

The First Gulf War

President George H.W. Bush's Cabinet

Introduction

On August 2nd 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, claims that this action was brought about as a retaliatory measure to Kuwait allegedly stealing oil from Iraq's Rumaylah refinery through slant drilling. Within a few days of direct military combat, Kuwaiti forces were overrun by their Iraqi counterparts and had to retreat to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Iraq has since annexed Kuwait, and on August 28th 1990 Saddam Hussein declared the Emirate of Kuwait to be Iraq's 19th province and renamed it al-Kadhima.

Build-Up

Dispute over Financial Debt

Iraq and Kuwait, prior to Iraq's invasion have been tussling over financial issues which can be traced to the Iran-Iraq war which broke out early after the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Kuwait, which had initially maintained a neutral stance on the war became a target of ideological warfare initiated by Ayatollah Khomeini. In his attempts to spill the current of fundamentalism that had sprung up in Iran during the revolution across the border into Kuwait, he ultimately alienated the latter who chose to support Iraq in the war. Between the years of 1982-83, Kuwait gave a significant amount of financial assistance to Iraq – to the tune of USD 14 billion. Once the war was over, Iraq with its depleted resources was in no position to repay this debt to Kuwait and requested that it be pardoned on the grounds that Iraq's influence over Kuwait during the war had prevented Iranian hegemony from taking over. Kuwait rejected this plea and the debt is still outstanding.

Economic Disagreements and the Rumaylah Dispute

Beginning in the 1980s, when Iraq appealed to OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) to reduce its crude oil production quota in order to end an oil glut which had been caused by a decrease in demand for oil following the 1970s energy crisis. There was a surplus of crude oil in circulation and Iraq was feeling the pinch of the same. Kuwait on the other hand, was not too concerned with the price of oil because it had a large downstream petroleum industry. So much so, that it appealed to the OPEC to increase its oil production ceiling by 50%. As a result, throughout the 80s oil glut, Kuwaiti production had been considerably above the quota permitted by the OPEC and was therefore preventing an increase in oil prices. This impasse in the OPEC undermined Iraq's efforts to end the oil glut and severely derailed its economic recovery following the Iran-Iraq war. Kuwait's adamancy in continuing to produce a surplus of oil was viewed by Iraq as an act of aggression.

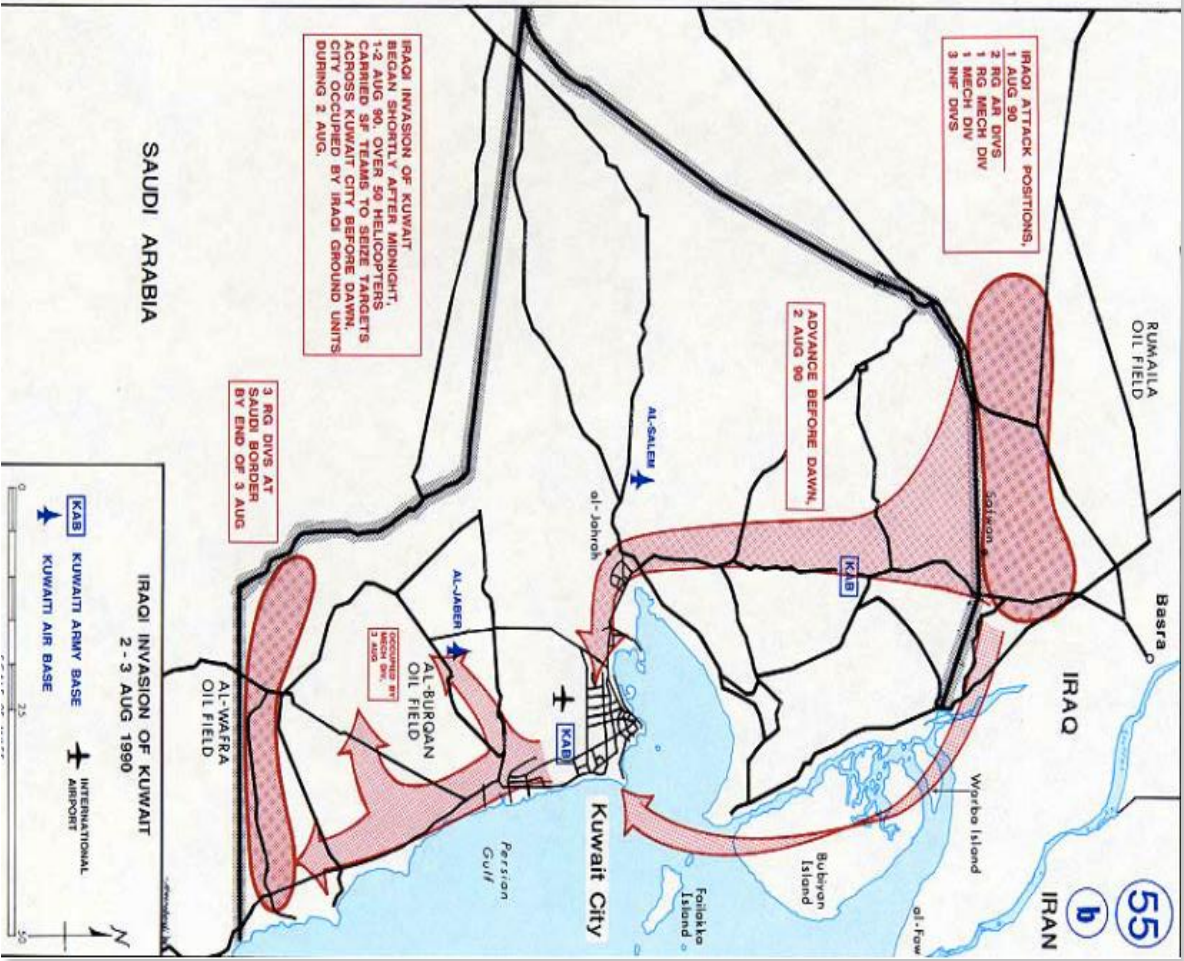
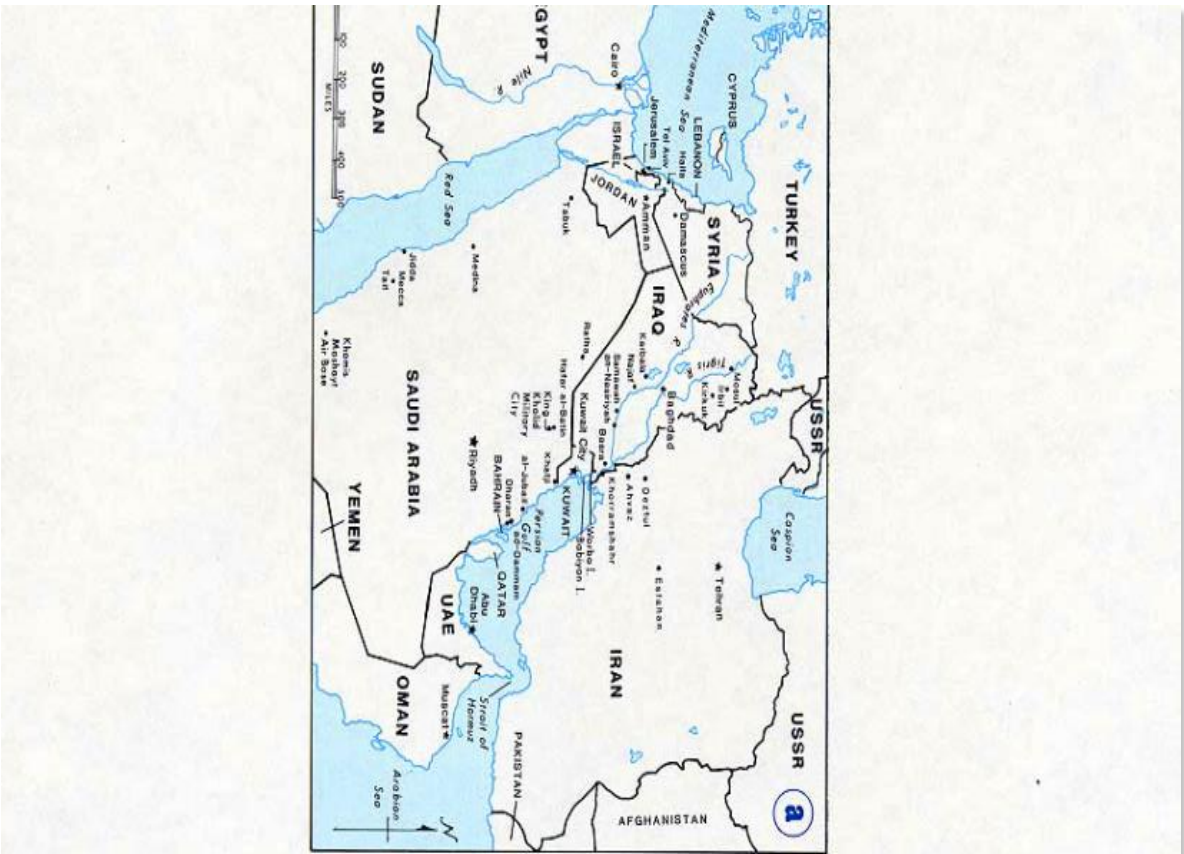
In the year 1960, an Arab league declaration had marked the border between Iraq and Kuwait two miles north of the southernmost tip of the Rumaylah oil field thereby making it disputed territory. Owing to the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi drilling in Rumaylah reduced whereas Kuwaiti drilling on their bit of the oil field increased. This dispute came to a head in 1989 when Iraq accused Kuwait of using slant-drilling to drill oil from the Iraqi portion of the oil field i.e. "stealing" oil estimated (by Iraq) to be worth approximately USD 2.4 billion. OPEC officials have however confirmed that, a few days prior to Iraq's invasion, leaders of the UAE and Kuwait had proposed to limit their daily output of oil to 1.5 million barrels. This agreement could potentially have resolved differences between Iraq and Kuwait regarding oil policy.

The Invasion

Iraq launched its attack on Kuwait on the 2nd of August at 2:00am local time. Four elite divisions of the Iraqi Republican Guard as well as Iraqi Army special forces units, equivalent to an entire division, spearheaded the attack. Commandos deployed by air and sea took control of Kuwait City and the remaining divisions captured the airports and two airbases. To back up this attack, Iraq deployed several air force units to support their commandos in Kuwait city and further the Iraqi Army's advance on Kuwait. The Iraqi air force launched crushing attacks on two Kuwaiti air-bases as well as the city with the goal to establish air superiority and tilt the stakes in favour of Iraq.

Kuwait was caught unaware and in a meagre attempt at retaliating, an air battle was fought between the two adversaries inflicting heavy losses on Iraqi forces. Eventually, overpowered by the Iraqi forces Kuwait evacuated their personnel to nearby Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Iraqi troops attacked the Royal Residence of the Emir in the Battle of Dasman Palace which resulted in the death of the Emir's younger brother Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Emir himself fled to the Saudi desert.

Towards the end of the first day of the invasion, only pockets of resistance were left in the country. By 3 August, the last military units were desperately fighting delaying actions at choke points and other defensible positions throughout the country until out of ammunition or overrun by Iraqi forces. Ali al-Salem air base of the Kuwaiti Air Force was the only base still unoccupied on 3 August, and Kuwaiti aircraft flew resupply missions from Saudi Arabia throughout the day in an effort to mount a defense. However, by nightfall, Ali al-Salem air base had been overrun by Iraqi forces. From then on it was only a matter of time until all units of the Kuwaiti Military were forced to retreat or be overrun.



Aftermath

Once occupied, the retreating Iraqi army set alight over 600 oil wells causing severe economic and environmental damage to Kuwait. Saddam Hussein installed Alaa Hussein Ali as the Prime Minister of the “Provisional Government of Free Kuwait” and Al-Hassan al-Majid as its de facto governor. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti royal family in exile began gathering international support against this illegal occupation of Kuwait and the UN Security council has also called for Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait. However, Iraqi forces are still continuing their illegal occupation of Kuwait and gradually draining the Emirate of its wealth.

Saddam Hussein’s government has received severe international condemnation for their actions, including from countries traditionally considered close allies of Iraq such as France and India. China and the USSR have placed arms embargoes on Iraq and the NATO as well has severely criticized Iraq for its actions. The United States has also warned Iraq of a potential military intervention if it does not withdraw its forces from Kuwait. The US Congress, on the 12th of January 1991, has officially authorized the President and his cabinet to undertake military action in aid of Kuwait. This committee has been called to order for this purpose on the 14th of January 1991. Ladies and Gentlemen, the world now looks to the Unites States to pave the way for peace and justice.

God Bless America.

A Brief Timeline Of Events

1990:

May 28–30: Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein says that oil overproduction by Kuwait and United Arab Emirates was an "economic warfare" against Iraq.

July 15: Iraq accused Kuwait of stealing oil from the Rumaylah, Iraq's oil field near the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border and warns of military action.

July 22: Iraq begins deploying troops to the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border and building a massive military buildup.

August 2: About 100,000 Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, initiating the Gulf War. The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 661 imposing a trade embargo on Iraq in a 13-0 vote, with Cuba and Yemen abstaining.

August 7: The United States launched Operation Desert Shield. First U.S. troops arrived in Saudi Arabia.

August 8: Saddam Hussein proclaimed the annexation of Kuwait.

August 12: Naval blockade of Iraq begins.

August 28: Iraq declared Kuwait as its 19th province and renames Kuwait City as al-Kadhima.

September 14: United Kingdom and France announce the deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia.

November 29: The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 678 setting a deadline for

Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait before January 15, 1991, or face military action.

1991:

January 9: Talks in Geneva, Switzerland, between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Iraq Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz ended with no progress.

January 12: U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the use of military force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. The votes were 52-47 in the U.S. Senate and 250-183 in the U.S. House of Representatives.