

MODERN AMERICAN WARS

THE GULF WAR

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AT A GLANCE

- The Gulf War began on August 2, 1990, when Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait. It ended on April 11, 1991.
- Saddam Hussein belonged to the Ba'ath Party. This political party wanted to unite all the Arab countries into one nation.
- On August 8, 1990, US president George H.W. Bush announced that American soldiers would be sent to Saudi Arabia.
- By late 1990, there were 240,000 US troops in the Persian Gulf. Another 200,000 would be arriving soon.
- Thousands of people fled Kuwait. Some 350,000 refugees fled to Saudi Arabia. More than 600,000 refugees went to Jordan.



- On January 17, 1991, US helicopters crossed the border into Iraq. They bombed radar installations and the telephone system, and they knocked out the electricity.
- On February 24, 1991, coalition troops launched a ground attack. Quickly, the troops surrounded the Iraqi forces. The ground war was over in 100 hours.
- The Gulf War officially ended on April 11, 1991. A United Nations peacekeeping force stayed behind to guard the border between Iraq and Kuwait.

OPERATION DESERT STORM

Just before 3:00 a.m. on January 17, 1991, helicopters crossed the border into Iraq. They bombed two **radar installations**. This allowed jets to fly undetected. Then, F-117 Nighthawk fighter jets flew into Baghdad. Nighthawks were stealth aircraft. They were designed to be invisible to radar. The planes bombed the telephone system. They also knocked out

F-14A Tomcat aircraft of Fighter Squadron 41 head into Iraq on a striking mission during Operation Desert Storm.



the electricity. The city went dark. Then aircraft began bombing targets all over Iraq.

The bombing continued for 6 weeks. The United States and allies flew more than 18,000 missions. They bombed command centers and military bases. They destroyed airports, planes, weapons, and equipment. They ruined bridges and train tracks. The Iraqi military could not communicate information. Troops could not get supplies. Planes could not even leave the ground.

Americans followed the news on television. CNN reporters filmed the airstrikes in Baghdad. They gave up-to-the-minute reports. Camera crews showed the action from inside fighter jets. Their live video feed showed missiles being fired in real time. On TV, the live video



Members of an aircraft squadron prepared to load 2,000-pound (900 kg) bombs onto F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft. The coalition forces dropped 88,500 tons (80,300 metric tons) of bombs during the war.

looked like a screen from a video game.

This gave the Gulf War a nickname. It was called the Video Game War.

SADDAM HUSSEIN FIGHTS BACK

As the bombs fell on January 17, Saddam Hussein spoke to the Iraqi people. Over the

radio he said, “The great duel, the mother of all battles has begun . . . the dawn of victory nears as this great showdown begins.”⁵

Saddam Hussein could not win. The airstrikes were devastating. Still, he fought back. On January 18, an Iraqi missile hit an airbase in Saudi Arabia. That same day, the Iraqis fired 39 Scud missiles into Israel. Many hit the city of Tel Aviv. Thirteen people were killed. The United States persuaded Israel not to strike back. They realized that it was a trap. Israel was an enemy to many Arab states in the region. Saddam Hussein hoped that Israel would attack Iraq. If this happened, the Arabs might take Iraq’s side.

On January 29, Saddam Hussein tried to capture the city of Khafji, Saudi Arabia. But coalition troops defeated the Iraqis.

This convinced the coalition that they could win a ground war against Iraq.

THE GROUND WAR

The air attacks had weakened Iraq. But General Schwarzkopf knew it was not enough. To win he needed to put troops on

Soldiers examine a downed Scud missile. The US military shot down Scud missiles using Patriot missiles. Patriots could detect and hit Scuds while they were in the air.



the ground. He came up with a way to trick Saddam Hussein. He put battleships along the coast of Kuwait. This made Iraqis think an attack was coming from the sea. But troops were preparing to attack by land. They would cross the desert and sneak up behind Iraqi forces.

The plan worked. Iraqi forces stayed along the coast of Kuwait. They watched

Crossing the Desert

The Iraqis hadn't prepared for UN troops to cross the open desert. It was a long and dangerous journey. There were no roads. Sandstorms made it hard to see. But a new technology called GPS helped troops find their way. Thousands of Iraqi bombs called land mines were hidden in the sand. Special plows on UN tanks pushed the mines aside.

GLOSSARY

blockade

the act of stopping a nation from sending or receiving food and supplies

coalition

a group of nations that works together toward a common goal

hostages

people held against their will as a way to get demands met

infrared sensors

tools that detect heat coming from objects

radar

a method of detecting distant objects using radio waves

radar installations

systems that use radar to monitor or navigate

refugees

people who flee their homeland to find shelter

sanctions

official measures taken by countries to punish other countries

tracers

bullets that leave a line of flame or smoke to help the shooter see the target

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