some key nations, Iraq among them. As the end of the Soviet Union’s ability to protect and support its allies became even more apparent by the end of the 1980s, the Reagan administration’s policy of improving relations with Iraq seemed prescient.
George H.W. Bush and the New World Order

George H.W. Bush came to office in 1989, therefore, convinced that relations between Iraq and the United States would continue to improve. In his administration’s first policy review of relations with Iraq, what became known as National Security Directive 26 (see Document 1-A), President Bush and his national security team concluded that “The United States government should propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior and to increase our influence with Iraq . . . We should pursue, and seek to facilitate, opportunities for U.S. firms to participate in the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy, particularly in the energy area, where they do not conflict with our non-proliferation and other significant objectives. Also, as a means of developing access to and influence with the Iraqi defense establishment, the United States should consider sales of non-lethal forms of military assistance. . . .” The Bush administration also warned Iraq, however, that it would not tolerate any “illegal use of chemical and/or biological weapons,” nor would it turn its back on human rights concerns inside Iraq. Finally, White House officials concluded that Iraq had to “cease its meddling in external affairs . . . and be encouraged to play a constructive role in negotiating a settlement with Iran and cooperating with the Middle East peace process.”

Working through his newly appointed U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, the first woman to hold a senior embassy post in the Arab world, President Bush relayed his Iraqi policy to Saddam Hussein. The United States sought to “engage Iraq and direct it toward progressive and peaceful pursuits.” The Bush administration continued Reagan’s policy of extending agricultural credits and new loans to Iraq, convincing Hussein that the United States needed Iraq as an ally in the region. He probably came to this conclusion because the Bush administration skillfully avoided attempts by several members of Congress, Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island among them, to curtail U.S. support of Iraq on human rights grounds. Reports from Iraq indicated that the government had continued its persecution of Kurds and Shiites, but Saddam was hopeful that the Bush White House would look the other way and continue to support Iraq financially. When key allies agreed with Bush officials that Saddam looked like a voice of reason in the region, even modifying his stance on Israel somewhat, the new loans were granted and the Iraqi government spoke of a “warm and close” relationship with the United States and many of its Western allies. As Americans celebrated the end of the 1980s, and an end to the Cold War, it appeared as if long-standing difficulties in the Middle East were also on a new course.
All of this changed, however, in the spring of 1990. U.S. officials had miscalculated Saddam Hussein’s most important goal: political survival. In a move that was to be repeated throughout the next two decades, Hussein led a series of purges inside Iraq to bolster his hold on ultimate political power. Knowing all too well that his predecessor had been killed in office by disloyal officers, Saddam “was determined to use whatever means were required to avoid a similar fate.”\footnote{22} He reportedly told a visitor to Baghdad that he knew “that there are scores of people trying to kill me . . . However, I am far cleverer than they are. I know they are conspiring to kill me long before they actually start planning to do so. This enables me to get them before they have the faintest chance of striking at me.”\footnote{23} After several failed assassination attempts by his handpicked Republican Guard in 1989 and early 1990, Saddam launched a series of purges to regain control of his armed forces.

He also executed a journalist, Farzad Bazoft, on charges of espionage in March 1990, and this action began to undermine Iraq’s new relationship with Western democracies. There is little evidence that Bazoft was a spy for Israel, as Saddam had claimed, but that did not stop the Baghdad government from convicting him of spying. Bazoft, in fact, had been sympathetic to Iraq’s position in its war against his native Iran. He had been a severe critique of the Iranian revolution and the Ayatollah. Baghdad had invited him several times to report on the Iraq–Iran War from inside Iraq, largely because Saddam had found his criticism of Iran pleasing. During one visit, Bazoft learned that there was some physical evidence that Saddam might be engaged in a massive chemical or nuclear weapons program. Bazoft ventured outside of Baghdad to investigate the rumors. Upon his return to Baghdad, he was convinced that he had the news story of a lifetime. Several of his fellow journalists warned him to leave the country, which he tried to do at midnight on September 15, 1989. He was arrested at the airport, however, and brought to Baghdad for questioning by Saddam’s notorious secret police, the Mukhbarat. After Bazoft had spent six weeks in detention, Saddam showed a tape of him confessing to his crimes. Despite sharp protest from several Western leaders, including British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, Bazoft was hanged in early March 1990. Alone, this action would not have led to a direct confrontation with the West, but taken together with the purges, the human rights violations, the continued rumors that Saddam was engaging in a massive chemical or nuclear weapons build up, and his increasingly harsh rhetoric against Israel, many in the Bush and Thatcher administrations began to doubt that Saddam had changed all that much.

The Israeli piece of Saddam’s unraveling conciliatory policy toward the West is most confusing. After several public speeches in late 1988 and 1989
that suggested Iraq had backed away from its strident anti-Israel stance, Saddam went back to his usual bombastic rhetoric about war against Israel. He threatened that if Israel attacked Iraq, it would “be confronted by us with a precise reaction, using the means available to us according to the legitimate right to self-defense.” 24 In April 1990, Saddam further boasted that “he who launches an aggression against Iraq or the Arab nation will now find someone to repel him. If we can strike him with a stone, we will. With a missile, we will . . . and with all the missiles, bombs, and other means at our disposal.” 25 He must have known that the United States would not allow such rhetoric to spill over into reality. Israel, for that matter, would not allow Baghdad to have a weapons program progress to the point of providing an actual threat to its national security. Saddam must have feared that the Israelis were indeed planning a preemptive attack on his military installations and that he had to warn of regional war to stop them. It now seems clear that Hussein was over-invested in his weapons program. It provided the often paranoid leader with several kinds of security. First, knowledge of a weapons program had a domestic purpose. Control of such a dangerous and powerful arsenal was a warning to Saddam’s many internal adversaries that he held all the power. Second, a weapons program told Iraq’s Arab neighbors that Saddam was a leader to be reckoned with, a regional power that could not be ignored. Finally, it appears likely that Saddam thought a growing weapons program would actually act as a deterrent against an Israeli attack, despite the obvious and reverse perception in Jerusalem. Whatever Saddam’s motivation, his weapons program was clearly seen as a direct threat to Israel, a threat that the Bush administration could not ignore.

**Iraq Invades Kuwait**

Still, there was hope in Washington that the improving relations with Iraq would provide the administration with enough leverage to “walk Saddam back” from the brink of war again. Hope was short-lived. In April 1990, Saddam demanded that the United States withdraw its forces from the region, including its navy patrolling international waters in the Persian Gulf. In addition, he declared that Iraq was now in possession of binary chemical weapons (CW), which would serve “as a deterrent sufficient to confront the Israeli nuclear program.” 26 In late May 1990, at the annual meeting of the Arab League, ironically hosted by Baghdad, Saddam publicly accused the government of neighboring Kuwait of stealing Iraqi oil. He further demanded that Kuwait forgive Iraqi debts racked up in the war against Iran, a war Saddam claimed was fought on behalf of all Arab states against the hegemonic Iranians. Iran had twice launched attacks inside tiny Kuwait,
attacks Saddam claimed that Iraq repelled because it was a good neighbor. Iraq had always had an uneasy relationship with Kuwait, laying claim to the small state the moment Baghdad gained its full independence from the British in 1961. The border had remained “a lingering source of dispute,” but Saddam had never been so openly hostile to Kuwait as he was in the spring of 1990. Iraq was financially stressed, and Saddam blamed Kuwait for much of it. Indeed, Iraq’s indebtedness was occupying more and more of Saddam’s time. One of the major causes of that economic distress, a fact that Saddam ignored, was that Iraq’s military budget was unrealistic. In 1990, Iraq’s military budget was $12.9 billion, or approximately $700 per citizen in a country where the average annual income was $1,950. By April 1990, Iraq had only enough cash reserves to cover governmental expenses for three more months and had a region-high inflation rate of 40 percent. Hussein was clearly worried that the war with Iran had depleted Iraqi financial reserves at a time when oil prices were falling worldwide. The Iraqi treasury was in bad shape, and the last thing Saddam wanted was to turn to the International Monetary Fund for budget relief. He was also worried that his domestic political enemies would use Iraq’s poor economic standing as a weapon against him.

In what seemed liked a desperate attempt to rescue Iraq from the brink of economic and political disaster, Saddam began to make plans for an invasion of Kuwait. The first volley of the attack was verbal. On July 18, 1990, Saddam warned Kuwait that, “War is fought with soldiers and much harm is done by explosions, killing and coup attempts – but it is also done by economic means. Therefore, we would ask our brothers who do not mean to wage war on Iraq: this is in fact a kind of war against Iraq.” He also accused Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) of complicity with the United States to cheat on oil production quotas, thereby driving the price of oil down on the international market and costing Iraq billions of desperately needed dollars. There were also geo-strategic considerations in attacking Kuwait. The port of Shatt al-Arab had been closed to Iraqi shipping and oil depots because of debris left over from the Iraq–Iran War. This meant that Iraq now had only limited access to the vital Persian Gulf waters and that access to ports on the Khwar ’abd Allah – the waterway leading to the Persian Gulf – was crucial. Since Kuwait laid claim to the islands of Warbah and Bubiyan on the Khwar ’abd Allah, Iraq was in a difficult position. Attempts by other Arab states to mediate the conflict over the islands and Iraqi access to the Gulf failed in the summer of 1990, as the Iraqi deputy prime minister claimed that “no agreement has been reached on anything because we did not feel from the Kuwaitis any seriousness in dealing with the severe damage inflicted on Iraq as a result of their recent behavior and stands against Iraq’s basic interests.” Kuwait quite reasonably had rejected all Iraqi demands for money and territory.
throughout 1990, but Kuwaiti leaders proposed instead a long-term loan and the sharing of revenue from the Ar-Rumaylah oilfield to help Iraq out of its current financial crisis. This further enraged Saddam, who thought the Kuwaitis were being paternalistic toward their more powerful northern neighbor.

One week after his first public challenge to Kuwait, on July 25, 1990, Saddam for the first time summoned U.S. Ambassador Glaspie to his Baghdad palace. He told her that many of his Arab neighbors had engaged in disappointing actions specifically aimed at Iraq and that he was going to have to take corrective measures. According to official Iraqi transcripts released shortly after her meeting with Saddam, Glaspie reportedly told the Iraqi leader that the Bush administration had nothing but friendly intentions toward his government and that the United States had no specific position on border disputes. “I have a direct instruction from the President to seek better relations with Iraq,” she reported, according to the Iraqi source. “We have no opinion on the Arab–Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.” Furthermore, the Baghdad source reported that Glaspie clearly stated that Secretary of State James Baker believed that the Iraq–Kuwait border issue “is not associated with America.” At the end of their meeting, Glaspie reportedly asked Saddam, “in the spirit of friendship – not in the spirit of confrontation,” what his intentions were with regard to Kuwait. The Iraqi transcript did not reveal Saddam’s response.

When news of this exchange reached the Bush administration, Ambassador Glaspie was called back to Washington to respond. She told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the Iraqi transcript of her conversation with Saddam Hussein had been “maliciously” edited “to the point of inaccuracy.” She also claimed that she had warned Saddam not to attack Kuwait, telling him directly that the United States would not allow such a move to go unchallenged. She concluded her testimony by unequivocally stating that the United States did not give Saddam a “green light” to invade Kuwait and that Saddam must have been “stupid” to think otherwise. The United States would support its clear and vital interests in the region, Glaspie told the Iraqi leader, and this included defending the territorial integrity of Kuwait.

A recently released National Security Council document seems to confirm Ambassador Glaspie’s version of the conversation with Saddam (see Document 1-B). According to this internal memorandum dated July 25, the same day as the meeting in Baghdad, Saddam complained that the United States was trying to humiliate Iraq by working with Kuwait and the UAE to drive oil prices down. He also complained about reports of his government’s human rights abuses in the American press, stating that he would not allow such transgressions. He also believed the ambassador when she stated that the president wanted to improve relations between the United States and
Iraq, but he warned that Iraq would not tolerate any U.S. “arm twisting” of Iraq to get its way. He believed that the upcoming visit of Israeli foreign policy leader Moshe Arens to Washington at “a time of crisis in the Gulf” was a clear sign that the United States favored Israel over peace in the Middle East. Saddam declared that Iraqis knew what war was, “wanted no more of it,” but did not want the United States to “push us to it; do not make it the only option left with which we can protect our dignity.”

In response, Ambassador Glaspie told Saddam that the United States had every reason to be concerned about Iraq’s intentions toward Kuwait, especially when leaders in Baghdad “say publicly that Kuwaiti actions are the equivalent of military aggression.” Furthermore, Glaspie argued, how was the United States supposed to respond when it learned that “many units of the Republican Guard have been sent to the border?” Hussein assured the ambassador that he understood the Bush administration’s position and duty as a superpower. Still, he asked, “how can we make them [Kuwait and the UAE] understand how deeply we are suffering?” Saddam hinted that the financial hardships facing Iraq made it impossible for the government to continue pensions for widows and orphans from the Iraq–Iran War, and that this was unacceptable. At this point in the conversation, Glaspie reported, a notetaker and one of the interpreters “broke down and wept.” Glaspie ended the meeting with a hopeful comment about regional negotiations then being planned by Egypt’s president Hosni Mubarak, and a warning that the United States would only support a peaceful resolution to the mounting crisis between Iraq and Kuwait.

Despite this apparent warning from Ambassador Glaspie, Saddam wasted no time in preparing for war. In mid-July, even before his meeting with Ambassador Glaspie, Saddam had deployed an entire armored division of the Republican Guard just north of the Iraqi border with Kuwait. There were reports circulating in the intelligence communities that as many as 3,000 military vehicles were on the road leading from Baghdad to Kuwait. By August 1, 1990, there were eight Republican Guard divisions between Basra in southern Iraq and the Kuwaiti border. Because the deployment involved the careful coordination of nearly 140,000 Iraqi troops, over 1,500 Iraqi tanks, and massive amounts of heavy artillery, it was clear that Saddam had been planning the invasion for some time. Iraqi leaders had also fully mobilized its attack, fighter, and fighter-bomber aircraft to southern airbases in preparation for the invasion. Iraq’s air force had become the envy of the region because of its size and diversity. It included many F-1, MiG 29, and Su-24 aircraft along with a modern air defense command-and-control system. The air force had been a major reason why Iraq was able to resist total defeat in the Iraq–Iran War, and now it stood poised to attack its weaker southern neighbor, Kuwait, a nation with a very frail air defense system. Iraqi ground forces, now massed on Kuwait’s border, were
the largest in the Persian Gulf. They were well trained and well supported with heavy artillery. During the Iraq–Iran War, Saddam had insisted that Iraq build a modern transportation system inside Iraq to help resupply the Republican Guard. Now Saddam could use that road network to move men and supplies to the Kuwaiti border rapidly.

On August 2, 1990, Saddam’s forces were in place and the invasion of Kuwait began. Three Republican Guard divisions attacked across the Kuwaiti frontier while an Iraqi mechanized division and an armored division launched a coordinated assault south into Kuwait along the Safwan Abdally axis, driving for the al-Jahra pass, the cut in the land on the eastern coast of Kuwait. By early afternoon, Iraqi forces had directly attacked key Kuwaiti government buildings in downtown Kuwait City. Special Republican Guard commando teams meanwhile raided the Kuwaiti amir’s palace. The amir was able to escape to Saudi Arabia, but his brother, one of his closest allies in the government, was killed in the attack. By the evening of August 2, Iraqi forces had fully captured Kuwait City and were now on their way to secure blocking positions on the main routes from Saudi Arabia to Kuwait. Iraqi tanks moved south to capture key Kuwaiti ports on the coast. Kuwaiti forces were hopelessly outmatched and most of the fighting soon ended with Iraq in complete control of much of the country. Saddam was pleased with how quickly his invasion force had subdued Kuwait, and some analysts believe that he even eyed a bigger regional prize, Saudi Arabia. Although the evidence is still quite thin to support the idea of a larger Iraqi invasion, it is possible that Saddam had amassed much of his force in southern Kuwait in preparation for an attack against the oil-rich and more conservative state of Saudi Arabia, a close ally of the United States. Bush administration officials were rightfully fearful of what Iraq might gain by invading Saudi Arabia. “It would be very easy for him to control the world’s oil,” White House chief of staff John Sununu warned. Sununu feared that the greatly outnumbered Saudi military would be no match for Saddam’s troops, and therefore such an attack “would be heady for Saddam.” President Bush feared that Saddam would not only control the world’s oil supply, but that he would also control the very military bases inside Saudi Arabia that the United States would need to launch an effective counterattack against Iraq.

Despite some limited border raids inside Saudi Arabia, no full-force invasion ever materialized. Instead, Saddam now offered a justification and explanation for Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. In a brazen move that fooled no one, Saddam claimed that Iraq had invaded Kuwait because of populist Arab sentiments inside Kuwait that demanded freedom from the oppressive ruling al-Sabah family. A new “Free Kuwait Provisional Government” was now in charge in Kuwait, according to Saddam, and the Iraqis promised to withdraw “as soon as things settle and when the temporary free government
asks us to do so.”43 No such Kuwaiti group ever existed, and it was clear to most that this was another of Saddam’s attempts at regional deception. After about a week of this farce, Saddam simply signed an executive order annexing Kuwait, claiming it as Iraq’s “province 19.” He had long argued that Kuwait had belonged to Iraq before the British designated it a sovereign state, and now the world had been righted. In Baghdad, military leaders spoke of returning “the part and branch, Kuwait, to the whole and the Iraq of its origins.”44 The invasion and annexation of Kuwait had returned to Iraq something that was vital for the nation to be grand. And better access to the Gulf and the oil-rich Ar-Rumaylah fields assured Saddam a break from the grinding debt problems now plaguing Iraq. Of course, Saddam had seriously underestimated the international community’s response to the invasion, and this would ultimately lead to his downfall and execution sixteen years later.

Building the Coalition against Saddam

The Bush administration wasted no time in responding to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. The first action was to have President Bush sign an executive order freezing all Iraqi assets in the United States and those of the newly installed puppet government in Kuwait.45 Next, the Bush administration went to the United Nations to secure a resolution condemning the Iraqi invasion. There was very little debate at the United Nations, as U.S. ambassador Thomas Pickering supervised the passage of UN Resolution 660 (see Document 1-C), condemning the Iraqi invasion and demanding that “Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces to the positions which they were located on 1 August 1990.” Finally, the UN resolution called upon Iraq and Kuwait to “begin immediately intensive negotiations for the resolution of their differences and supports all efforts in this regard, and especially those of the League of Arab States.”46 Four days later, the United Nations adopted Resolution 661, which reaffirmed the sentiments of Resolution 660, but which also prohibited all trade with Iraq and Kuwait and outlawed the transfer of any funds to the two countries as well. Only essential items were given a reprieve from the resolution, such as “supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and, in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs.”47 Within days of Resolution 661, 90 percent of Iraq’s imports and 97 percent of its exports were cut.48 UN Resolution 662, issued on August 9, 1990, condemned Iraq’s annexation of Kuwait and declared that the international community did not recognize Iraq’s claims to Kuwait. Clearly, Saddam must have been alarmed by the speed with which the international community condemned Iraq’s actions. Particularly surprising must have been the UN votes of Saddam’s European allies, like France, that
The First Gulf War, 1990–1991

had staunchly supported Iraq during its war with Iran. Now, France stood with the international community in condemning Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. The United Nations would eventually pass ten more resolutions reproving Saddam’s actions, authorizing military means to enforce economic sanctions, and ultimately approving a multi-national contingent to force an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

Alongside the UN resolutions, the Bush administration also launched what became known as Operation Desert Shield, a massive build-up of U.S. forces in and around Saudi Arabia to protect it from Saddam’s Republican Guard now poised on the Saudi border. After obtaining King Fahd’s approval, the Bush administration sent over 100,000 U.S. troops and airmen to Saudi Arabia to protect the kingdom, along with two squadrons of F-15 fighters and a brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division. President Bush also ordered U.S. naval ships stationed at Diego Garcia – a navy support facility that provides logistic support to operational forces forward-deployed to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf areas – directly into the Persian Gulf. This military operation became the largest American deployment since the Vietnam War. In addition to the navy ships from Diego Garcia, U.S. carriers in the Gulf of Oman and the Red Sea responded. Navy prepositioning ships rushed equipment and supplies for an entire marine brigade from Diego Garcia. One of the more interesting aspects of Operation Desert Storm was the use of deception cells to create the illusion that the United States was going to launch a unilateral attack against Iraqi-occupied Kuwait. U.S. forces established “Forward Operating Base Weasel,” consisting of a phony network of camps manned by several dozen soldiers. According to an official Department of Defense source, U.S. troops used portable radio equipment cued by computers, and phony radio messages were passed between fictitious headquarters. In addition, smoke generators and loudspeakers playing tape-recorded tank and truck noises were used, as were inflatable Humvees and helicopters. It was this full U.S. mobilization inside Saudi Arabia that Osama bin Laden later claimed was a violation of Islamic law, a move that led to his radicalization.

At the beginning of Operation Desert Shield, President Bush explained that the United States had no intention of invading Kuwait or Iraq. In a press conference on August 8, 1990, Bush made clear that U.S. troops were “in a defensive mode now, and therefore, that is not the mission to drive Iraqis out of Kuwait. We have economic sanctions that I hope will be effective to that end. And I don’t know how long they will be there.” Furthermore, Bush concluded that the United States was “not at war.” Instead, he explained, “We have sent forces to defend Saudi Arabia . . . my military objective is to see Saudi Arabia defended . . . our overall objective is to see Saddam Hussein get out and go back and have the rightful regime of Kuwait back in place.” Despite this public rhetoric, many in the Bush
administration realized that Saddam was probably not going to leave Kuwait voluntarily and that U.S. armed forces would be needed to remove Iraqi troops. Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney moved the Pentagon into full-scale preparations for an invasion, even though General Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned that removing Iraq from Kuwait by military force "would be the National Football League, not a scrimmage." Cheney and President Bush chaffed at Powell’s depiction of the Republican Guard, stating several times in national security meetings that Iraq had not performed that well against Iran in their recent war.

Before launching its attack against Iraq, the Bush administration worked tirelessly to build up a coalition of supportive allies in the region. Bush convinced most Arab states to support the UN resolutions and U.S. military action, should that become necessary. The Bush White House simultaneously convinced Syria to support the U.S. position on Iraq. Bush leaders persuaded Israel that cooperation between the United States and Arab states was, in effect, in Israel’s national security interests. The pragmatic realism that dominated the Bush administration’s worldview served the president well as he gathered support for the U.S. policy toward Iraq. In fact, after suffering several foreign policy setbacks, most notably the perception that the United States was doing nothing about human rights abuses in the Balkans and in China, the Bush team relished the feeling that it was in complete control of the narrative on Iraq and that the international community was quickly lining up behind U.S. policy.

Saddam had one last card to play, however, to destroy the international coalition gathering against him and preserve Iraq’s annexation of Kuwait. Shortly before a long-scheduled superpower summit in Helsinki between Washington and Moscow, Saddam Hussein went on national television to encourage Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to break relations with the United States and the enemies gathering against Iraq and chart an independent course with Iraq as a strong ally. Hussein even hinted that the only way the Soviet Union could remain a global power was to increase its number of friends in the Middle East. Saddam suggested that Iraq’s foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, visit Moscow soon to discuss the possibilities of improving relations between Moscow and Baghdad. A defiant Gorbachev joined President Bush in Helsinki on September 9 for the summit, and, during one of their joint press conferences, the two world leaders issued a shared statement condemning Iraq’s actions in Kuwait. The two agreed that “nothing short of a return to the pre-August 2 status of Kuwait can end Iraq’s isolation” and that “nothing short of the complete implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions is acceptable.” They concluded that the United States and the Soviet Union were “determined to see this aggression end, and if the current steps fail to end it, we are prepared to consider additional ones consistent with the United Nations
The First Gulf War, 1990–1991

Charter.” In a separate statement, an incensed Gorbachev left no doubt where the Soviet Union stood on the issue. He warned Saddam that the Soviet Union would not support his aggression in Kuwait and that Moscow stood behind the UN resolutions. Though he did not support the use of force to remove Iraq from Kuwait, he would not tolerate the violation of national sovereignty. He concluded, “what the present Iraqi leadership is doing is driving us to a dead end.” Gorbachev then declared that Tariq Aziz was not welcome in Moscow unless he was coming to share an Iraqi withdrawal plan with the Soviet Union.

Satisfied that he had done everything he could to make sure that Saddam understood that it was not “the United States against Iraq,” but rather “Iraq against the world,” Bush spent much of October focused on the congressional mid-term elections taking place in the United States. Domestic economic problems had created some tension in the Republican ranks, and many of the president’s own party members doubted his ability to provide them with coattails long enough to win their own individual races. Indeed, when the votes were counted, Republicans had lost one seat in the U.S. Senate and seven in the House of Representatives, giving Democrats clear majorities in both houses of Congress. Public opinion polls at the time suggested that most Americans wanted to see more vigorous action from the president, whether it was on policy toward China’s human rights abuses, the growing conflict in the Balkans, the national economy, or Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Bush was reluctant to move boldly on any of these issues, instead preferring to preserve the status quo and stability in the international system. A growing number of his political base began to question the president’s commitment to promoting democracy abroad. Many of President Reagan’s most loyal foreign policy supporters challenged President Bush publicly, suggesting that he was too tied to the traditional, isolationist wing of the Republican Party. Reagan Democrats and neoconservatives were especially critical of Bush. Neoconservative Norman Podhoretz, decrying what he considered Bush’s ineffective policies in dealing with Moscow, Beijing, and Belgrade, noted, “The Bush problem is like *coitus interruptus*. Nothing is consummated.” A joke circulating in Washington at the time was that Bush would tell his national security team, “Don’t do anything, just sit there!”

Despite these criticisms and the growing feeling among many Republicans that Reagan would have handled foreign affairs more aggressively, Bush cautiously and prudently continued to support the United Nations process of issuing ever more specific resolutions against Iraq and quietly building up a coalition of allies to support multilateral military intervention if it was needed. At the end of November 1990 the United States spearheaded a resolution through the United Nations Security Council – Resolution 678 – which ordered Iraq to leave Kuwait by January 15, 1991 or face
The First Gulf War, 1990–1991

severe international consequences (see Document 1-D). Specifically, Resolution 678 authorized UN member states to “use all necessary means . . . to restore international peace and security to the area.”58 Apparently fearing that the world was closing in, on the same day that Resolution 678 passed in the Security Council, Saddam released all hostages he had taken during the invasion of Kuwait, including many Americans. Sensing that the pressure may have produced a changing attitude in Baghdad, Bush invited Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz to Washington to discuss the crisis. Bush wanted Aziz to give a timetable for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait that was consistent with UN Resolution 678. Baghdad refused to issue such an assurance, forcing the White House to speed up its military planning. Bush quickly gained military and financial commitments from twenty-eight nations, should a counterattack against Iraq be necessary. Still, the president was reluctant to commit to war against Iraq. During a November 8, 1990, press conference, one reporter suggested that British prime minister Margaret Thatcher did not share the president’s caution. “Prime Minister Thatcher said yesterday that if, indeed, Saddam doesn’t withdraw from Kuwait that you and the allies will use force. I haven’t heard you say that before. You’ve talked about wanting to retain the option of war, but would you use force?” Bush answered, “I don’t want to say what I will or will not do.”59

What Bush was willing to do was exhaust every possible diplomatic effort to remove Iraq from Kuwait. On January 9, 1991, just six days before Resolution 678 required Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, President Bush sent Secretary of State James Baker to meet with Tariq Aziz in Geneva. A frustrated Baker concluded that Aziz was not interested in serious negotiations. In a communiqué to the president, Baker made it clear “that he discerned no evidence whatsoever that Iraq was willing to comply with the international community’s demand to withdraw from Kuwait and comply with the United Nations resolutions.”60 Bush had given Baker a letter for Saddam, and hoped that Aziz would agree to take it to Baghdad. When Aziz refused, most inside the Bush administration knew that war was imminent. Some members of the coalition attempted to make contact with Saddam Hussein, including UN secretary general Pérez de Cuéllar, who traveled to Baghdad in January 1991, but with the same result. Against this backdrop, a reluctant President Bush went to Congress on January 12, 1991 to get authorization for the use of military force against Iraq. Congress complied, giving the Bush administration the authority to use the “United States Armed Forces pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 678.”61 Two days later, Saddam and the Iraqi National Assembly called on the people of Iraq “to proceed toward holy jihad.” Saddam warned President Bush that if he believed Iraqi forces could be quickly “neutralized,” then “you are deluding yourself and this delusion will place you in
great trouble.” On January 15, 1991, Resolution 678’s deadline for an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait passed, Bush signed National Security Directive 54 (see Document 1-E), an executive order to start hostilities against Iraq. When the military leadership at the Pentagon confirmed that U.S. armed forces were fully prepared for operations in Kuwait and Iraq, the war began like clockwork.

**Operation Desert Storm**

On January 16, 1991, at 3:35 in the afternoon, several B-52 bombers took off from their bases in Louisiana for the Persian Gulf. Each bomber was carrying conventionally armed air-launched cruise missiles. The target list included Iraq’s air defense and command-and-control centers. Though a host of other countries were involved, it was the U.S. command that supervised the four-phase “air, naval, and ground offensive” that took place throughout January. The goal was to dismantle Iraq’s air defense system, strike at the Iraqi leadership, and reduce the combat capacity of Iraqi armed forces. Even though Iraq’s offensive air capabilities were extremely limited, Saddam decided to reserve them for use in the ground war he knew would follow the initial air campaign. He believed that his air defense systems could counter the coalition’s air war just enough to allow him to extend the war into Israel and Saudi Arabia, primarily through SCUD missile attacks. Such attacks, according to Saddam, would destroy the international coalition, making it more difficult for Bush to wage war against Iraq. Saddam had spent the last five years building up Iraq’s air defense systems, and the country had invested a disproportionate amount of its defense budget to ensure that the airbases could survive massive air attacks. Saddam built twenty-four very large and heavily fortified main operating bases and “a further thirty major dispersal airfields.” Some of these airbases, according to military historian Lawrence Freedman, were the size of London’s Heathrow Airport. Saddam had the most sophisticated anti-aircraft weaponry available in the region protecting these bases. He also possessed French Mirage F-1s, the latest surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), and a state-of-the-art anti-aircraft artillery system. His prized possession was SCUD missiles, which he launched against Israel beginning on January 18 and continuing for several days. Saddam had hoped this would draw Israel into the fight and break up the coalition that the Bush administration had worked so hard to create, including Arab states that might side with Iraq if Israel joined the effort against Saddam. According to Colin Powell, the Bush White House needed to keep Israel from responding to the SCUD attacks “if we were going to preserve the Arab end of the coalition.” Israel complied with a little push from Washington, and the air war continued.
Curiously, but predictably, Saddam had integrated his air defense system into a unified central command with control centers hidden in underground shelters in and around Baghdad. Saddam feared losing control of any aspect of his military structure to political rivals, so he always kept his command composition close at hand. This centralization meant that it was easy for coalition air attacks to disrupt the coordination of the national air defense network by simply destroying a few of these command centers. This was most evident in the use of Iraq’s SAMs, which were ineffective after the first few days of combat because they could not be centrally controlled. Within days, coalition forces had severely limited Iraq’s ability to counter allied air power, and this made all the difference. By the end of January 1991, coalition air forces had inflicted tremendous damage on Saddam’s air defenses, his command structure, and his air force while suffering relatively few losses.

Of course, American policymakers had predicted as much. During the weeks before the air attacks began, Bush administration officials had made sure that the gradualist approach to the air war in Vietnam was not repeated. Most of the military planners had served in Vietnam, and, like Colin Powell, few were eager to follow the limited war strategy in Iraq. During the Vietnam War, the Johnson administration had used air power to send messages to Hanoi, trying to convince Ho Chi Minh that to continue to arm the southern revolution would come at too high a price. The goal was to bomb North Vietnam sufficiently to diminish Hanoi’s willingness to continue the fight. A secondary goal was to use the bombings to lift morale in Saigon and assure South Vietnam’s leaders that the United States was committed to their survival. The chief complaint about Operation Rolling Thunder, as the air attacks against North Vietnam were named, was that the incremental pressure allowed Hanoi to make adjustments, such as evacuating its major population bases and constructing hardened air defenses. Still, the Vietnamese suffered enormous casualties under U.S. bombs, no matter how gradual Bush administration officials claimed the bombing of North Vietnam had been. In any event, Bush officials worried that the predictability of the air strikes had also bought Hanoi time to consider options for survival, and this mistake would not be repeated. According to Lawrence Freedman, an expert on warfare, the “determination to avoid incrementalism of this sort was the starting point” for the Bush administration’s air campaign against Saddam. Accordingly, the air strikes against Iraq were code named “Instant Thunder.”

From the initial planning stages, it was clear that to remove Saddam from Kuwait the coalition would also have to make a major commitment of ground forces. Colin Powell had insisted all along that air power was going to be no substitute for ground troops. After the First Gulf War, Powell recounted for a reporter the moment when he told President Bush that a
sizeable ground force would be needed to meet coalition goals. Powell explained to Bush that “the secondary air campaign, the secondary attacks, the amphibious feints, and then finally the deep hook around the left side of the Iraqi forces,” would require a “much larger force” than had been called for during Operation Desert Shield planning. And then Powell recalled, “I laid out the size of that force. There were some gasps. . . .” Powell reported that the president listened very carefully and then asked, “Now Colin, you and Norm [General Schwarzkopf] are really sure that air power alone can’t do it?” Powell responded, “Mr. President, I wish to God that I could assure you that air power alone could do it but you can’t take that chance. We’ve gotta take the initiative out of the enemy’s hands if we’re going to go to war. We’ve got to make sure that this is . . . there is no ordained conclusion and outcome, that there’ll be no guessing as to, you know, we’re going to be successful with this plan and this is the plan we recommend.” The president eventually agreed and gave General Norman Schwarzkopf, who would oversee the coalition forces in Iraq, the size of force Powell recommended, nearly 235,000 soldiers and marines.

Saddam Hussein had hoped that the United States would indeed commit its troops to a ground war against Iraq because he erroneously believed that a “second Vietnam” would ensue. Hussein told his top lieutenants that the American public had an adverse reaction to body bags, and that as soon as the full cost of a ground war against Iraq was known to the American people, they would force a U.S. withdrawal. He predicted that his army of 1 million men, the world’s fourth largest, would be able to inflict enough damage on U.S. troops to produce the desired result. He developed a strategy to ensure this outcome. Saddam hoped to use extensive fortifications to push coalition forces into confined areas and then have his well-protected military kill them at will. He also went on a propaganda offensive that highlighted potential American casualties. In a speech on February 11, 1991 (DOCUMENT 1-F), Saddam warned:

Iraqis, your enemy believed it was capable of achieving its goals and reversing the course of history, and when he failed, he resorted to direct armed aggression. Here we are in the fourth week of this aggression with the Iraqis becoming more firm in their faith, and shining out more in front of the whole world.

The resistance of our heroes to the warplanes and rockets of aggression and shame is the strongest indication of the steadfastness, faith and light in the hearts of the Iraqis and their great readiness not to give up the role willed to them by God, the will to which they responded, faithfully and obediently.

All the good people will be victorious as Iraq, and victory will restore to the Iraqis all the requirements for a free and honorable living that they will merit as a reward for their patience and steadfastness.
Saddam’s actions and words promised a long and costly war should the United States decide to intervene.

Even in the U.S., some national security analysts were predicting unusually high casualties for coalition troops given the experience, leadership, and numbers in the Iraqi army. Public opinion polls backed up the dire predictions. According to a poll conducted just before the air campaign began, a majority of Americans did not support the war against Iraq if it meant sustaining 1,000 U.S. troop deaths. Powell countered these observations by telling the president that he “did not do marginal economic analysis looking for crossover points. I go with enough to make sure . . . we’re not operating on the margin.” Powell was also aware that the nature of the Vietnam War had conditioned the general mood of the American public. High causalities with little to show for it and a draft meant thousands of angry people in the streets during the war. He could counter this by going into Iraq and Kuwait with overwhelming force in support of very clear and limited political goals, and with an all-volunteer army. The UN resolution and the congressional authorization on the use of force provided the political guidelines needed for such a war. Powell, an initial skeptic on the war, was now convinced that the American public would support the coalition effort once the battle plan became a reality.

Powell’s predictions now seem prescient, at least for the initial phases of the First Gulf War. On February 22, Bush issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein: Iraq must leave Kuwait within twenty-four hours or face the full brunt of coalition forces. Naturally, Saddam failed to comply with White House demands, so Bush ordered a full assault against Iraqi troops inside Kuwait. U.S. Marines led the invasion of Kuwait, while American troops backed by British and French forces outflanked Saddam by controlling southern Iraq. The much-vaunted Iraqi forces collapsed quickly. After two days of fighting, much of the Iraqi army inside Kuwait had been killed or captured, or had fled. Facing imminent defeat, Saddam ordered his troops to retreat from Kuwait under the cover of darkness. Soon, however, the main highway connecting Kuwait City with southern Iraq, Highway 6, was jammed with escaping vehicles. The sheer volume of traffic on the road led to slow progress, but it also enabled coalition aircraft to inflict severe damage on Saddam’s escaping army. On the morning of February 26, several U.S. F-15 fighter jets bombed the Iraqi convoy “to trap its vehicles in the Multa Pass; they then flew south and attacked the rear of the convoy.” Most Iraqis abandoned the scene, but those that did not were instantly killed along what became known as the “Highway of Death.”

On February 27, sensing that the goals of the UN resolutions had been met; President Bush ordered a temporary ceasefire. General Schwarzkopf boasted that the “gate is closed, there is no way out of here.” The general agreed that a ceasefire was in order and that the coalition had accomplished
its goals. The United States agreed to end the ground war after a mere one hundred hours. According to Wafq al-Samarrai, Saddam’s director of military intelligence, however, no one in the Iraqi leadership expected the U.S. to honor the ceasefire. Samarrai claimed that Saddam was “close to tears” following the Iraqi ouster from Kuwait, but was overjoyed to learn of the ceasefire. Saddam was shocked that the coalition had permitted much of his Republican Guard forces to escape, “thus facilitating his retention of power.” The coalition military command also allowed Saddam to keep his helicopters, which he later used to crush his domestic opponents and make new threats against regional enemies. Most Bush administration officials believed that the destruction of a large part of Saddam’s army in Kuwait and in southern Iraq would limit his capacity to inflict damage on others, but Iraq’s quick retreat gave coalition forces little time to respond, and so the Republican Guard was not pursued as vigorously as necessary to cripple its offensive capabilities. Saddam understood immediately that he had been given a second chance. “Soon he was laughing and kidding and joking and talking about Bush,” Samarrai claimed. Within weeks, Saddam was back to his old tricks, broadcasting that the Iraqis “had demolished the aura of the United States, the empire of evil, terror and aggression.” Indeed, Saddam had his Republican Guard and he was still in power in Baghdad. A dejected President Bush noted that there was no symbolic Iraqi surrender, and in this way the First Gulf War was indeed like America’s other modern wars in Korea and Vietnam. “It hasn’t been a clean end,” Bush concluded, “there is no battleship Missouri surrender.” Still, the president enjoyed enormous popularity at home and abroad, and with the demise of Soviet power the United States seemed positioned to create a new world order.

Bush’s popularity was short-lived, however. The administration had made the calculated decision to end the war once Saddam’s forces left Kuwait and not press on to Baghdad to remove the dictator. Regime change was never the administration’s goal, Bush’s national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, reminded critics, it was simply a “hopeful byproduct.” Many neoconservatives argued, however, that Saddam was dangerous to global security as long as he stayed in power, and they were quite critical of the Bush administration for not going all the way to Baghdad. But the president decided to end the mission, stating “I firmly believe that we should not march into Baghdad. Our stated mission, as codified in UN resolutions, was a simple one – end the aggression, knock Iraq’s forces out of Kuwait, and restore Kuwait’s leaders.” Others on Bush’s national security team agreed. Powell argued that the administration had made the right call. If coalition forces had marched to Baghdad, Powell warned, “we would be ruling Baghdad today – at unpardonable expense in terms of money, lives lost, and ruined regional relationships.” Scowcroft explained that “we might
be worse off today” had the United States tried to march on Baghdad. “We had a crucial but limited objective in the Gulf War . . . the international coalition . . . was based on this carefully defined goal . . . If we had made Saddam’s overthrow part of the objective, there would have been no international coalition: even during Desert Storm, our Arab allies stopped their troops at Iraq’s border because they wanted no part of an attack on Iraqi territory.” Scowcroft ironically concluded, “if we had succeeding in overthrowing Saddam, we would have confronted a choice between occupying Iraq with thousands of American troops for the indefinite future and creating a gaping power vacuum in the Persian Gulf for Iran to fill.”83 Secretary of State James Baker concurred, suggesting that the president had made the correct decision that was “enthusiastically endorsed by the military, our coalition partners, the Congress, and American public opinion.”84 Even the mercurial secretary of defense, Dick Cheney, did not support marching to Baghdad. “Once we cross over the line . . . it raises the very real specter of getting us involved in a quagmire figuring out who the hell is going to govern Iraq.”85 The pragmatic president and his national security experts all agreed that the mission had been accomplished.

To underscore this point, the Bush team went on the public relations offensive. “The ghosts of Vietnam have been laid to rest beneath the sands of the Arabian desert,” Bush boasted.86 Others applauded the efficacy of the all-volunteer army and the Powell Doctrine that had provided the strategy necessary for an overwhelming victory. Bush highlighted the close coordination of the coalition and declared a new world order, one in which responsible nations would maintain peace through collective security and enlightened U.S. leadership. General Schwarzkopf was hailed as a hero, and many cities held ticker tape parades to welcome returning soldiers.

As historian George Herring has noted, however, “war is seldom so neat.”87 Within months of the ceasefire, Saddam had rearmed his notorious Republican Guard and used them to crush his domestic opponents. Sensing that Saddam had been weakened, and encouraged by Bush administration officials, Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south launched uprisings against Saddam’s oppressive rule and in retaliation for his vicious attacks on them in 1987. Hussein crushed them with brutal force, killing some 350,000 and displacing tens of thousands more. The Bush administration had hoped that Saddam’s defeat in Kuwait would inspire a military coup inside Iraq, especially among disgruntled Sunni officers who the administration believed were frustrated by Saddam’s arbitrary decision-making. The Kurdish rebellion was complicated by the fact that America’s staunch ally, Turkey, did not support an independent Kurdish state on its border. Other White House officials feared that a popular uprising by Iraq’s Shiite majority might lead to a pro-Iran policy from Baghdad, something the Bush administration had long feared. While Saddam slaughtered tens of
The First Gulf War, 1990–1991

thousands of his own people, the Bush administration struggled with geopolitics.

Some critics of the Bush administration suggested that the president’s own words had led to the rebellions inside Iraq, and that it was now unconscionable to debate what to do about Saddam’s brutal attacks. In a speech in mid-February 1991, Bush urged Iraqis “to take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside.” BAKER hoped to instigate a rebellion among some Sunnis, including Saddam’s own army officers, by making it “clear that we would shed no tears if Saddam were overthrown.” BAKER hoped to instigate a rebellion among some Sunnis, including Saddam’s own army officers, by making it “clear that we would shed no tears if Saddam were overthrown.” BAKER hoped to instigate a rebellion among some Sunnis, including Saddam’s own army officers, by making it “clear that we would shed no tears if Saddam were overthrown.” BAKER hoped to instigate a rebellion among some Sunnis, including Saddam’s own army officers, by making it “clear that we would shed no tears if Saddam were overthrown.” BAKER hoped to instigate a rebellion among some Sunnis, including Saddam’s own army officers, by making it “clear that we would shed no tears if Saddam were overthrown.” The plan backfired, and forced Bush into the unenviable position of watching acts of genocide develop inside Iraq. Saddam was not masterminding a plot to destroy all Kurds, but he used mass killings to eliminate the Kurdish insurgency. As human rights scholar and Obama official Samantha Power has noted, the Bush administration feared that this public relations disaster would “negate all the gains the Gulf War had brought the Bush White House.” Indeed, public opinion polls that had shown the president with the highest approval rating in history now dropped significantly. M OVED by the tragedy, the Bush White House announced “Operation Provide Comfort,” the establishment of coalition-supported refugee camps for Kurds in the north. In addition, U.S., British, and French aircraft would patrol the northern Kurdish regions and eventually establish a no-fly zone for the Iraqi helicopters used in the raids. The containment of Saddam Hussein, then, was the policy inherited by Bill Clinton when he defeated George H.W. Bush in the 1992 election.

Notes

1 Eisenhower Doctrine, January 5, 1957, announced by the president in a special message to Congress. A full text of the speech is available at the Miller Center, University of Virginia.
2 “President Dwight D. Eisenhower to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, December 12, 1956,” Whitman File: Dulles-Herter Series, Box 6, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.
3 Eisenhower Doctrine, January 5, 1957, announced by the president in a special message to Congress. A full text of the speech is available at the Miller Center, University of Virginia.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Peter Hahn, Mission Accomplished? The United States and Iraq since World War I (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 47.
7 Hanna Batatu, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq’s Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Com-

8 Hahn, Mission Accomplished?, 53.


18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Hahn, Mission Accomplished?, 87.


22 Ibid., 29.

23 Ibid.


26 Ibid.

27 Lawrence Freedman, A Choice of Enemies: America Confronts the Middle East (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 216.

28 Department of Defense, “Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” 44.

29 Baghdad Radio, July 18, 1990.

30 Department of Defense, “Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” 46.

31 Hahn, Mission Accomplished?, 88.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.


35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.
28  *The First Gulf War, 1990–1991*

37 Ibid.
38 Department of Defense, “Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” 46.
39 Ibid., 48.
41 Ibid.
42 Hahn, *Mission Accomplished?*, 95.
46 UN Resolution 660, August 2, 1990.
48 Ibid.
49 The Department of Defense, “Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” 34.
50 The President’s News Conference, August 8, 1990.
51 Ibid.
52 As quoted in Hahn, *Mission Accomplished?*, 96.
54 Ibid.
55 As quoted in Hahn, *Mission Accomplished?*, 98.
56 As quoted in Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 34.
57 This joke is told repeatedly in Washington, D.C.
58 UN Resolution 678, November 29, 1990.
59 The President’s News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis, November 8, 1990.
60 The President’s News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis, January 9, 1991.
61 H.J. Resolution 77, 102nd Congress, 1st session.
63 Department of Defense, “Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” 141.
64 As quoted in Freedman, *The Gulf Conflict*, 301.
65 Ibid., 302.
66 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 251.
Access to Persian Gulf oil and the security of key friendly states in the area are vital to U.S. national security. The United States remains committed to defend its vital interests in the region, if necessary and appropriate through the use of U.S. military force, against the Soviet Union or any other regional power with interests inimical to our own. The United States also remains committed to support the individual and collective self-defense of friendly countries in the area to enable them to play a more active role in their own defense and thereby reduce the necessity for unilateral U.S. military intervention. The United States also will encourage the effective support and participation of our western allies and Japan to promote our mutual interests in the Persian Gulf region.

...It is important for the United States to continue to nurture the mutually beneficial and enduring cooperative security relationships with the GCC states.
that grew out of the Iran/Iraq war. The Department of Defense should seek to maintain and, if possible, increase its peacetime and contingency access to cooperation through military exercises, prepositioning arrangements and contingency planning.

The United States will sell U.S. military equipment to help friendly regional states meet their legitimate defense requirements, so long as such sales do not present a security threat to Israel.

The Secretaries of State and Defense should develop a strategy for a long-term program of arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states that serves our national interest but does not increase Israel’s security burden. This strategy should focus on those sales likely to be requested that might be controversial, such as main battle tanks and advanced fighter aircraft, and outline actions for the Administration to undertake in order to obtain congressional and domestic support for such sales.

Normal relations between the United States and Iraq would serve our longer-term interests and promote stability in both the Gulf and the Middle East. The United States Government should propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior and to increase our influence with Iraq. At the same time, the Iraqi leadership must understand that any illegal use of chemical and/or biological weapons will lead to economic and political sanctions, for which we would seek the broadest possible support from our allies and friends. Any breach by Iraq of IAEA safeguards in its nuclear program will result in a similar response. Human rights considerations should continue to be an important element in our policy toward Iraq. In addition, Iraq should be urged to cease its meddling in external affairs, such as in Lebanon, and be encouraged to play a constructive role in negotiating a settlement with Iran and cooperating in the Middle East peace process.

We should pursue, and seek to facilitate, opportunities for U.S. firms to participate in the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy, particularly in the energy area, where they do not conflict with our non-proliferation and other significant objectives. Also, as a means of developing access to and influence with the Iraqi defense establishment, the United States should consider sales of non-lethal forms of military assistance, e.g., training courses and medical exchanges, on a case by case basis.

The United States should continue to be prepared for a normal relationship with Iran on the basis of strict reciprocity. A process of normalization must begin with Iranian action to cease its support for international terrorism and help obtain the release of all American hostages, which will not be a matter for bargaining or blackmail. Other criteria Iran must meet before full normalization of U.S.-Iranian relations include halting its subversive activities and improving relations with its neighbors, making a good faith effort toward a peace treaty with Iraq, and improving its human rights practices . . .
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why did U.S. policymakers believe normalized relations with Iraq were important in 1989?
2. What steps did the United States need to take to improve relations with Iraq?
3. What were the key national security goals of U.S. policymakers toward the Persian Gulf region prior to the First Gulf War?

Document 1-B

Meeting between Saddam Hussein and U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie, excerpts from April Glaspie memorandum, July 25, 1990

Excerpts from “Secret Section 01 of 05 Baghdad 04237, E.O. 12356, DECL:OADR TAGS: SUBJECT: Saddam’s Message of Friendship to President Bush.”

SUMMARY: SADDAM TOLD THE AMBASSADOR JULY 25 THAT MUBARAK HAS ARRANGED FOR KUWAITI AND IRAQI DELEGATIONS TO MEET IN RIYADH, AND THEN ON JULY 28, 29 OR 30, THE KUWAITI CROWN PRINCE WILL COME TO BAGHDAD FOR SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS. “NOTHING WILL HAPPEN” BEFORE THEN, SADDAM HAD PROMISED MUBARAK. – SADDAM WISHED TO CONVEY AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BUSH: IRAQ WANTS FRIENDSHIP, BUT DOES THE USG? IRAQ SUFFERED 100,000’S OF CASUALTIES AND IS NOW SO POOR THAT WAR ORPHAN PENSIONS WILL SOON BE CUT; YET RICH KUWAIT WILL NOT EVEN ACCEPT OPEC DISCIPLINE. IRAQ IS SICK OF WAR, BUT KUWAIT HAS IGNORED DIPLOMACY. USG MANEUVERS WITH THE UAE WILL ENCOURAGE THE UAE AND KUWAIT TO IGNORE CONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY. IF IRAQ IS PUBLICLY HUMILIATED BY THE USG, IT WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO “RESPOND,” HOWEVER ILLOGICAL AND SELF DESTRUCTIVE THAT WOULD PROVE. – ALTHOUGH NOT QUITE EXPLICIT, SADDAM’S MESSAGE TO US SEEMED TO BE THAT HE WILL MAKE A MAJOR PUSH TO COOPERATE WITH MUBARAK’S DIPLOMACY, BUT WE MUST TRY TO UNDERSTAND KUWAITI/UAE “SELFISHNESS” IS UNBEARABLE. AMBASSADOR MADE CLEAR THAT WE CAN NEVER EXCUSE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES BY OTHER THAN PEACEFUL MEANS. END SUMMARY . . .
... SADDAM SAID HE FULLY BELIEVES THE USG WANTS PEACE, AND THAT IS GOOD. BUT DO NOT, HE ASKED, USE METHODS WHICH YOU SAY YOU DO NOT LIKE, METHODS LIKE ARM-TWISTING—...

... SADDAM SAID THAT THE IRAQIS KNOW WHAT WAR IS, WANT NO MORE OF IT—"DO NOT PUSH US TO IT; DO NOT MAKE IT THE ONLY OPTION LEFT WITH WHICH WE CAN PROTECT OUR DIGNITY"—...

... PRESIDENT BUSH, SADDAM SAID, HAS MADE NO MISTAKE IN HIS PRESIDENCY VIS-A-VIS THE ARABS. THE DECISION ON THE PLO DIALOGUE WAS "MISTAKEN," BUT IT WAS TAKEN UNDER "ZIONIST PRESSURE" AND, SADDAM SAID, IS PERHAPS A CLEVER TACTIC TO ABSORB THAT PRESSURE...

... AMBASSADOR SAID THERE WERE MANY ISSUES HE [Saddam] HAD RAISED SHE WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON, BUT SHE WISHED TO USE HER LIMITED TIME WITH THE PRESIDENT TO STRESS FIRST PRESIDENT BUSH'S DESIRE FOR FRIENDSHIP AND, SECOND, HIS STRONG DESIRE, SHARED WE ASSUME BY IRAQ, FOR PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE MIDEAST. IS IT NOT REASONABLE FOR US TO BE CONCERNED WHEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER BOTH SAY PUBLICLY THAT KUWAITI ACTIONS ARE THE EQUIVALENT OF MILITARY AGGRESSION, AND THEN WE LEARN THAT MANY UNITS OF THE REPUBLICAN GUARD HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE BORDER? IS IT NOT REASONABLE FOR US TO ASK, IN THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP, NOT CONFRONTATION, THE SIMPLE QUESTION: WHAT ARE YOUR INTENTIONS?

SADDAM SAID THAT WAS INDEED A REASONABLE QUESTION. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED FOR REGIONAL PEACE, IN FACT IT IS OUR DUTY AS A SUPERPOWER. "BUT HOW CAN WE MAKE THEM (KUWAIT AND UAE) UNDERSTAND HOW DEEPLY WE ARE SUFFERING." THE FINANCIAL SITUATION IS SUCH THAT THE PENSIIONS FOR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS WILL HAVE TO BE CUT. AT THIS POINT, THE INTERPRETER AND ONE OF THE NOTETAKERS BROKE DOWN AND WEPT...

... AT THIS POINT, SADDAM LEFT THE ROOM TO TAKE AN URGENT CALL FROM MUBARAK. AFTER HIS RETURN, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED IF HE COULD TELL HER IF THERE HAS ANY PROGRESS IN FINDING A PEACEFUL WAY TO DEFUSE THE DISPUTE. THIS WAS SOMETHING PRESIDENT BUSH WOULD BE KEENLY INTERESTED TO KNOW. SADDAM SAID THAT HE HAD JUST LEARNED FROM MUBARAK THE KUWAITIS HAVE AGREED TO NEGOTIATE. THE KUWAITI CROWN PRINCE/PRIME MINISTER WOULD MEET IN RIYADH WITH SADDAM'S NUMBER TWO, IZZAT IBRAHIM, AND THEN THE KUWAITI WOULD COME TO BAGHDAD ON SATURDAY, SUNDAY OR, AT THE LATEST, MONDAY, JULY 30.

"I TOLD MUBARAK," SADDAM SAID, THAT "NOTHING WILL HAPPEN UNTIL THE MEETING," AND NOTHING WILL HAPPEN DURING OR AFTER THE MEETING IF THE KUWAITIS WILL AT LAST "GIVE US SOME HOPE."
THE AMBASSADOR SAID SHE WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR THIS GOOD NEWS. SADDAM THEN ASKED HER TO CONVEY HIS WARM GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT BUSH AND TO CONVEY HIS MESSAGE TO HIM . . .

. . . IT WAS PROGRESS TO HAVE SADDAM ADMIT THAT THE USG HAS A “RESPONSIBILITY” IN THE REGION, AND HAS EVERY RIGHT TO EXPECT AN ANSWER WHEN WE ASK IRAQ’S INTENTIONS. HIS RESPONSE IN EFFECT THAT HE TRIED VARIOUS DIPLOMATIC/CHANNELS BEFORE RESORTING TO UNADULTERATED INTIMIDATION HAS AT LEAST THE VIRTUE OF FRANKNESS. HIS EMPHASIS THAT HE WANTS PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IS SURELY SINCERE (IRAQIS ARE SICK OF WAR), BUT THE TERMS SOUND DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE. SADDAM SEEMS TO WANT PLEDGES NOW ON OIL PRICES AND PRODUCTION TO COVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. GLASPIE

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. According to Ambassador Glaspie, what were Saddam Hussein’s regional goals?
2. How did Saddam Hussein characterize U.S. actions in the Middle East?
3. What did Ambassador Glaspie tell Saddam Hussein about U.S. relations with Iraq and the conflict with Kuwait?

United Nations Resolution 660, August 2, 1990

The Security Council,

Alarmed by the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 by the military forces of Iraq.

Determining that there exists a breach of international peace and security as regards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait,

Acting under Articles 39 and 40 of the Charter of the United Nations,

1. Condemns the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait;
2. Demands that Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces to the positions in which there were located on 1 August 1990;
3. Calls upon Iraq and Kuwait to begin immediately intensive negotiations for the resolution of their differences and supports all efforts in this regard, and especially those of the League of Arab States;
4. Decides to meet again as necessary to consider further steps to ensure compliance with the present resolution.

Adopted at the 2932nd meeting by 14 votes to none. One member (Yemen) did not participate in the vote.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were the key provisions of UN Resolution 660?
2. What were member states empowered to do?

---

Document 1-D

**United Nations Resolution 678, November 29, 1990**

The Security Council,


Noting that, despite all efforts by the United Nations, Iraq refuses to comply with its obligation to implement resolution 660 (1990) and the above-mentioned subsequent relevant resolutions, in flagrant contempt of the Security Council,

Mindful of its duties and responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance and preservation of international peace and security,

Determined to secure full compliance with its decisions,

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter,

1. Demands that Iraq comply fully with resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions, and decides, while maintaining all its decisions, to allow Iraq one final opportunity, as a pause of goodwill, to do so;
2. Authorizes member states co-operating with the Government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before January 15 1991 fully implements, as set forth in
paragraph 1 above, all the mentioned resolutions, to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area;

3. Requests all States to provide appropriate support for the actions undertaken in pursuance of paragraph 2 above;

4. Requests the States concerned to keep the Security Council regularly informed on the progress of actions undertaken in pursuance to paragraphs 2 and 3 above;

5. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

Adopted at the 2963rd meeting by 12 votes to 2 (Cuba and Yemen), with 1 abstention (China).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How did UN Resolution 678 differ from UN Resolution 660?

2. Did UN Resolution 678 provide the rationale and justification for a counterattack against Iraq?

Document 1-E


... Iraq, by virtue of its unprovoked invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and its subsequent brutal occupation, is clearly a power with interests inimical to our own. Economic sanctions mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 661 have had a measurable impact upon Iraq’s economy but have not accomplished the intended objective of ending Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait. There is no persuasive evidence that they will do so in a timely manner. Moreover, prolonging the current situation would be detrimental to the United States in that it would increase the costs of eventual military action, threaten the political cohesion of the coalition of countries arrayed against Iraq, allow for continued brutalization of the Kuwaiti people and destruction of their country, and cause added damage to the U.S. and world economies. This directive sets forth guidelines for the defense of vital U.S. interests in the face of unacceptable Iraqi aggression and its consequences.

... I hereby authorize military actions designed to bring about Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait. These actions are to be conducted against Iraq and Iraqi
forces in Kuwait by U.S. air, sea and land conventional military forces, in coordination with the forces of our coalition partners, at a date and time I shall determine and communicate through National Command Authority channels. This is authorization is for the following purposes:

a. to effect the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait;
b. to restore Kuwait’s legitimate government;
c. to protect the lives of American citizens abroad; and
d. to promote the security and stability of the Persian Gulf.

To achieve the above purposes, U.S. and coalition forces should seek to:

a. defend Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states against attack;
b. preclude Iraqi launch of ballistic missiles against neighboring states and friendly forces;
c. destroy Iraq’s chemical, biological, and nuclear capabilities;
d. destroy Iraq’s command, control, and communications capabilities;
e. eliminate the Republican Guard as an effective fighting force; and
f. conduct operations designed to drive Iraq’s forces from Kuwait, break the will of Iraqi forces, discourage Iraqi use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, encourage defection of Iraqi forces, and weaken Iraqi popular support for the current government.

The United States shall seek the maximum participation of its coalition partners in all aspects of operations conducted in either Kuwait or Iraq.

The United States will encourage Iraq’s neighbors Syria and Turkey to increase their forces along their borders with Iraq so as to draw off Iraqi forces from, and resources devoted to, the Kuwait theater of operations.

The United States will discourage the government of Israel from participating in military action. In particular, we will seek to discourage any preemptive actions by Israel. Should Israel be threatened with imminent attack or be attacked by Iraq, the United States will respond with force against Iraq and will discourage Israeli participation in hostilities.

The United States will discourage any participation in hostilities by Jordan. Similarly, the United States will discourage any Jordanian facilitation of, support for, Iraqi military efforts. The United States will also discourage violation of Jordanian territory or airspace.

The United States recognizes the territorial integrity of Iraq and will not support efforts to change its current boundaries.

Should Iraq resort to using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons be found supporting terrorist acts against U.S. or coalition partners anywhere in the world, or destroy Kuwait’s oil fields, it shall become an explicit objective of the United
States to replace the current leadership of Iraq. I also want to preserve the option of authorizing additional punitive actions against Iraq.

All appropriate U.S. government departments and agencies are to prepare and present to me for decision those measures necessary for stabilizing to the extent possible energy supplies and prices during hostilities.

Military operations will come to an end only when I have determined that the objectives set forth in paragraph 2 above have been met.

George H.W. Bush

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What were the key foreign policy directives of NSC #54?
2. Was NSC #54 a declaration of war?
3. Was the scope of U.S. action against Iraq limited, or open-ended?

Document 1-F


Iraqis, your enemy believed it was capable of achieving its goals and reversing the course of history, and when he failed, he resorted to direct armed aggression. Here we are in the fourth week of this aggression with the Iraqis becoming more firm in their faith, and shining out more in front of the whole world.

The resistance of our heroes to the warplanes and rockets of aggression and shame is the strongest indication of the steadfastness, faith and light in the hearts of the Iraqis and their great readiness not to give up the role willed to them by God, the will to which they responded, faithfully and obediently.

All the good people will be victorious as Iraq, and victory will restore to the Iraqis all the requirements for a free and honorable living that they will merit as a reward for their patience and steadfastness.

Those who look for triumph should search for it not outside the great chapter of time that has elapsed, because it exists in each hour of the confrontation, in each day and week since the first hour of the siege, . . . since the first day of the armed confrontation until the last day and hour, God willing.

Those who question when and how aggression was defeated should see it in the first moment that the President of the so-called greatest country was forced – as he said – to take the decision of war after the decision of the embargo
instead of dialogue, and to ally against us those whom he did bring together when America’s power looked so small to him, or thus God willed it.

With this he lost his prestige and made America lose its prestige as the biggest, or greatest, nation, as he calls it.

Bush lost his prestige when he lost conviction and lost the ability to convince through dialogue in order to avoid the course of using arms.

He lost prestige when he brought in the arms which the West had intended against the Warsaw Pact, against one of the countries of the third world, which is an Arab country.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why did Saddam Hussein think that Iraq would prevail in a war with the United States?
2. According to Saddam Hussein, what was Iraq’s greatest asset in the coming struggle against the United States?
3. Why would the United States move to a war footing in Iraq, according to Saddam Hussein?