

**MOVING THE FORCE:
*Desert Storm and Beyond***

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2. **PREPARATION FOR DESERT STORM**

This will not stand. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait.

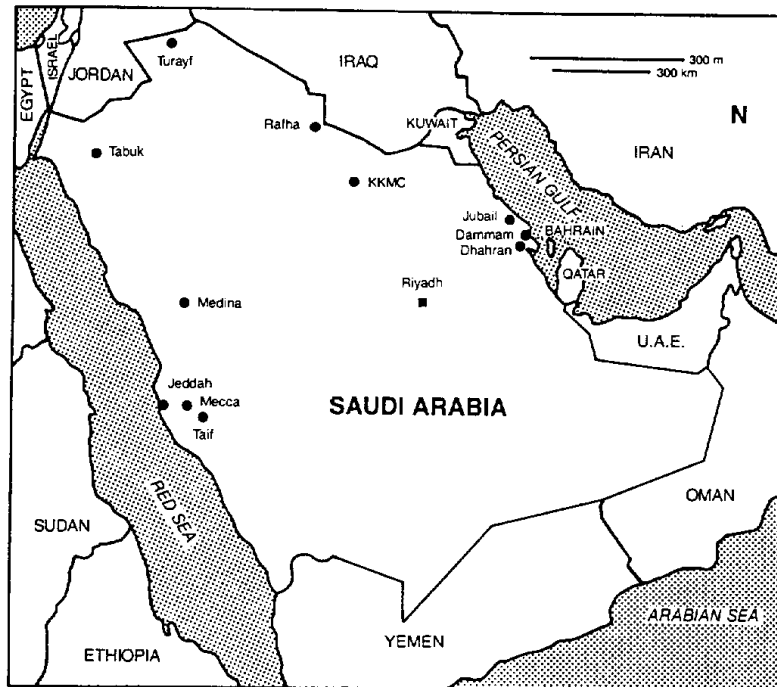
President George Bush

August 5, 1990

On August 2, 1990, forces from Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait and successfully seized control of the Emirate within 24 hours. Iraq's battle-tested army of one-million men was touted as the world's fourth largest. It was equipped with some 5,500 tanks, 5,000 armored vehicles, 5,700 tank transporters, 5,000 support vehicles, 700 modern combat planes, and vast supplies of guided missiles and artillery pieces.¹ They appeared formidable.

TRANSPORTING A HIGHLY MOBILE ARMOR FORCE

The less a unit weighs, the easier it is to move strategically. But there's a catch: Upon arrival, its ground mobility depends on how mechanized the unit is. That is why light and medium forces have predominated in America's initial response during recent military interventions. The basis for this predomination has been their rapid deployability—not the overwhelming firepower those units brought to the battlefield. In a world now demanding potential response across the spectrum of conflict and peacemaking, this logic is flawed—we have designed too few forces capable of rapid deployability. The United States must be able not only to project a light or medium force quickly to



(Source: Association of the U.S. Army, Institute of Land Warfare, *Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm: The Logistics Perspective*, Special Report, September 1991.)

demonstrate American presence and resolve, but also to confront regional armies rapidly, including armies possessing hundreds or thousands of tanks with strong anti-armor power. The strategic deployment ramifications of these force capabilities are significantly different: The former force requires available surge airlift; the latter calls for pre-positioning and fast sealift to move the force.

The Gulf War proved to be one of highly lethal, set-piece battles requiring many tanks and attack helicopters, and the requisite ships to get them there. The most mobile force on the battlefield includes armored and mechanized infantry divisions whose primary weapons are the M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank (weighing over 67 tons), and the M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle (weighing about 33 tons combat loaded). These systems usually deploy by sea because they are so large. (For example, only one M1 can be transported aboard the gigantic C-5 Galaxy). This

force is the most draining on strategic mobility resources because of heavy weight, associated high volumes of ammunition, and support requirements.

Strategic mobility has eroded as the force has steadily put on weight. According to the *Armed Forces Journal*, the weight of a mechanized division has grown 40 percent since 1980. During Operation *Desert Shield*, the defensive phase of the Gulf War, each division required 345,000 gallons of diesel fuel, 50,000 gallons of aviation fuel, 213,000 gallons of water, and 208 40-foot trailers of other supplies ranging from barrier material to ammunition *each day*. During the 100-hour offensive of Operation *Desert Storm*, a single division consumed 2.4 million gallons of fuel transported on 475 5,000-gallon tankers—eight times the amount sold by the average service station in a month.²

We make our weapon systems more effective so they can put more rounds on target, in less time. Target acquisition and fire control processes are at the moment the limiting factors to maximum effectiveness. Soon, lack of strategic transport to deploy equipment and battlefield transport to move the additional ammunition will replace them as limiting elements.³ Awareness of this problem has resulted in an emphasis on how to get more fuel and ammunition forward faster and has focused the acquisition community on pursuit of more capability. Unless we improve strategic lift and operational transport, the United States will have an even harder time getting forces to war in the future. Taking the longer view, it may be wise to concentrate technology efforts on lightening the heavy burden of high mobility and reducing fuel and ammunition consumption, while improving lethality.

THE DECISION TO INCREASE AMMUNITION SUPPLIES

Because of the ammunition-intensive environment of the mobile battlefield, commanders want as much as they can get. When

planning work began on offensive operations, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf decided to "up" the requirement for ammunition on the ground—from 30 days of supply to 60 days. The cascade effect of this decision upon transportation was tremendous. From additional shipping to the associated people, everything increased. According to Lieutenant General William Pagonis, who headed the Army's logistical effort in the Gulf, just the unused ammunition that remained in the sands after the fight amounted to 250,000 tons—about two-and-one-half times the weight of the newest aircraft carrier.⁴ Eventually, over 220,000 tank cannon rounds were moved to the theater, only 3,600 rounds of which were actually fired.⁵ Just as in the past, instead of asking, "How much do we need?" the emphasis was on "How much can we get?" (Not surprisingly, this emphasis has not been corrected in more recent operations. The Army used nine ships to deploy equipment and supplies from the United States and Europe to support Operation *Restore Hope* in Somalia. Almost 18 percent was reloaded and returned to origin without use—representing more than an entire fast sealift ship [FSS] worth of cargo.⁶)

IRAQ'S ADVANTAGE: STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY AND SURPRISE

Iraq's sinister attack on and seizure of Kuwait was bad enough, but along with the defeated nation, the tyrant held hostage much of the world's oil supply. Regional hegemony, if not global control of the precious commodity, loomed real. The free world was galvanized and the prospect of intervention seemed inevitable. During that first week in August, 11 Iraqi divisions were in, or deploying to, Kuwait.⁷ They appeared to be massing for further advance against the region's linchpin, Saudi Arabia. Iraq's armor force was already positioned and poised for further advance. Gulfs and oceans separated Saudi Arabia from friendly nations that could bring a comparably heavy force to the fray.

Spade work had fortunately begun in the fall of 1989 to counter a regional threat to the Arabian Peninsula—a shift away from the previous U.S.-Soviet confrontation scenario. In spring 1990, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) had prepared a preliminary plan that roughly outlined the necessary forces and basic strategy for such a defense. By July 1990 this outline plan was in the final stages of development, but still without the resources of identified forces and transportation. To test the plan, CENTCOM's Commander in Chief Gen. Schwarzkopf conducted a wargaming exercise, *Internal Look 90*. It provided a clear vision of how the United States might defend Saudi Arabia and greatly facilitated an American response. Demonstrating that we at least had a plan gave the Saudis a sense of U.S. resolve when the aggression occurred.⁸

THE SAUDI DECISION TO ALLOW ACCESS

King Fahd, Saudi Arabia's head of state, at first demurred against American attempts to use his country as a stronghold. Key U.S. envoys (including Gen. Schwarzkopf and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney) ultimately convinced him of the approaching danger. Eventually he requested U.S. military assistance to deter such an attack and defend his nation. If the United States had not gained ready passage to the ports of Saudi Arabia, its determination to deploy forces may have been far more tenuous. There were few viable military options. American forces could have been forced to move slowly over the unsecured beaches of Kuwait, or let Iraqi aggression go unchecked.

Saddam Hussein viewed his "bold annexation of Iraq's 19th province" as a means to assume the mantle of leadership of the Arab world. By annexing Kuwait, he also gained 40 percent of the world's oil reserves—oil that could help resolve his country's pressing economic problems.⁹ Others saw it differently, and the brutal aggression was so wanton that it greatly simplified the task to muster world response and unify a coalition.

The United States believed that the unprovoked attack threatened the world's oil supply and decided to "redress a great wrong."¹⁰ To Arab neighbors who became part of the coalition, conflict appeared inevitable, if distasteful. Saddam's fanaticism and deception had already worn thin with them. Others throughout the world less threatened by Iraq nevertheless feared the potential long-term repercussions of doing nothing. Forces of America and 38 other nations therefore took on the task of deterring Iraq from further attack. The entire United Nations, even the Soviet Union and China, backed the responses and did not interfere with the U.S.-led military operations.

Once President Bush decided to intervene, public sentiment for action appeared unwavering. Americans stood with the world community against aggression. If there were to be war, American soldiers would fight side-by-side with the soldiers of other nations to evict Iraq from Kuwait.

IRAQI ISOLATION VERSUS THE U.S.-LED COALITION

Iraq was denied freedom of action largely because it had no meaningful strategic alliances, but the alliances forged over the years brought America essential strategic access. Besides Saudi Arabia's cooperation, more than 80 percent of deploying flights flowed through en-route staging bases in Spain and Germany. Global deployment required overflight agreements from many governments. At this critical time, European countries also made key transportation contributions to supplement America's resources—then fully employed moving U.S.-based forces. While some nations contributed money, many others provided critical operational transportation assets to attain coalition membership (e.g., barges, tank transporters, trucks, and land rovers). These assets proved indispensable to the total success of the war effort, and they made the war less expensive for the United States to prosecute.

Previous to *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, there had been lip service but precious little real accomplishment toward interoperability. So the United States remained self-reliant for all equipment and resupply. There was almost no sharing of supplies and equipment among allies in the operational theater, which further drained U.S. transportation resources. Having witnessed the success of *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, Americans may not be willing to support future violent intervention without the added strength of a coalition. Indeed, resource considerations alone militate toward this conclusion.

THE RIGHT FORCE, THE WRONG SCENARIO

Events in the Arabian desert in 1990-91 had their basis in a nearly 50-year-old commitment by the United States. In 1943, President Roosevelt declared, "The defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the United States."¹¹ President Carter conceived the Rapid Deployment Force concept in 1979, aiming to protect America's national interests in the Middle East. President Reagan gave the concept teeth when he activated the very real, if not fully manned, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in 1983. Previous Middle Eastern operation plans had focused on responding to a potential Soviet onslaught into Iran. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, though envisioned by a few, surprised many policy makers and military planners.

On August 6, 1990, President Bush ordered U.S. forces to commence deployment as part of Operation *Desert Shield* (to emphasize that it shielded Saudi Arabia from further attack). Ironically, it was ultimately the right force for the wrong scenario—Fulda Gap and Kola Peninsula replaced within the blink of an eye by Wadi Al-Batin and the Persian Gulf.

Following Vietnam and the Soviet buildup in Germany, U.S. Army doctrine had taken on a distinctly Central European flavor. There, a significant transportation infrastructure was in place, and

although substantial, America's presence was as a part of a larger alliance. The anticipated warning time and support structure of a war in Europe caused many to discount the notion of preparing for a come-as-you-are war. The Gulf War should by now have changed this mind set.

Our ability to project forces rapidly and massively, halfway around the world—contemplated but never accomplished—was put to the ultimate test. Within days, the nation energized its defense mobility resources.

THE FOUR U.S. OBJECTIVES

- Immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait
- Restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government
- Security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf
- Safety and protection of the lives of American citizens abroad.¹²

Noticeably absent from the list was perhaps our true vital interest—preservation of access to oil. Many coalition members had similar motivation. America's objectives also did not directly address a desire to balance military power in the region. This balance had significantly shifted in Iraq's favor because of its successful war with Iran. Finally, although rallying public opinion included branding Saddam Hussein "another Hitler," stated policy did not include his removal from power.

The JCS translated these political aims into four military objectives:

- Develop a defensive capability in the Persian Gulf region to deter Saddam Hussein from further attacks
- Defend Saudi Arabia effectively if deterrence failed
- Build a militarily effective coalition and integrate coalition forces into operational plans
- Enforce the economic sanctions prescribed by UN Security Council Resolutions.¹³

These initial objectives did not include forceful restoration of Kuwait's rightful government, if sanctions failed. This option would require the deployment of a significantly larger force, one that the United States could not, initially, move to the battlefield. The overall intent of deterrence and defense options was to confront Iraq with the prospects of unacceptable costs and a widened conflict with the United States.¹⁴ Initially, this called for deploying a force at least equal to Iraq's that should have been able to deploy quickly.

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