Chapter 17

STORM IN THE DESERT

As the Cold War drew to a close, other problems took its place. None was more threatening to American interests than Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in early August 1990. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had long viewed the Middle East and Southwest Asia as potential trouble spots, and over the years they steadily became more mindful of the region's difficulties. Indicative of the growing importance they attached to the Middle East was their decision in 1983 to create a regional planning organization, the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM). While maintaining a limited U.S. presence in the area, USCENTCOM conducted combined training exercises with friendly countries, bolstered diplomatic support for U.S. interests, and coordinated multilateral protection of international shipping. Assuring unfettered access to the Persian Gulf oil fields was normally USCENTCOM's top concern. But with the Soviet threat to Europe and an unstable situation on the Korean peninsula still claiming priority, the JCS had refused to allocate significant resources to the region on a permanent basis and had dealt with it in ad hoc fashion as the need arose.

The demise of the Cold War combined with Saddam Hussein's covetous designs on his oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait, changed JCS perceptions of U.S. security requirements in Southwest Asia. As the Soviet threat to Europe receded, the JCS also adopted a more relaxed outlook toward the Far East where improved relations with China pointed to a more stable geopolitical environment. As a result, the Joint Chiefs felt more comfortable earmarking assets for regional contingencies elsewhere in line with the emerging "forward presence" doctrine. Though Southwest Asia was not the only place that caught their eye, it loomed larger than the others because of its strategic location, economic importance to the West, and growing potential for trouble.

ORIGINS OF THE KUWAIT CRISIS

Following the UN-brokered armistice ending the Iran-Iraq War in the summer of 1988, the United States intensified its efforts to broaden relations with Baghdad, always the U.S.-favored party in the conflict. Shortly after taking office, the Bush

administration launched a comprehensive review of U.S. policy toward the Persian Gulf (NSR 10), focusing on U.S. interests there, the role of the Soviet Union, relations with Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the other Gulf states, and the level of U.S. military involvement. The key issue raised in NSR 10 was whether U.S. interests in the region—economic, political, and military—remained vital in view of the changed strategic environment there and, if so, whether the existing investment of U.S. power and resources reflected that importance.[1]

The review confirmed that major changes in the strategic environment of the Persian Gulf over the past decade mandated greater American interest and involvement, and recommended that the United States bolster regional peace and stability through closer cooperation and collaboration with friendly governments. Step-by-step improvements in U.S.-Iraqi relations were crucial to the success of this policy. While aware that problems with Saddam were bound to arise, the Bush administration was cautiously optimistic that it could moderate his behavior and increase U.S. influence in Iraq through carefully targeted economic, political, and military assistance. In exchange for U.S. help, Saddam should be prepared to give up his chemical and biological weapons, curb his nuclear ambitions, break his ties with terrorist organizations, and stop meddling in the internal affairs of Lebanon and other Mideast countries.[2]

Saddam, however, had his own agenda, which involved nothing less than establishing an Iraqi hegemony across the region. Bloodied but undefeated in the war with Iran, the Iraqi dictator was at the pinnacle of his power and prestige, a formidable, dangerous, and unpredictable figure who had the largest and most powerful military force in the region at his disposal. Aiming to regain some of the oil export market he lost to other Gulf producers during the conflict, Saddam accused neighboring Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the other Gulf states of undercutting Iraq's recovery by surreptitiously increasing oil production and driving down prices, even though these countries had been among his staunchest allies in the recent conflict. According to former Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who knew Saddam personally, the Iraqi leader assumed that he had a more or less free hand, based on U.S. help against Iran, and could do virtually as he pleased without risking American retaliation as long as Iran remained under the control of a radical anti-Western regime.[3]

Meanwhile, the United States launched a progressive military draw-down in the Persian Gulf. With Operation *Earnest Will* coming to a close, the Joint Chiefs saw no justification for the sizable air and naval forces they had assembled to escort neutral shipping at the height of the Iran-Iraq war in 1987–1988. By the summer of 1989 USCENTCOM's presence in the Gulf was essentially back to its pre-escort level—a

handful of naval vessels backed by the intermittent presence of a carrier battle group in the Indian Ocean and North Arabian Sea. Whether the retention of a larger U.S. naval presence in Southwest Asia would have assured greater stability, deterring Iraq from aggression against Kuwait, remains an open question. Saddam's ruthless drive to dominate Middle East politics and his insatiable ambitions would have been hard to check in any case. Nonetheless, as U.S. forces withdrew, the odds increased that they would be back again sooner or later. The retreat may have been unavoidable, but it left the Joint Chiefs, among others, decidedly uneasy and created a political and military vacuum in the region that Saddam was only too happy to fill.[4]

During the summer of 1990 Saddam steadily increased the pressure on Kuwait. While complaining that his neighbor was pumping excessive oil and driving down prices, Saddam precipitated a border dispute with Kuwait, the same pretext he used for going to war with Iran in 1980. He also became highly critical of the United States and stepped up menacing rhetoric and gestures toward Israel by deploying Scud ballistic missiles aimed at Tel Aviv. Still committed to the constructive engagement policy, the Bush administration hoped to diffuse the situation and elicit cooperative behavior from Saddam with pledges of nonlethal military assistance, loans, and credit guarantees to help finance grain imports and to rebuild Iraq's battered economy. Much to Saddam's irritation, however, the proffered assistance was slow to materialize.[5]

Increasingly belligerent, Saddam began massing forces along Iraq's common frontier with Kuwait in a show of gunboat diplomacy. While the Intelligence Community declined to rule out the possibility of an invasion, it could find no hard evidence that Saddam was preparing an attack. Indeed, the absence of Iraqi logistical support led General Powell and analysts on the Joint Staff to suspect that Saddam was bluffing and was more interested in eliciting concessions from Kuwait and its neighbors than in starting another war.[6] Following the Chairman's lead, JCS action officers dealing with the Middle East shied away from recommending anything remotely resembling a military response without first exploring other options and ascertaining clear-cut political objectives. But with tensions building, a military confrontation seemed increasingly unavoidable. On July 25, 1990, Saddam summoned April Glaspie, the U.S. Ambassador to Baghdad, to an impromptu interview. Professing friendship for the United States, Saddam expounded at length on his desire for a peaceful resolution of the dispute with Kuwait but did not rule out military action. In return, Glaspie assured him that President Bush was also interested in a peaceful outcome but also wanted close U.S. relations with Iraq. Subsequently, critics of the Bush administration pounced on Ambassador Glaspie's remarks as a virtual invitation for Saddam to invade Kuwait. Whether Saddam viewed them in that light is

unclear. More than likely, he had already made up his mind to attack Kuwait and in summoning Glaspie, was trying to gauge how the United States would respond.[7]

While continuing to give lip service to a diplomatic solution, Saddam moved more units into position and by the end of July had approximately 140,000 troops and 2,000 Soviet-made T-72 tanks and other armored vehicles along the border with Kuwait. On August 2, 1990, he launched his attack. The invaders met light resistance and within a few days were in full control of the country, which Saddam proceeded to annex. Demanding that Saddam withdraw his forces immediately, President Bush declared that Iraqi aggression "will not stand."[8] But despite a tough declaratory policy, the administration had no firm plan of action. For the time being, containing Saddam's aggression and deterring him from attacking neighboring Saudi Arabia were the administration's only firm objectives. Only time would tell whether the United States would be willing to go further and take steps to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

FRAMING THE U.S. RESPONSE

Even though General Powell and the Joint Staff had been closely monitoring the situation in the Middle East for some time, looking at alternative contingency plans as they went along, Saddam's invasion still caught them by surprise and unprepared. Like almost everyone else in Washington at the time, they expected the confrontation between Iraq and Kuwait to end peacefully. As Lieutenant General George Lee Butler, USAF, director of J-5, described the state of mind in the Joint Staff, "We had the warning from the intelligence community—we refused to acknowledge it."[9] When the Iraqis attacked Kuwait, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had few forces in or near the vicinity of the Persian Gulf and were only beginning to take steps to get more there. Most of the planning done prior to the Iraqi invasion centered on OPLAN 1002-90, an updated version of a Cold War-era USCENTCOM plan to defend Iran against a Soviet invasion. Arguing that the threat of Iraqi aggression now outweighed the danger of a Soviet attack, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, Commander in Chief of Central Command (USCINCCENT), had requested JCS permission to shift the geographic focus of OPLAN 1002-90 to reflect a possible Iraqi invasion of either Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. In December 1989 the Joint Chiefs gave Schwarzkopf permission to proceed.[10]

While the detailed work of revising OPLAN 1002-90 had just begun by the time Iraq invaded Kuwait, its broad outlines were fairly clear and well known. Basically, OPLAN 1002-90 envisioned war on a grand scale, with the mobilization and deployment of 200,000 U.S. ground troops and supporting air and naval units taking

on an Iraqi force of comparable if not larger size and capabilities. With a strength of over one million men, the Iraqi Army was one of the largest in the world. But it relied heavily on conscripts armed with older models of Eastern Bloc and Chinese weapons. The core of Iraq's defense establishment consisted of eight elite Republican Guard divisions (expanded to 12 divisions following the invasion of Kuwait) commanded by officers who had sworn personal allegiance to Saddam. Made up of volunteers, the Republican Guard carried more up-to-date weapons than the regular army and constituted Saddam's most effective and reliable force. Military and political analysts in the West generally considered it a key prop of Saddam's regime. Iraq's air component, though strong on paper with over 800 planes, had few experienced pilots and operated under a defensive doctrine that limited its range and effectiveness. On the other hand, Iraq's air defenses, though somewhat outdated, were rated among the best in the world, built around sophisticated low-level antiaircraft artillery and portable surface-to-air missiles.[11]

The greatest dangers Iraq posed sprang from the uncertainties surrounding its capabilities for chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare, known collectively as "weapons of mass destruction," or WMD. Available delivery means included short-range Scud missiles, aerial bombs, artillery shells, rockets, and spray tanks mounted on aircraft. Saddam's desire to make Iraq a nuclear power was well known. Even though the Israelis dealt his program a major setback by destroying the Tuwaitha atomic reactor in 1981, rumors persisted that he was continuing to explore ways of acquiring atomic bombs and might have stockpiled enough fissionable material for a small arsenal. Biological weapons were also of interest to Saddam but seemed to hold less promise and appeal than chemical weapons. During the 1980s, Saddam mounted poison gas attacks against local insurgencies and Iranian troop formations. Since then, he had continued to replenish his chemical weapons stockpile, threatening to use it against anyone who got in his way.

In surveying what they were up against, senior members of the Bush administration were understandably wary. By far the most cautious was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Powell. Convinced that Saddam should be contained, Powell readily agreed to rush reinforcements to the Middle East to block the Iraqis from moving against Saudi Arabia (Operation *Desert Shield*). But he initially opposed offensive operations aimed at liberating Kuwait, a much larger and more complicated task which, based on preliminary estimates, would require substantially more troops and eight months to a year of preparation. In view of the risks involved, he was prepared to treat Kuwait as expendable and concentrate on protecting Saudi Arabia. "I think we'd go to war over Saudi Arabia," he told Schwarzkopf, "but I doubt we'd go to war over Kuwait."[12] Recalling the popular backlash against Vietnam, Powell believed that any

attempt to liberate Kuwait by force would need full congressional and public support. Without that, he saw little hope of success. As an alternative to military action, Powell endorsed a regime of economic, political, and diplomatic sanctions against Iraq and was prepared to wait up to 2 years for them to have an effect.[13]

Powell's strategy of restraint contrasted sharply with the emerging determination in the White House to restore the status quo ante one way or another as quickly as possible. Like the Chairman, President Bush hoped to avoid going to war. But he had less confidence than Powell in the efficacy of sanctions and felt that the longer the West delayed in acting, the more entrenched Saddam would become. Applying a historical perspective, Bush saw a "direct analogy" between the invasion of Kuwait and Nazi Germany's aggression against Poland in World War II. Prodded by Scowcroft, who considered Powell overly cautious, the President moved steadily toward a policy of liberation through military action and looked to Cheney to manage the details and bring the Joint Chiefs of Staff into line. "Cheney recognized early that sooner or later it would come to force," Bush recalled. "Dick was probably ahead of his military on this."[14]

During the early days of the crisis, as the administration sought to define its position, Powell and Cheney seemed to go separate ways. Resisting hasty decisions and commitments, Powell played for time and tried to focus the debate on political objectives and whether military action was in the best interest of the United States. Cheney became frustrated and insisted that Powell concentrate more on developing and refining military options.[15] "Colin," he said, "you're Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. You're not Secretary of State. You're not the National Security Advisor anymore. And you're not Secretary of Defense. So stick to military matters." Looking back, Powell agreed that Cheney was right, but he gave way grudgingly and offered military advice that was almost always framed, as only Powell could do, around its potential political impact during the ensuing planning process and buildup of forces.[16]

OPERATIONAL PLANNING BEGINS

Despite the Goldwater-Nichols reforms, operational planning for *Desert Shield–Desert Storm* encountered many of the problems the Joint Chiefs had experienced during crises in the past. This included initial confusion and uncertainty, followed by largely improvised responses, with inputs from several sources at the same time. While Powell was gradually turning the Joint Staff into an unrivaled planning and staff-action organization, he had yet to complete the process. Thus, the door remained open for the Services' planning staffs to make inputs, often on their own initiative. With limited staff available and his own plans in flux, Schwarzkopf desperately needed

help from wherever he could get it. The result was a rather chaotic period at the outset of the crisis that saw planning diverge along two separate lines, one running through the Joint Staff where Powell's influence predominated, the other through a wholly separate Air Staff planning cell known as Checkmate. Eventually, these lines converged at Schwarzkopf's USCENTCOM headquarters, where they became integrated into an overall strategic concept. But in their origins and purpose, they reflected two sharply different military philosophies for coping with the crisis.

Powell and the Joint Staff initially occupied the stronger and more influential position owing to their statutory role and increasing preeminence within military planning circles. After the extraordinary success of the Panama invasion, few dared to gainsay the Joint Staff's growing skill for organizing and coordinating joint operations. While the President had not yet fully made up his mind about Kuwait, those close to him could sense the drift in his thinking. As a precaution, in addition to the defensive actions taken under Operation *Desert Shield* at the outset of the crisis, Secretary Cheney ordered the CJCS and USCENTCOM to develop an offensive option that would be available to the President in case Saddam Hussein chose to engage in further aggression or other unacceptable behavior, such as killing Kuwaiti citizens or foreign nationals in Kuwait or Iraq.[17] As characterized by one account, the Joint Staff's earliest response resembled "a typical cold-war, limited-option sort of thing."[18] Using OPLAN 1002-90 as their guide, Joint Staff planners initially estimated that evicting the Iraqis could be done with a force not much larger than that being organized at the time for Operation *Desert Shield*—about 200,000 troops plus supporting air and naval units. Powell, however, found these estimates insufficient. With his eye on avoiding a military confrontation, the Chairman hoped to intimidate Saddam and convince him through a combination of sanctions and a highly visible military buildup to back down without a fight. Should that approach fail, he wanted to be prepared to conduct "a full-scale air, land, and sea campaign" that would quickly overwhelm Saddam, just as he had overwhelmed Noriega. "We had learned a lesson in Panama," Powell contended. "Go in big and end it quickly." With these as Powell's planning guidelines, Joint Staff estimates of the required force varied almost daily and became practically open-ended.[19]

Initially, Powell operated under very few constraints. Looking at the military possibilities and various options, a consensus developed early on in Washington that the United States would need sizable forces to counter Saddam and that the build-down under the base-force plan, only recently announced by the President, should be put on hold. Yet as projected force requirements for the Middle East began to mount, they pointed to increased expenditures that left senior administration officials decidedly uneasy. Hoping to defray some of the "staggering" expense, as

Secretary of State Baker described it, the Bush administration actively solicited contributions of money and/or troops from around the world to create a multinational coalition to liberate Kuwait. Eventually, nearly fifty countries agreed to provide assistance in one form or another. But even with those inputs, there was still a high likelihood that the United States would bear the brunt of the costs.[20]

Cheney never presumed to challenge Powell's professional expertise, but as Secretary of Defense, his first concern was to weigh the financial impact of the operation. It was on that basis that he began to take a closer look at the proposals coming out of the Joint Staff. The Goldwater-Nichols Act may have streamlined the advisory process, making it more timely and responsive, but it also inadvertently created barriers to the flow of military ideas and information reaching the Secretary, the President, and the NSC. Though he continued to rely heavily on Powell and the Joint Staff, Cheney decided to shop for other views as well. As one military analyst described it, "Cheney adroitly and informally bypassed Powell for additional military opinions to assure himself of differing views. . . . This technique did not sit well with Powell and, although he never challenged Cheney's right to solicit advice from others, it angered him."[21]

The most attractive alternative to a large-scale buildup on the ground was increased reliance on airpower. Actually, Powell and Cheney were both skeptical of strategies built around airpower and could not find much evidence that the air campaigns of previous wars had been either very successful or decisive. In years past, even some airpower enthusiasts would have agreed. But since Vietnam, as the Air Force shed its dependence on nuclear weapons and turned to reviving its conventional capabilities, its confidence in the efficacy of airpower rose steadily. By the end of the Cold War, with the advent of improved planes employing stealth technology, increasingly reliable precision-guided munitions, and more effective command and control using high-speed computers and space-based satellites, the chances of a conventional bombing campaign having a decisive impact on future wars seemed more assured than ever. Little by little, as interest at the White House in developing an airpower-oriented strategy began to grow, views on airpower around the Pentagon likewise began to change.[22]

Powell concurred that airpower had a major role to play, and in the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi invasion both he and Schwarzkopf turned to airpower as their most readily available and effective means of deterring Saddam from further aggression or punishing him if he should make a move against Saudi Arabia.[23] Of the forces rushed to the Middle East under Operation *Desert Shield*, Joint Staff planners put major emphasis on large Air Force deployments of combat aircraft and aerial reconnaissance planes as the bulk of the initial "package." All the same, Powell resisted the

notion, popular in some quarters of the Air Force, that a carefully orchestrated air campaign could practically win a war alone.[24] To Powell's consternation, the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Michael J. Dugan, openly suggested such a possibility shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait. During the return flight from a fact-finding trip to the Middle East in August 1990, Dugan regaled reporters with his views, which subsequently appeared in the *Washington Post*. While making the Iraqis "look like a pushover" with airpower, Powell recalled, Dugan further suggested that American military planners were "taking their cue from Israel" on how to deal with Saddam, a remark that was sure to antagonize many Arabs. Cheney agreed that Dugan's behavior was "dumb, dumb, dumb" and promptly fired him for "poor judgment." The ignominious departure meant that Dugan's tenure as Chief of Staff lasted only 3 months.[25]

Even though airpower advocates had lost one of their strongest and most influential spokesmen, their cause remained very much alive. Hints of growing interest in airpower at the White House doubtless fueled the process. Soon to emerge as the initial architect of the air campaign against Iraq was Air Force Colonel John A. Warden III, who headed a planning cell in the Air Staff known as Checkmate. Trained as a fighter pilot, Warden served in Vietnam and during the 1970s and 1980s steadily refined his views on the role and application of airpower. Some regarded him as the most innovative thinker the Air Force had produced since Billy Mitchell after World War I. Basically, Warden took issue with the AirLand Battle doctrine, the dominant military concept since Vietnam, which urged closer coordination between ground and air forces, with the aim of using airpower to achieve decisive maneuver on the ground. In Warden's scheme of things, air superiority should take precedence; once achieved, "in many circumstances it alone can win a war."[26]

Amid rising tensions in the Middle East, Warden emerged as the leading spokesman for increased reliance on airpower in the expected showdown with Saddam. One of Warden's admirers was Secretary of the Air Force Donald B. Rice, a former president of the RAND Corporation (originally an Air Force think tank) and an ardent proponent of airpower. If previous U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf had been primarily a Navy show and toppling Noriega predominantly an Army affair, Rice and like-minded others wanted the looming conflict with Iraq to be first and foremost an air war. Warden and his staff (a group comprised initially of about two dozen young Air Force officers) were eager to oblige. Within days of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, they received an urgent request from the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force to provide General Schwarzkopf with advisory assistance. Expecting to be called upon sooner or later, Warden had initiated work the day before on an outline plan called "Instant Thunder" for strategic air operations against Iraq. As described by Air Force historian Richard G. Davis, "Instant Thunder" was "a stand-alone

war-stopper" that called for a concerted 6-day effort designed to incapacitate the Iraqi leadership and destroy its key military capabilities.[27]

While Powell duly acknowledged Checkmate's contributions, terming them "the heart of the *Desert Storm* air war," he took issue with the single-Service approach and around mid-August directed that Army, Navy, and Marine Corps officers be included in Warden's organization. Thenceforth, Checkmate's papers and reports bore the logo of the Joint Staff, and its activities acquired the appearance, if not always the reality, of jointness under the Directorate of Operations (J-3).[28] The spirit of Goldwater-Nichols notwithstanding, inter-Service coordination, especially with the Navy, remained tenuous throughout the crisis. As eager as the Air Force was to leave its mark, the Navy disliked having its carrier-based aircraft placed under a joint tasking system and would have preferred to operate on its own.[29] During the conflict, applying its own priorities as the opportunity arose, the Navy withheld as many as a third of its aircraft to protect its carriers. Of the Navy planes that did participate in offensive operations, only a limited number were equipped to deliver the precision-guided munitions that were crucial to the execution of Warden's strategic bombing concept. The Navy's most significant contribution to the air campaign was its Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles (TLAMs). Launched from surface ships and attack submarines, the low-flying TLAMs were ideal for daytime attacks against highly defended targets and could also be used when adverse weather grounded fighter-bombers.[30]

Checkmate's direct involvement in shaping the air war was relatively short-lived. At Schwarzkopf's request, Warden flew to Riyadh and on August 20 briefed Lieutenant General Charles A. Horner, USAF, Schwarzkopf's air deputy and USCENTCOM's acting forward commander. Horner accepted Checkmate's target scheme but rejected Warden's "airpower alone" strategy because it ignored the large number of Iraqi troops and tanks poised on the border with Saudi Arabia.[31] Asserting control from there on out, Horner created his own Special Planning Group for air operations, a multi-Service unit (later expanded to include NATO and Saudi representatives), and placed Brigadier General Buster C. Glosson, USAF, in charge. Dubbed the "Black Hole," it operated in utmost secrecy out of the basement of the Royal Saudi Air Force headquarters in downtown Riyadh. Throughout the crisis, Glosson was in constant contact with Warden and drew heavily on Checkmate for advice, ideas, and personnel. But from that point on, primary responsibility for air war planning became an inter-Service operation, with Checkmate, the Joint Staff, and Glosson's Black Hole organization in Saudi Arabia working in unison.[32]

Checkmate's eclipse brought a fundamental change of philosophy that steered planning for the air campaign back into line with Powell's view of airpower as a

supporting element of the ground war. On that point, Powell and Schwarzkopf—both Army officers—thought exactly alike. "Instant Thunder" disappeared and in its place emerged a more conventional plan for an integrated air-ground campaign. Though still built around Warden's phased sequence of attacks and basic target scheme, Schwarzkopf's integrated approach took a larger range of military and related targets into account. As the target list grew, so did the need for aircraft, intelligence, and logistical support. What Warden and his colleagues in Checkmate had originally envisioned as an intensive 6-day bombing and interdiction campaign turned into plans for a month or more of round-the-clock air operations aimed not just at driving the Iraqis out of Kuwait but at eliminating Saddam and his armed forces as a future threat to the region.

THE ROAD TO WAR

By late September 1990, working closely with Schwarzkopf, Powell had assembled a plan to defend Saudi Arabia and was gradually developing a military strategy to expel the Iraqis from Kuwait, starting with an intense air campaign, should sanctions and diplomacy fail. Major elements of the *Desert Shield* force were now in place, while the remainder were either en route to Saudi Arabia or being fitted out for deployment. Whether more would follow remained to be seen. Although Powell had repeatedly discussed the various options in general terms with Cheney and the President, he had yet to receive a clear signal of the President's intentions. As a result, final preparations remained in limbo. Privately, the President was increasingly reconciled to a military showdown. Frustrated by Saddam's intransigence in the face of efforts by Gorbachev and others to broker a settlement, Bush saw the chances of a peaceful resolution steadily slipping away and now looked on the looming confrontation as "a moral crusade." Rumors had already begun to spread that should armed intervention become necessary, the JCS expected a minimum of 10,000 casualties and up to 50,000 if Saddam used chemical and biological weapons. Even though public and congressional opinion generally endorsed the administration's "get tough" approach toward Saddam, the prevailing sentiment leaned more toward sanctions than the exercise of military power. Among leaders on Capitol Hill, reliance on air and sea capabilities received preference over a potentially bloody ground campaign.

Realizing that the country was in no mood for a war if one could be avoided, President Bush continued to defer a final decision on military action. Before making further commitments, he wanted a clearer picture of what it would take to defeat Saddam and arranged with Powell for a formal briefing at the White House on October 11, 1990.[33] Schwarzkopf had recently moved his headquarters from Tampa

to Riyadh and, pleading that his plans were still gestating, wanted to come to Washington to explain the situation and lead the briefing himself. At Powell's insistence, however, he stayed behind and designated his chief of staff, Major General Robert B. Johnston, USMC, to lead the USCENTCOM delegation. The day before going to the White House, Powell held a dry-run presentation at the Pentagon for Cheney, the Service chiefs, and senior members of the Joint Staff. Glosson summarized the progress on the air war while an Army lieutenant colonel gave the briefing on the ground campaign. Afterwards, Powell drew Glosson aside and admonished him for making the air war look too easy. For the presentation the next day, Powell wanted Glosson to "tone it down" and curb his estimates of the outcomes. "Be careful over at the White House tomorrow," Powell said. "I don't want the President to grab onto that air campaign as a solution to everything."[34]

The White House briefing on October 11 revealed a military planning process at midstream. Glosson's toned-down presentation notwithstanding, it was clear that planning for the air campaign was well ahead of preparations for the ground war, which was now designated Phase IV in the planned sequence of operations. Utilizing forces and equipment currently deployed, Phase IV was basically a single-corps thrust into the middle of the Iraqi defenses, a strategy that one senior OSD official mocked as the "charge of the light brigade into the wadi of death."[35] While bypassing Iraqi strong points, the proposed attack would still encounter key Iraqi ground units. Heavy casualties were almost certain.[36] As Scowcroft remembered the briefing, it "sounded unenthusiastic, delivered by people who didn't want to do the job. . . . I was appalled with the presentation and afterwards I called Cheney to say I thought we had to do better."[37]

Like many of Roosevelt's meetings with the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the early days of World War II, the White House briefing on October 11, 1990, was a largely exploratory affair. If Powell's underlying purpose was to dissuade Bush from hasty action, he was eminently successfully. "The briefing made me realize," Bush recalled, "we had a long way to go before . . . we had the means to accomplish our mission expeditiously, without impossible loss of life."[38] But the episode also deepened the rift between Powell and Cheney and made the Secretary of Defense more aware than ever that he needed an alternative to the CJCS as a source of advice. Disappointed in what Powell and Schwarzkopf came up with, Cheney established a special advisory unit in OSD headed by retired Army Lieutenant General Dale A. Vesser. A former Director of J-5 and currently Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Resources and Plans, Vesser had been involved in deployment planning for *Desert Shield* almost from the outset. His new tasking from the Secretary was to double check the planning coming out of the Joint Staff and USCENTCOM and to look into alternative strategic concepts.[39]

Shortly after the ill-starred White House briefing, at the urging of the President and the Secretary of Defense, Powell flew to Saudi Arabia in hopes of finding a "more imaginative" Phase IV strategy. He carried assurances from the President that Schwarzkopf could have "whatever forces he needed to do the job."[40] Earlier, to augment his planning staff, USCINCCENT requested help from the Jedi Knights, an elite Army planning team from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. To overcome the defects in the earlier concept, they proposed a strategy that promised a higher degree of success with fewer casualties through a flanking maneuver west of the Iraqi defenses in Kuwait. Though bolder and more innovative, the new plan would also require more troops, more heavy armor, and additional air and sea support. By the time Powell arrived, Schwarzkopf had already given the plan his enthusiastic blessing and had a request in hand for at least another mechanized corps. Powell cautioned that it might be necessary to secure "a clear mandate from Congress and the American people" before bringing more forces into the Gulf or committing them to combat. But his immediate concern was to reassure Schwarzkopf that, as the President had indicated, he could have whatever he needed to complete his mission. "If we go to war," the Chairman said, "we will not do it halfway."[41]

Returning to Washington, Powell held a series of briefings starting with Cheney and the Service chiefs to present the new strategy and its force requirements, now approaching half a million troops. While acknowledging that the new plan needed work, he still saw it as a significant improvement. By and large, the Service chiefs agreed. The sole exception was General Merrill A. McPeak, who succeeded Dugan as Air Force Chief of Staff. Suspecting that the available intelligence had inflated Iraqi capabilities, McPeak doubted the need for the massive ground build-up that Powell and Schwarzkopf were planning and saw it mainly as an attempt by the Army to embellish its role at Air Force expense. But his efforts to dissuade Powell were apparently half-hearted and he soon gave up, realizing that the momentum was against him.[42]

On October 30, Powell personally presented the new strategy to the President and his core group of advisors. Powell recalled that as he ran down the list of force requirements, there were gasps and gulps from practically everyone in the room except the President. Scowcroft thought the proposed augmentations were "so large that one could speculate they were set forth by a command hoping their size would change [the President's] mind about pursuing a military option."[43] Bush, however, was unfazed. Remembering Glosson's briefing of a few weeks before, he inquired about the increased use of airpower in lieu of ground forces but found the Chairman more adamantly opposed than ever. "Mr. President," he said, "I wish to God that I could assure you that airpower alone could do it, but you can't take that chance."[44]

To speed up deployment of the heavy armor Schwarzkopf requested, Powell proposed withdrawing VII Corps from Germany (comprising half of the Army's strength in Europe) and moving it en masse to Saudi Arabia. Assuming all went well, U.S. forces would be in a position to commence offensive air operations around the middle of January 1991 and launch a ground attack a month later. Only a few years earlier, with the Soviet threat hanging over Western Europe, the unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces from Germany on this scale was utterly unthinkable. But in the light of recent events—the pending CFE Treaty and the collapse of Communist power in Eastern Europe—the situation changed.[45]

On November 8, President Bush announced a significant augmentation in the number of troops being sent to the Persian Gulf, setting off a political battle in Washington that lasted into the new year.[46] At issue was the 1973 War Powers Act, a legacy of Vietnam, which curbed the President's authority to commit to combat without explicit approval from Congress. Bush and Scowcroft both scoffed at the law, arguing that it infringed on the President's duties as Commander in Chief and was therefore unconstitutional. Powell, however, took the matter more seriously and welcomed an open airing of the issues. During the preparations for the Panama operation, he had not paid much attention to gathering congressional support, mainly because he found sentiment on Capitol Hill to be ahead of the administration on the need for intervention.[47] A large-scale war in the Middle East involving the call-up of Reserves, with possibly thousands of U.S. casualties, was another matter. Echoing positions taken by the Joint Chiefs from the early days of the Reagan administration on, Powell wanted congressional preferences clearly on record before taking military action against Saddam. The upshot was a vigorous debate in Congress culminating on January 12, 1991, in the adoption of resolutions by both houses authorizing the President to use force to expel the Iraqis from Kuwait in accordance with UN directives. At long last, Powell had the mandate he wanted.

FINAL PLANS AND PREPARATIONS

President Bush's decision to augment the U.S. buildup in the Persian Gulf set the stage for the largest U.S. military campaign since Vietnam—the liberation of Kuwait, also known as Operation *Desert Storm*. Like the 1944 D-Day invasion of Europe, *Desert Storm* was both a joint and combined operation. As such, it tested not only the Bush administration's diplomatic skills in coalition-building, but also its progress toward fulfilling the goals of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. While not the resounding display of "jointness" that some hoped it would be, the overall operation still reflected

an increased level of inter-Service cooperation and collaboration, a positive sign that the Goldwater-Nichols reforms were slowly but surely taking hold.

At the heart of the American-led effort to liberate Kuwait was an unusual set of command and control arrangements. From his temporary headquarters in Riyadh, General Schwarzkopf exercised broad strategic direction over an international coalition that grew to 700,000 troops representing 28 countries by the time military action commenced early in 1991. His direct operational control (OPCON) extended to about two-thirds of the total, mostly U.S. and British forces. French forces operated independently but coordinated closely with USCENTCOM. Egyptian, Syrian, and other Islamic forces invited to participate in military operations did so with the understanding that they would be subject to Saudi OPCON. A tricky arrangement in theory, it worked remarkably well in practice. By the time the ground offensive began in February 1991, the coalition had effectively evolved into two combined commands—the Western allies under Schwarzkopf, and the Islamic members under the senior Saudi commander, Prince Khalid bin Sultan.[48]

Final planning and preparations for *Desert Storm* took place through Schwarzkopf's USCENTCOM organization. Like other combatant commands under the Joint Chiefs, USCENTCOM operated at the top with an integrated military staff but functioned through Service-oriented subcommands for ground, sea, air, and amphibious operations.[49] The only one of those that approached truly joint-combined status during *Desert Shield–Desert Storm* was Horner's air component, U.S. Air Forces Central Command (CENTAF), which from September 1990 on included Navy, Marine, and British representatives.[50] Among his duties, Horner functioned as Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC), in which capacity he had authority to plan the air war, but not Service-specific command for anything other than Air Force assets.[51] Still, his control of coalition air assets exceeded that of any U.S. commander in either the Korean or Vietnam Wars.[52] Despite its joint appearance, CENTAF retained a distinctly Air Force perspective that heavily influenced the use of intelligence, targeting priorities, and the allocation of resources for the air campaign—all sources of friction to some degree with the other Services, which had their own views on how airpower should be applied. The Navy, which operated under less rigid planning procedures than the Air Force, found CENTAF's methods especially onerous.[53] As a rule, CENTAF either worked around those problems or relied on informal agreements to paper over them. Though not always the ideal solution, these ad hoc agreements seemed to avoid any serious misunderstandings. One of the earliest and most successful compromises, dating from September 1990, was the agreement reached between CENTAF and the

Marine Corps, under which the Marines allocated roughly half their combat planes in-theater to CENTAF-directed strategic operations in exchange for assurances of B–52 and Air Force tactical support of their ground operations.[54]

While providing overall strategic direction, Schwarzkopf was determined to avoid micromanaging field operations as he and Powell often complained McNamara and President Johnson did in Vietnam, to the detriment of the war effort. Preferring a system of decentralized command, he allowed his subordinates maximum freedom of action as long as they adhered to USCINCCENT's overall strategy. That applied to planning for the air war as well as for the ground campaign and resulted in less than ideal coordination between USCENTCOM's component commands. The upshot was that Schwarzkopf personally assumed operational control of all ground forces in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO) but was still unable, once the fighting began, to achieve much more than nominal synchronization between USCENTCOM's advancing Army (ARCENT) and Marine Corps (MARCENT) components.[55]

Despite his reputation for fastidious planning and attention to detail, Powell left Schwarzkopf more or less alone once they had an agreed plan of action. Describing him as "testy by nature" and "short-tempered," Powell acknowledged that Schwarzkopf could be difficult to work with. But he had the utmost confidence in the USCINCCENT's leadership and wanted to protect the longstanding American tradition that accorded commanders independence and initiative in the field, a concept he thought the Vietnam experience had assailed. In effect, Powell extended this doctrine a step further by applying it to the planning process. Using his CJCS position as a buffer, he allowed Schwarzkopf to move ahead with final preparations for *Desert Storm* with minimal interference from the "armchair strategists" in Washington.[56]

On December 19, 1990, Powell and Cheney arrived in Riyadh for 2 days of briefings, the final review before the President approved launching *Desert Storm*. Back in Washington, there was growing pressure from Secretary of the Air Force Rice and officers on the Air Staff to suspend preparations for a ground assault and to rely exclusively on airpower to defeat the Iraqis. At issue was Europe's overburdened transportation network, which was causing intermittent disruptions in redeploying VII Corps' heavy equipment from Germany to the Middle East.[57] Seizing the opportunity, Rice launched an eleventh-hour effort to derail the ground offensive and arranged for Warden to conduct a special briefing for the Secretary of Defense on December 11 to persuade Cheney that an airpower-alone strategy could crush Iraqi resistance and win the war. Giving a heavy-handed performance, Warden insisted that a concerted air campaign could cut the strength of the Republican Guard in half and with enough time and bombs reduce Iraqi armor and artillery in the KTO

by 90 percent. Cheney was noncommittal, but as he and Powell arrived in Riyadh they knew they faced some hard decisions.[58]

Much of what they heard covered familiar ground. While Horner defended the particulars of the air campaign as currently planned, Schwarzkopf did the same for the ground war. Wanting to leave no stone unturned, Cheney peppered both commanders with tough questions and eventually asked them point blank whether Warden and other airpower enthusiasts were right in claiming that air strikes could take the Republican Guard down by 50 percent. Horner and Schwarzkopf acknowledged that computer analysis deemed it feasible and that Glosson and his staff were operating with that goal in mind. But with the moment of truth fast approaching, they conceded that it was a tall order and that nothing like it had ever been tried. While offering a generally positive assessment, Horner made no secret of his doubts.[59]

As for the ground offensive, Schwarzkopf offered assurances that despite delays, the buildup was moving ahead and would continue under cover of the air strikes. He estimated that he would be ready to launch his land attack (G-Day) sometime between mid-February and March 1. Ground combat would entail several interrelated operations. XVIII Airborne Corps and a French division would attack to the west and cut off Iraqi forces in the KTO. VII Corps and British units would conduct the main Coalition effort and attack to the east of XVIII Corps, engaging and destroying the Republican Guard. Finally, along the coast, U.S. Marines and Arab units would launch a combined offensive to hold enemy forces and eventually open the way for retaking Kuwait City. Schwarzkopf expected to have Kuwait back in safe hands in 2 weeks and spend another 4 weeks consolidating his victory. What would happen after that was apparently not discussed.[60]

Seeing no better alternative, the Secretary of Defense approved USCINCCENT's plans and returned to Washington where he and Powell discussed them further with the President. While lauding the professionalism of the air campaign planners, Cheney admitted to being less impressed with preparations for the ground war. Though there was still the debate in Congress to contend with, Bush agreed to go ahead with scheduling the air offensive but determined that the actual start of the land campaign would require a subsequent Presidential decision in February. Only a few weeks earlier, Bush had listened to what he characterized as an "upbeat briefing" by McPeak on the air campaign and may have hoped it would rule the day and avoid the need for a bloody confrontation on the ground. Powell, as always, remained skeptical, but everyone involved realized that the time for planning and for theoretical discussions was fast drawing to a close.[61]

On January 15, 1991, President Bush approved a general statement of war aims (NSD 54) authorizing U.S. military action in accordance with various UN resolutions. Despite the enormous force the United States and its coalition partners were assembling, the stated objectives in the President's directive were limited to bringing about "Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait" and restoring the region to the status quo prior to the invasion. Only if Saddam resorted to the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, carried through on threats to mount a terrorist campaign against the United States and its allies, or adopted a scorched earth policy by destroying Kuwait's oil fields, should steps be taken to replace his regime.[62] In contrast, USCENTCOM's preparations for military action both on the ground and in the air—plans approved at the highest levels—envisioned a much more ambitious agenda that included not only the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty but also the de facto disarmament of Iraq and the annihilation of Saddam's most formidable military forces, the Republican Guard. Under the air campaign, U.S. forces planned to "fragment and disrupt Iraqi political and military leadership," a goal sometimes described as "decapitating" the Iraqi government. In short, there would be no holding back. If the opportunity presented itself, Schwarzkopf and his field commanders had tacit authority to go all the way and eradicate Saddam's regime.[63]

LIBERATING KUWAIT: THE AIR WAR

Operation *Desert Storm* commenced during the early hours of January 17, 1991, with an attack by Army Apache helicopters against enemy radar installations in western Iraq. As the Iraqi installations burned, more than one hundred coalition fighter-bombers swept through the "hole" in the enemy radar fence bound for various targets across the country. Almost simultaneously, a squadron of Air Force Stealth F–117s using precision-guided bombs struck key command, control, and communications nodes in Baghdad, while British Tornados bombed key airfields with special munitions designed to incapacitate the runways. There soon followed additional attacks from conventional air-launched cruise missiles (CALCMs) delivered by B–52s based in the United States and Tomahawk missiles fired from Navy vessels in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. All in all, it was a dazzling display of joint and combined airpower and the most closely coordinated operation of its kind in history. Five hours into the air campaign, a voice identified as Saddam Hussein's declared over state radio: "The great duel, the mother of all battles, has begun."

Coalition air and missile strikes continued with only occasional let-up until the cessation of hostilities on February 28, 1991. Though a few Iraqi jets made it into the air to offer a challenge, most stayed on the ground. Some pilots flew their

planes to sanctuary in neighboring Iran. Initially, the bombing campaign adhered closely to the targeting and phased sequence of attacks as recommended by Warden's Checkmate organization and as subsequently modified by Glosson's Special Planning Group. Directed against 12 separate target sets, the intended goals of the air campaign were to assure coalition forces' air superiority, cripple Saddam's political and military command and control, disrupt essential industries and public services, isolate Iraqi forces in Kuwait and eventually defeat them, and deny Iraq the wherewithal to carry out future aggression or to pose a threat with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. In pursuit of those objectives, coalition forces flew nearly 65,000 combat sorties during the war, with 75 percent of them directed against Iraqi forces in the KTO.[64]

Shortly after the air war began, planners came under unexpected political pressure to amend their objectives. The day after the air campaign commenced, Saddam made good on a threat to launch Scud missiles armed with high-explosive warheads against Israel. Six hit Tel Aviv and two landed on Haifa, doing little physical damage but having immense psychological impact.[65] Since the onset of the crisis, the Bush administration did everything it could to dissuade the Israelis from becoming involved and now faced the prospect of Israeli retaliation unless U.S. forces took out the Scuds. With an effective range of only 500 miles, a relatively small warhead (between 200 and 500 pounds), and limited accuracy, the Scud missile, in Horner's opinion, was "militarily insignificant." Only if the Iraqis armed their Scuds with chemical or biological agents did Horner or other military planners see a serious danger. Weighing one thing against another, CENTAF planners downplayed the Scud threat. After destroying the fixed sites targeted at the outset of the bombing campaign, they looked to the Army's Patriot missile defense system to cope with the problem.[66]

Following the attacks on Israel, however, Schwarzkopf and Horner came under mounting pressure from Washington to divert more air assets than they had intended to neutralize the Scuds. Intelligence was sketchy and proved to be on the low end, but as a working estimate planners assumed an Iraqi arsenal of 600 Scud missiles (and variants), 36 mobile launchers, and 28 fixed launchers in 5 complexes in western Iraq.[67] The mobile systems proved the most vexing. Out of roughly 2,000 sorties per day during the early stages of the air campaign, Schwarzkopf estimated that USCENTCOM and its allies diverted approximately a third of their assets to the mobile "Scud hunt," largely to no avail other than to placate the Israelis.[68] Meanwhile, NATO reassigned four Patriot antimissile batteries to Israel, while the Joint Chiefs established a special planning cell within the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, headed by a senior Joint Staff intelligence officer, to coordinate with the Israelis.[69] As a rule, Schwarzkopf had

a low professional opinion of special operations forces and used them sparingly. But to help get the air campaign back on track, he called in the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which deployed a 400-man unit to western Iraq in late January 1991. Joined by British commandos, the JSOC teams scoured the Iraqi desert for mobile Scuds and claimed a dozen "kills," though none were confirmed.[70]

According to after-action reports, the hunt for the elusive Scuds caused preplanned attacks against some targets to be postponed but did not significantly degrade the effectiveness of the air campaign. Equally if not more detrimental to the air war was a weather front that stalled over Iraq on the third day of the conflict, disrupting operations for the next 3 days and resulting in the cancelation of some attacks. But by the tenth day of the offensive (D+10), the coalition had achieved undisputed air superiority over Iraq, permitting operations at high and medium altitudes with "virtual impunity." From that point on, coalition aircraft went about their tasks with systematic thoroughness.[71]

After the war, the air campaign's role in Iraq's defeat became a hotly debated issue. For those who had been around long enough, it conjured up memories of the contentious strategic bombing controversy after World War II (see chapter 3). Most assessments gave the air campaign mixed marks. On the plus side, it was without doubt a striking success in demonstrating the capabilities of new technologies (especially Stealth fighter-bombers and precision-guided munitions) in crippling Iraq's communications and war-supporting infrastructure. But it was less effective in undermining Saddam's leadership and eliminating the residual capabilities of his armed forces. Intelligence on Saddam's chemical, biological, and nuclear programs proved so poor that many key installations that were carefully hidden remained untouched. While air bombardment destroyed thousands of Iraqi tanks and other vehicles, about half of the losses occurred during the Iraqi Army's headlong retreat in the face of advancing coalition ground forces. The goal of a 50 percent reduction in effective Iraqi military strength through airpower prior to launching the ground war was never achieved.[72] A large part of the explanation for the air campaign's shortcomings was the brief duration of the war. Hence, even in areas where airpower achieved all of its objectives, it still fell below expectations. "It was prudent to have done so," observed the authors of the Gulf War Airpower Survey, "but attacking oil refineries and storage in Iraq bore no significant military results due to the swift collapse of the Iraqi Army." The same was essentially true of strategic attacks against Iraq's electrical power grid and other public services.[73]

Yet without the air war, the liberation of Kuwait doubtless would have taken far longer at far greater cost. Assured by their superiors that the air campaign would last no more than a week, many Iraqi units found the month-long bombing intolerable

and surrendered at the first opportunity when the ground campaign began.[74] As an exercise in jointness, the air war was probably the most successful and effective single part of the campaign. Air Force planners played the leading role in orchestrating the air war and in overseeing its execution. The Air Force also provided more planes than any other Service and flew the largest number of sorties—three and half times more than the Navy and over 60 percent of the total for the conflict.[75] As the dominant Service in the air war, the Air Force tended to impose its judgments and values on the other Services and coalition partners. Friction, especially with the Navy, became virtually inevitable. But by the same token, there was a predisposition on the part of all involved to compromise and cooperate as the need arose. In a very real sense, there was no other choice. Mounting the air campaign was the most complex and technically demanding aspect of the Gulf War. It created an operational environment in which success was directly dependent on effective joint collaboration.

PHASE IV: THE GROUND CAMPAIGN

While the United States and its allies achieved air superiority against Iraq with relatively little difficulty, indications were that they would have a much tougher time overcoming resistance on the ground in Phase IV. Evicting an estimated half million Iraqi troops from Kuwait, many of them heavily dug in and experienced in trench warfare from years of conflict with Iran, was a daunting prospect. More ominous was the possibility that Saddam might employ chemical or biological weapons against advancing coalition forces. Assessments, both official and unofficial, ranged from a few hundred to tens of thousands of American casualties. Preparing for the worst, USCENTCOM's medical staff expected as many as 20,000 U.S. killed and wounded.[76] Though Scowcroft, McPeak, and a few others considered these estimates of Iraqi capabilities exaggerated, most policymakers and planners were too cautious not to take them seriously; hence the willingness of Bush and Cheney to follow Powell's advice and expedite a massive buildup of land armies.

In pushing for the buildup, Powell's purpose had been twofold: to intimidate Saddam into capitulating without a fight or, failing that, to apply overwhelming force that would crush Iraqi resistance with as few losses as possible to the United States and its allies. The air war was the critical first step, but under the strategy embraced by Powell and Schwarzkopf it was never an end in itself. Though both lauded the role of airpower, neither saw it as decisive. As in Panama, they expected the fate of Kuwait to be decided on the ground.

Thinking along similar lines, Saddam was confident that his forces could ride out an air bombardment and effectively resist a ground assault.[77] Drawing on his

experience in positional warfare against Iran, Saddam created a layered defense with elaborate trenches, sand berms, and mine fields to slow the attackers' advance and inflict heavy casualties. Bolstering his strategic reserve, he quietly began removing his Republican Guard divisions from Kuwait in September 1990 and redeployed them to rear echelon positions. Regular army infantry replaced them. Time and again during the war with Iran, Saddam used similar battlefield tactics. Once the thrust of the attacker's offensive was apparent and had been reduced by the forward units, the reserve force made up of Republican Guard divisions would move in for the kill and destroy the enemy. A successful strategy against the limited capabilities of the Iranians, it proved considerably less effective against the coalition's relentless air bombardment, heavy armor, mechanized artillery, and other sophisticated weapons.[78]

Coalition ground forces had limited contact with the opposing Iraqis prior to launching their main offensive in late February 1991. Up to then, the largest and most intense engagement was the battle of Khafji, a coastal Saudi town just south of the Kuwaiti border. Believing that the coalition was massing its forces there for a thrust up the coast, Saddam ordered a division-sized preemptive attack against Khafji on January 29, 1991. Heavy fighting raged for two days. In the end both sides claimed victory—the Iraqis for having requited themselves reasonably well in the face of overwhelmingly stronger opposition and the coalition for inflicting heavy losses on the invaders and driving them back to their lines using intense air, artillery, and naval bombardment. Militarily, the battle had little impact on the course of the war. But it did much to bolster the morale of Saudi forces who had taken part in the fighting and convinced Schwarzkopf that Iraqi combat skills were overrated.[79]

By the time the main attack to liberate Kuwait commenced on February 23–24, Schwarzkopf had at his disposal one of the most impressive arrays of conventional firepower ever assembled including all the best of the Reagan buildup, from the planes, helicopters, and missiles flying overhead, to the tanks and armored personnel carriers on the ground, to the ships offshore. Since the Iraqis were armed largely with Soviet tanks and other Eastern bloc weapons, some in the press likened *Desert Storm* to a Cold War proxy conflict. In line with the Bush administration's pending base force reorganization plan, many U.S. units and their equipment were slated for immediate demobilization once Kuwait was liberated. *Desert Storm* was to be their last hurrah.

Under the weight of this awesome force, Iraqi resistance crumbled faster than anyone expected and the fighting was over in 100 hours. Some Iraqi units held their ground and offered credible resistance, but many gave up quickly and surrendered or deserted the battlefield. It turned out that allied intelligence had consistently

overestimated the size and capabilities of the Iraqi Army, so when the showdown came it was almost anticlimactic. Instead of the half million or more Iraqi troops in Kuwait as originally believed, there were probably between 200,000 and 220,000. Prewar intelligence also credited the Iraqis with 800 more tanks and 600 more artillery pieces than they had.[80] Enemy casualties were likewise far fewer than the 10,000 that were widely reported. A revisionist account, intentionally aimed at deflating such claims, asserted that there were as few as 4,500 Iraqi military losses during both the air and ground wars. This conjecture, based on selective anecdotal evidence, is probably too low. But remembering the unfavorable publicity and sordid controversy arising from McNamara's enemy "body count" in Vietnam, Powell suppressed the issuance of official figures on Iraqi losses.[81]

Like the air war, the ground campaign fell short of achieving some of its key objectives due in large part to its relatively brief duration. The greatest disappointment was the coalition's failure to destroy the Republican Guard, one of the cornerstones of Saddam's political and military power. Eliminating the Guard as an effective fighting force was a declared objective in NSD 54 and was the responsibility of the all-mechanized VII Corps commanded by Lieutenant General Frederick M. Franks, Jr., USA, which spearheaded the main assault. Brought in on short notice from Germany, VII Corps was organized, trained, and equipped to operate against the Warsaw Pact along a fairly static front in Central Europe and did not have much time to acclimate itself to the faster pace of desert warfare. "I do not want a slow, ponderous pachyderm mentality," Schwarzkopf declared. "I want VII Corps to *slam* into the Republic Guard."[82] Though Franks did what he could to pick up the tempo, it was still not fast enough to suit the USCINCCENT. Ultimately, in combination with ongoing air attacks, VII Corps inflicted heavy equipment losses on some of the Republican Guard's best units, including the elite Medina, Hammurabi, and Tawakalna divisions. Franks declared it "a victory of staggering battlefield dimensions."[83] Confirming Franks' assessment, Powell told President Bush that, based on initial reports, U.S. forces were "crucifying" the enemy.[84] Later, however, Powell learned that much of the Republican Guard never committed to battle and that three divisions escaped essentially intact to the safety of fallback positions near the Iraqi city of Basra.[85]

Failure to destroy the Republican Guard meant that Saddam remained a credible and dangerous military power. As a result, instead of a prompt withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, the United States became entangled for more than a decade in a low-intensity conflict using air and naval power to contain Saddam's rogue regime and police the region. While toppling Saddam was never an overt objective of *Desert Storm* (indeed, some Islamic governments would never have joined the coalition if it

was), it was always one of the Bush administration's preferred outcomes. An elusive goal, it would continue to haunt American foreign policy until the combined U.S.-British invasion of Iraq in 2003 finally brought down Saddam's government.

THE POST-HOSTILITIES PHASE

On March 3, 1991, Schwarzkopf and senior officers of the U.S.-led coalition met with Iraqi generals at Safwan airfield just inside Iraq to conclude a ceasefire. Looking back, Bush and Scowcroft acknowledged that they agreed to halt the war based on mistaken information that the Republican Guard had been largely destroyed and that air strikes had rendered Saddam's WMD research and production facilities inoperable. By the time they learned otherwise, it was too late to reconsider. Saddam's politico-military base of power remained secure. Still, they insisted that they had done the right thing by bringing the war to a prompt conclusion. The Bush administration had achieved its declared aim of evicting the Iraqis from Kuwait, but as the fighting subsided it faced an unexpected backlash of "bad press" arising from reports of civilian casualties, televised bomb damage in Baghdad, and pictures of destroyed enemy tanks and assorted vehicles along the "highway of death" out of Kuwait City. President Bush wanted the United States to emerge from the war with improved relations and a favorable image in the Arab world, and it served his purposes better to limit further carnage.[86]

After the war, there was much second-guessing that by ending the conflict too soon the United States and its partners had passed up the opportunity to topple Saddam. Army planners attached to USCENTCOM had in fact sketched out a plan for a march on Baghdad if the opportunity arose. But the concept they proposed lacked defined objectives and assumed that the mere presence of U.S. forces nearing the city would be enough to compel Saddam to capitulate and step down. How U.S. forces would respond if Saddam refused was unclear. Not surprisingly, the plan received a cool reception followed by a curt rejection at Schwarzkopf's headquarters.[87] Weighed against *Desert Storm*'s initial accomplishments, moreover, U.S. and coalition casualties were incredibly light, and no one was eager to incur more. While some in the Air Force would have preferred additional time to test their theories about the role and impact of airpower, most were satisfied that they made large strides toward proving their case. With enemy resistance collapsing on all fronts, Powell and Schwarzkopf concurred that the Iraqi Army was a spent force and that a ceasefire would be in the interest of all concerned.[88]

Compared to the meticulous planning that went into the military preparations for the Gulf War, planning for the postwar period was sketchy and haphazard. According to

Charles W. Freeman, Jr., the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, the Bush administration downplayed long-term political planning lest leaks "unhinge the huge and unwieldy coalition" the United States had so painstakingly put together to fight the war.[89] As a result, preparing for the postwar period was not a high priority on anyone's agenda. Still, to some extent it was unavoidable. Undertaken on a close-hold basis, postwar planning became largely an interagency distillation of views by the NSC Deputies Committee, where the Vice Chairman, Admiral David E. Jeremiah, represented the JCS.

In early February 1991, while testifying on Capitol Hill, Secretary of State Baker presented the gist of the deputies' deliberations to that point. One proposal under active consideration was to create a permanent Arab peacekeeping force backed by an increased U.S. naval presence in the Persian Gulf. During preliminary discussions of this and other issues affecting postwar security arrangements, Joint Staff (J-5) planners opposed an increased U.S. military presence in Southwest Asia on the grounds that it would divert resources from other missions and go against promises the United States made to the Saudis and other Arab governments that Western forces would promptly withdraw from the region once Kuwait was liberated. As the deputies' deliberations progressed, however, a consensus emerged that there was no alternative other than for the United States to assume a larger, more active postwar role in Gulf affairs. While the UN was likely to have overall responsibility, the United States, operating through USCENTCOM, had the only reliable organization in place with the necessary resources to police the region, assure the delivery of humanitarian aid to refugees displaced by the war, and assist Kuwait with its reconstruction. The deputies agreed that to the extent feasible the U.S. presence should be discrete and inconspicuous. For planning purposes, they were looking at the prepositioning of supplies and equipment for several Army brigades that could be quickly airlifted to the Middle East in case of renewed trouble, the permanent stationing of an Air Force tactical fighter wing somewhere in the Persian Gulf, additional units of Marines afloat offshore at all times, and an unspecified increase in naval forces with more frequent carrier visits to the region.[90]

The rest of Baker's plan traversed familiar ground and envisioned regional arms control agreements to curb the proliferation of conventional arms and prevent Iraq from reviving its WMD capability, a program of regional economic development, renewed energy conservation to lessen U.S. dependence on Middle East oil, and last but not least a revived peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. The formidable agenda looked good on paper. But as the Secretary of State acknowledged, the plan was still very tentative. To succeed it would need the full cooperation of all involved, including the Iraqis. Hardest of all would be a revived Arab-Israeli peace process that did not include substantial prior concessions from Israel.[91]

Efforts by the Deputies Committee to clarify a postwar strategy for the Middle East were still underway when the coalition's senior military officers met with their Iraqi counterparts in early March to sign the Safwan ceasefire accords. Some of Cheney's aides wanted the ceasefire to include tough restrictions on Iraq's military capabilities and full Iraqi disclosure of all WMD research sites. But the Joint Staff saw no need for such detail and argued successfully that specific guidance would only complicate Schwarzkopf's mission of negotiating an effective truce.[92] Modeled on a recently adopted UN Security Council resolution (S/RES 686), the ceasefire imposed limited constraints on enemy forces and left Iraq's military establishment essentially intact. Toward the end of the Safwan meeting, the Iraqis requested permission to use helicopters, which they insisted were essential for communication purposes owing to the damage coalition bombing had caused to ground transportation systems. Schwarzkopf was without instructions on the matter and, treating it as a reasonable request, agreed. He soon regretted his decision.[93] Shortly after the truce, Iraqi armed forces began using helicopter gunships to help suppress rebellions that had broken out among dissident Shiites in southern Iraq and Kurds in the north. Press accounts exaggerated the role the helicopters actually played, but the impression in the West was that the coalition had seriously blundered by not banning them.

Thus, despite the setback in Kuwait, Saddam remained as defiant and dangerous as ever and a source of continuing tensions in the Persian Gulf. All the same, the most lasting impression from the Gulf War was that it was a stupendous military triumph for the United States. Shaking off the stigma of Vietnam, U.S. forces had put on an awesome display of military power that achieved stated objectives with stunning efficiency and effectiveness. The Powell Doctrine of applying overwhelming force against the enemy had again prevailed, probably saving countless American lives. Not since World War II had the American public's confidence in the military and its leadership been so high. Much of the adulation fell on Schwarzkopf, whose gruff, no-nonsense manner, and commanding bearing made him an instant celebrity. Yet others basked in approbation as well. Indeed, for the vast majority of the Persian Gulf veterans it was an exhilarating experience as they returned home to tickertape parades and open-arm welcomes, honors that had eluded Vietnam veterans.

An unintended side effect of the Gulf War was the impetus it gave to reassessing the nature of future conflicts. In orchestrating such a lopsided victory, American planners exploited the latest military technologies to the fullest and in so doing made the defeat of Saddam's forces look easy—maybe too easy. Underlying the American success was a phenomenon known as the revolution in military affairs (RMA), which helped give the United States swift military dominance over Iraq. Dating from theoretical studies initiated in the 1970s, RMA stressed the interaction

of new forms of communications, improved battlefield management techniques, and the application of "smart" weaponry to gain superiority over the enemy. As the "lessons" of RMA's application in the Gulf War emerged, the notion took hold in some circles that future wars could be short, precise, and relatively painless. No member of the JCS, least of all General Powell who had done as much as anyone to engineer the victory, seriously believed that. But as the conflict ended, it seemed that a new era in warfare might be near at hand.

A further result of the war was the growing recognition that "jointness" had been an integral part of the victory. Iraq's defeat had come about not merely by superior force of arms but through carefully coordinated planning and the joint application of military power. While Service planning staffs played key roles at the outset of the crisis in shaping both the air and ground campaigns, and while the conflict had not always gone as scripted (especially during the ground war phase), it was clear by the war's end that joint direction and control had a major impact in shaping the outcome. Indeed, in Powell's estimation, the Gulf War saw the "triumph of joint operational art."[94] That jointness would be a prerequisite to the success of future military operations as resources continued to contract was almost certain. Implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act may not yet have been in full stride as its authors intended, but things were moving inexorably in that direction.

NOTES

1 NSR 10, "US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf," February 22, 1989 (declassified), Bush Presidential Records, available at <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr10.pdf.

2 NSD 26, October 2, 1989, "US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf," U, Bush Presidential Records, available at <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsd/nsd26.pdf>.

3 Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, trans. Paul Gould (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 314–315.

4 Powell mentions the military's apprehension in his Oral History, PBS "Frontline," aired January 9, 1996, transcript, 3–4, available at <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/decision.html>.

5 NSD 26, October 2, 1989, loc. cit.; James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 266–267.

6 Powell Oral History, PBS "Frontline," transcript, 3.

7 Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 272.

8 "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," August 5, 1990, Bush Public Papers, 1990, 1102.

9 Quoted in Matthew M. Aid, *The Secret Sentry: The Untold History of the National Security Agency* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 192.

10 Robert H. Scales, Jr., *Certain Victory: United States Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, 1993), 43.

11 Alexander S. Cochran et al., *Gulf War Airpower Survey*, Vol. I., Part I, *Planning* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1993), 203–207 (series hereafter cited as *GWAPS*); and U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1992), 9–16.

12 Quoted in H. Norman Schwarzkopf, with Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 344.

13 Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 130–131.

14 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 354, 375.

15 Dick Cheney, with Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 185.

16 Colin L. Powell, *American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 465–466.

17 DOD, 65.

18 Richard T. Reynolds, *Heart of the Storm: The Genesis of the Air Campaign Against Iraq* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 16.

19 Powell, *American Journey*, 479, 487.

20 Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 288.

21 Bernard E. Trainor, "Jointness, Service Culture, and the Gulf War," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Winter 1993–94): 72.

22 Richard G. Davis, *On Target: Organizing and Executing the Strategic Air Campaign Against Iraq* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2002), 3–9.

23 Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage: Planning the Gulf War Air Campaign, 1989–1991* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2004), 24.

24 See Powell's testimony of December 3, 1990, in U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings: Crisis in the Persian Gulf Region—U.S. Policy Options and Implications*, 101:2 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990), 662–663; and Putney, 263–264.

25 Powell, *American Journey*, 476–477.

26 John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1988), 169. Also see Richard P. Hallion, *Storm over Iraq: Airpower and the Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 116–117.

27 Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Gulf War Airpower Survey: Summary Report* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1993), 36–37; Richard G. Davis, "Strategic Bombardment in the Gulf War," in R. Cargill Hall, ed., *Case Studies in Strategic Bombardment* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1998), 546–547.

28 *GWAPS*, I, Pt. I, 114; DOD, 65.

29 Edward J. Marolda and Robert J. Schneller, Jr., *Shield and Sword: The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf War* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1998), 184.

30 Putney, 344.

31 *GWAPS*, I, Pt. I, 125–126, and Pt. II, 158.

32 Davis, "Strategic Bombardment in the Gulf War," 545.

33 Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 303.

34 Powell quotations from Putney, 221.

35 Henry Rowen quoted in Gordon and Trainor, 144.

36 Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus, eds., *The Whirlwind War: The United States Army in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1995), 107.

37 Bush and Scowcroft, 381; Cheney Oral History Interview, no date, PBS "Frontline," transcript, 4, available at <www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/cheney>.

38 Bush and Scowcroft, 381.

39 Cheney, "Frontline" Oral History, 5; Putney, 228; Gordon and Trainor, 144–145. One of Vesser's tasks was to evaluate the so-called "Western Excursion," a proposal developed in OSD to occupy western Iraq and from there to launch or threaten an attack on Baghdad. Arguing that it was logistically unsupportable, USCENTCOM strenuously opposed the plan and it eventually died. Still, it was a lingering source of friction between OSD and USCENTCOM. See Schwarzkopf, 428–429.

40 DOD, 66; also see Schwarzkopf, 419.

41 Scales, *Certain Victory*, 131–133; Powell quotes from Schwarzkopf, 426–427.

42 Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1993), 123–124; Woodward, 313–314.

43 Bush and Scowcroft, 431.

44 Powell Oral History, PBS "Frontline," transcript, 2; see also Powell, *American Journey*, 488–489.

45 Schubert and Kraus, 107–110; Bush and Scowcroft, 393–395.

46 "President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis," November 8, 1990, Bush Public Papers, 1990, 1580–1581.

47 See Powell, *American Journey*, 419–20.

48 DOD, 42–45; Schubert and Kraus, 130.

49 USCENTCOM also included a fifth combat component command for special operations, but lacking a full-blown organization it functioned in a limited capacity and had no operational role. A separate organization, the U.S. Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), carried out special operations during *Desert Storm*.

50 Davis, "Strategic Bombardment in the Gulf War," 545.

51 DOD, 101–102.

52 James A. Winnefeld and Dana J. Johnson, *Joint Air Operations: Pursuit of Unity in Command and Control, 1942–1991* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press and RAND Corp., 1993), 126.

53 See Marolda and Schneller, 183–190.

54 Putney, 175, 274–294 and passim; Gordon and Trainor, 311–312.

55 Atkinson, 67–68; John R. Ballard, *From Storm to Freedom: America's Long War with Iraq* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 52–53; and Trainor, "Jointness, Service Culture, and the Gulf War," 73.

56 Powell, *American Journey*, 503.

57 See James K. Matthews and Cora J. Holt, *So Many, So Much, So Far, So Fast: United States Transportation Command and Strategic Deployment for Operation Desert Shield/ Desert Storm* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office and Research Center, U.S. Transportation Command, 1995), 167–169, 174–175.

58 Gordon and Trainor, 186–190; Putney, 262–263.

59 Putney, 305–309.

60 DOD, 230–231, 243.

61 Davis, *On Target*, 161; Bush and Scowcroft, 431–432; DOD, 70.

62 NSD 54, "Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf," January 15, 1991, Bush Presidential Records, NSC Collection; and <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsd/nsd54.pdf> (accessed July 19, 1911).

63 DOD, 95–96.

64 Davis, "Strategic Bombardment in the Gulf War," 528; DOD, 253.

65 During the war, Saddam also launched Scud attacks against coalition positions in Saudi Arabia; 39 Scuds struck Israel and 44 hit Saudi Arabia. The most deadly attack came on February 25, 1991, when a Scud landed on barracks in Dhahran killing 25 U.S. military personnel and injuring another 100.

66 Atkinson, 85–90; Putney, 267–270. Developed originally as an antiaircraft missile, the Patriot was upgraded in 1988 to provide a limited capability against tactical ballistic missiles. The Gulf War was its first practical test.

67 DOD, 97.

68 Schwarzkopf, 486. Coalition air crews reported destroying around 80 mobile Scud launchers, nearly all of which were later found to have been decoys. A few actual launchers may have been destroyed but probably not more than a dozen. See *GWAPS Summary Report*, 83–90.

69 DOD, 168.

70 Gordon and Trainor, 244–246.

71 DOD, 124–129.

72 *GWAPS*, II, Pt. 2, 202–220.

73 *GWAPS Summary Report*, 77 (quote) and passim.

74 See Perry D. Jamieson, *Lucrative Targets: The U.S. Air Force in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2001), 144–145 and passim.

75 Table 64, "Total Sorties by U.S. Service/Allied Country by Mission Type," *GWAPS*, V, 232.

76 Woodward, 349.

77 Aid, 193.

78 DOD, 83–84.

79 Schwarzkopf, 496.

80 *GWAPS*, II, Pt. 2, 218–220.

81 See John G. Heidenrich, "The Gulf War: How Many Iraqis Died?" *Foreign Policy* 90 (Spring 1993): 108–125.

82 Schwarzkopf, 502. Emphasis in original.

83 Tom Clancy with Fred Franks, Jr., *Into the Storm: A Study in Command* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1997), 447.

84 Powell quoted in Atkinson, 469.

85 Scales, *Certain Victory*, 300–301, 314–315; DOD, 281; Ballard, 74.

86 Gordon and Trainor, 412; Bush and Scowcroft, 488–489.

87 Gordon and Trainor, 452–454.

88 Schwarzkopf, 542–543; Powell, 519–525. Shortly after the war, in a televised interview, Schwarzkopf changed his mind and indicated that he would have preferred to continue fighting a few more days but neglected to mention what specific objectives he had in mind.

89 Freeman interviewed March 31, 1998 and quoted in Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 33.

90 Baker testimony, February 6, 1991, U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearings: Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Years 1992–93*, 102:1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991), Pt. 1, 6–7 and passim; Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 412–413.

91 Baker, *Politics of Diplomacy*, 412–414.

92 Gordon and Trainor, 444.

93 Schwarzkopf, 566–567.

94 Gordon and Trainor, 464.


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