

**OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD & DESERT STORM**  
in  
**TWILIGHT: 2000**



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After more than forty years of armed watchfulness, the Cold War appeared to be thawing in Spring 1989. On May 2, Hungary began dismantling its border fence with Austria. East Germans vacationing in Hungary began crossing the border by the hundreds. In July, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who had set far-reaching reforms in the Eastern Bloc into motion with his policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (economic reform), effectively renounced the use of military force against members of the Warsaw Pact for the purpose of interference in domestic affairs. In August, a pro-Solidarity dissident Catholic became Prime Minister of Poland. In October, Hungary enacted legislation changing itself from a communist state to a republic. East Germany attempted to close her borders to prevent her citizens from reaching the West through neighboring Warsaw Pact states. However, massive civil unrest caused the East German government to lift all travel restrictions between East and West Berlin on November 9.

Word of this event reached Moscow, where conservative elements had been plotting to overthrow Gorbachev for months. Images of West Berliners climbing the Berlin Wall aided by

East German border guards spurred the conspirators into action. In a brutally effective action, a cabal led by KGB man Dmitri Danilov seized control of the Kremlin and placed themselves at the head of the Soviet state. Units of the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG) were dispatched to the Berlin Wall to take over from the unreliable East Germans. Dozens of West Germans were killed as Soviet troops restored the integrity of the Berlin Wall.



*Soviet MVD troops in action in East Germany, early January 1989. Following the overthrow of Mikhail Gorbachev by hardliners, the USSR sent regular army units and even MVD units into the nations of the Warsaw Pact to restore control by communist regimes friendly to the USSR.*

The new Soviet leadership mobilized massive resources to restore communist control of Eastern Europe. Soviet troops flooded into Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. The military effort was as clumsy as it was unprecedented. Violence was widespread as pro-democracy forces

in many nations attempted to resist the imposition of pro-Soviet regimes. Estimates of the loss of life in Eastern Europe during the so-called Black Winter ranged from 100,000 to one million.

The period immediately after the Black Winter (1989-1990) was one of the most tense in Cold War history. The US President, George Bush, was deeply angered and frustrated by the turn of events in Eastern Europe. Though he was enough of a realist to know that he could not have done much to aid the Eastern Europeans without going to war with the Soviets, it was nevertheless bitterly disappointing to see the Iron Curtain so close to and yet so far from coming down.

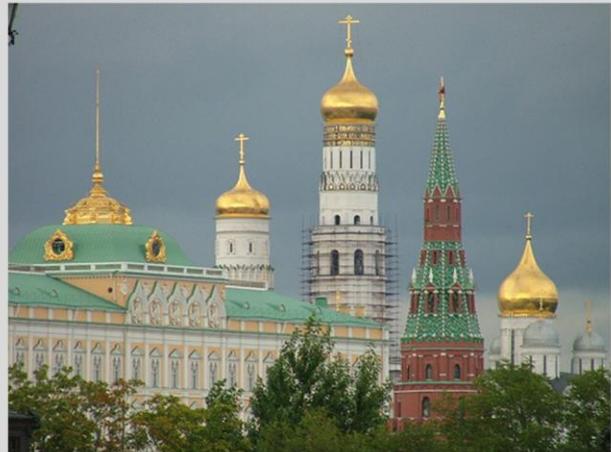
Public opinion throughout the West was explosive. One poll in the US found that a majority of Americans were willing to go to war. The Western press was filled with anti-Soviet vitriol, and vocal leaders in the legislatures of the NATO signatories soundly denounced the Danilov regime. The US Congress drafted and passed a measure to block all shipments of grain and other US products to the USSR. US leaders pressured other Western and Third World nations to follow suit.

Behind the scenes, however, the Danilov regime was working to repair the damage to its relations with the West. Even as Soviet intelligence and security forces were locking down Eastern Europe, Soviet representatives were soliciting the United States and other Western nations for loans, credits, grain, and other products. Though the Eastern Europeans were handled brutally, Westerners caught up in events throughout the region were treated with great care by the Soviets.

Though his first act as leader of the Soviet Union to direct a brutal counter-revolution in Eastern Europe, Danilov was in fact a reformer. He understood why Gorbachev had made changes in the Soviet system. Danilov grasped the single overriding fact of Soviet existence at the beginning of the 1990s: the Soviet Union could survive no longer as it had been operating for more than twenty years. The military budget had imposed a crushing burden on an economy that was much less productive than that of the United States. The pervasive presence of internal security was consuming nation resources at a rate that was small only when compared to the gargantuan military budget. Centralized planning, combined with the essential deceit of the Soviet system, had resulted in a national production situation that produced nothing so much as waste. State-run agriculture was a disaster. The Soviet Union possessed some of the most potentially productive agricultural land in the world, and yet the USSR imported massive quantities of food from the West. Even then, millions of Soviets existed at the brink of starvation.

Unlike many of his cronies in the new Kremlin cabal, Danilov understood clearly that without significant change the Soviet Union would implode. His problem was convincing the hard-liners who had overthrown and killed Gorbachev that some measure of reform was required. Danilov needed to convince his co-conspirators that their best option for holding onto power was to give up some of the immense power of the Party state before the state collapsed under its own weight.

*It is noteworthy, however, that this poll stood out among other similar polls in making no mention of the prospect of nuclear war. Other polls showed that a majority of Americans still believed an outright confrontation with the USSR would lead to a nuclear exchange. Polls which included the nuclear issue showed a much smaller of the United States willing to risk nuclear war to liberate Eastern Europe.*



*The new Soviet regime led by Dmitri Danilov faced the same problems that had prompted Gorbachev to initiate glasnost and perestroika—and for which the Danilov cabal had deposed and murdered Gorbachev. Food shortages, low industrial efficiency, bloated military and state security budgets, and a political system based upon fraud and intimidation were problems that had become even more acute since Gorbachev's first efforts to ameliorate them. "Brute force cannot solve our problems," Danilov told Pravda in February 1989.*

Danilov's initial efforts to restore the Gorbachev-era essence to Soviet-Western relations were soundly rebuffed. Bush and British Prime Minister John Major were under enormous pressure from the respective legislatures to find some means of injuring the Soviets. The West German Chancellor didn't even want to meet with Soviet representatives. The brutality of the Soviet Communists towards other Communist peoples in the Eastern European satellites caused the large socialist segments of the French and Italian political structures to unite with the generally anti-Soviet conservatives of those countries. The smaller members of NATO had neither the resources to supply Soviet needs nor the inclination to buck the leadership of their larger partners.

In May 1990, Danilov sweetened his offers to the United States. He was willing to pay for grain, machinery, loans, and technology with oil. The Soviet Union possessed stupendous petroleum reserves, as well as a massive production capacity. Danilov silenced protests within his own government by pointing out that he was maneuvering the Soviet Union into a position of advantage. If the US (or other Western states) took the oil deal, the USSR would be edging out other vendors of oil. This could only hurt the oil-producing countries that were aligned with the West, like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Venezuela. Moreover, the US would be further discouraged from military adventures with the USSR by the necessity of keeping the oil supply line open. If initial deals proved satisfactory, the volume of trade could increase. American dependence on Soviet oil would grow as a result.

Though sorely tempted, the Bush White House refused the deal. The conservatives understood the risks of becoming in any way dependent on Soviet oil. The grain embargo was hurting the Midwest farmers, but the general mood in Congress remained stridently anti-Soviet. The UK and other NATO states refused to deal with the Soviets for the same reasons.

Without outside intervention, this impasse might have kept Soviet-Western relations in a deep freeze for years to come. However, events in the Middle East would affect the situation between the Soviets and the West, as they had so many times before. This time, though, the outbreak of war in the Middle East would serve to bring the superpowers to an understanding.

On August 2 1990, Iraq invaded the emirate of Kuwait. Within days, the elite Iraqi

Republican Guard overran the small but enormously wealthy country on Iraq's southern border and stood poised to invade Saudi Arabia.



*Jubilant Iraqi Republican Guard troops in Kuwait City, August 1990*

Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraq, was confronted by a number of problems at home which he hoped to alleviate by conquering little Kuwait. Having seized power in Iraq in 1979, Hussein soon thereafter came to blows with his neighbor Iran. Iran, a long-time US ally, underwent a wracking revolution soon after Hussein came to power in Iraq. The Shah of Iran was deposed, and a new fundamentalist Islamic government under the Ayotollah Khomeini took nominal control of Iran. At first, Khomeini's grip on the country was shaky. Hussein decided to use this opportunity to settle a long-standing difference of opinion between Iran and Iraq over control of the Shatt-al-Arab, the waterway that was the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates River and which linked Iraq to the Persian Gulf. Iraqi forces crossed the Shatt-al-Arab,

secured the eastern bank, and drove east. Hussein believed that the Iranians would not be able to respond effectively, giving him control over the southwestern corner of Iran.

The Iraqis moved quite slowly, however, while the Iranians responded with surprising energy. Within weeks, the Iranians had driven the Iraqis back across the Shatt-al-Arab. Hussein asked for a truce, but the revolutionary Iranians refused. For the next eight years, Iran and Iraq would engage in a war of attrition that would see widespread (if inept) use of chemical weapons, missiles, and human wave attacks by one side or another. Hussein built the Iraqi Army to more than a million men, with a robust park of tanks, APCs, artillery, trucks, and other materiel for mechanized war. Finally, in 1988 the Iraqis launched a series of counteroffensives that broke the back of the Iranians.

The Iraqi economy was devastated by the war. The national debt was huge, despite considerable aid from other Persian Gulf states that did not want to see Iranian-style revolutionaries increase their power. With the end of the war, the Gulf States wanted their money back. Hussein could not demobilize his million-man army because there were no jobs for the soldiers. Worse, the price of oil—Iraq's chief export---was going down at the end of the 1980s. Desperate, Hussein turned his attention to Kuwait.

Kuwait was one of the oil-rich Gulf States which had provided loans to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. The little emirate had not existed until the demise of the Ottoman Empire, at which time the British created the modern map of the Middle East. Under the Ottomans, Kuwait had been a part of what was to become Iraq. Given the very limited access to the Persian Gulf enjoyed by Iraq, the Iraqi state had long coveted Kuwait. The situation under the Ottomans gave Iraq a pretext of ownership, if a somewhat flimsy one. Further, Kuwait was tremendously wealthy.

For Hussein, conquest of Kuwait promised to solve a number of problems. Control of

additional oil wealth would help the cash-flow problem. Eradication of the Kuwaiti state would obviate much of the Iraqi debt while bringing billions into the Iraqi coffers. Conquest of Kuwait also might bring the other Gulf States to the table in a much more compliant frame of mind regarding Iraq's debts to them. Iraq would have an invaluable addition to her coastline, plus the port of Kuwait City. It was a promising package. Thus on August 2 1990, Hussein sent his elite Republican Guard across the Kuwaiti border.

Worldwide condemnation was immediate. The United States demanded that the Iraqis withdraw from Kuwait and began immediate deployment of the 82nd Infantry Division (Airborne) to Saudi Arabia, which now appeared to be under threat of imminent invasion. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) was now faced with the war in the Persian Gulf for which they had trained and prepared for more than a decade.

Although the United States and France both did business with Iraq, the principal supplier of Iraqi military hardware was the Soviet Union. Soviet advisors and technicians were to be found throughout Iraq, and relations between Baghdad and Moscow were cordial. In the West, the initial assumption was that the new hard-line Soviet government was behind the invasion of Kuwait. Comparisons with the Korean War were on the airwaves and in the halls of power throughout the West before the Iraqi Army had reached the southern border of little Kuwait. If the heavy divisions of the Republican Guard did strike into northeastern Saudi Arabia, they would grind the light troops of the US 82nd Airborne into the sand. By the time the first elements of the 82nd Airborne Division were winging their way to the Gulf, the only real question seemed to be whether the Soviets would direct Hussein to invade Saudi Arabia, thereby bringing the majority of the world's petroleum reserves into Soviet hands.

*T-72s much like this one equipped the elite Republican Guard, which was held in the operational rear as a fast-moving, hard-hitting reserve. Although the Republican Guard tankers proved reasonably skilled and resolute, the T-72 was a poor match for the more modern tanks of the US Army and British Army. In poor visibility resulting from bad weather and well fires, defending T-72s could not see Coalition tanks rolling into their ambushes. Coalition tankers, operating vehicles with state-of-the-art imaging and long-range guns, were able to identify and destroy Iraq's best tanks almost with impunity.*



In fact, the Soviets were as surprised as anyone by this turn of events. Hussein had neither sought nor received approval from the Kremlin for an invasion of Kuwait. He ignored Soviet attempts at communication during his two-day operation in Kuwait. Only when the US began deploying CENTCOM did Hussein respond to Moscow's calls.

Now, with the Iraqi Army in firm control of Kuwait, the Kremlin faced a dilemma. How to make the most of the situation?

The Kremlin had ears, and Danilov knew the Americans thought the Soviet Union was behind the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Indeed, it was hard to see how the Americans would believe otherwise. The US had persisted in seeing every Communist action around the world as a part of a grand scheme directed from Moscow long after it should have been obvious that this was not the case. The Americans blamed the Soviets for Korea. To a lesser extent, they blamed the Soviets for Vietnam (despite the fact that the majority of aid for North Vietnam came from China). In the Gulf in 1990, the US was presented with a worst-case scenario of a Soviet client invading an important oil-producing state that was friendly to the West. How could the Americans not see it as something done to Soviet advantage?

Many of the Kremlin hard-liners argued the very same thing. Though they had not instigated the Iraqi action, the Soviets stood to gain enormously from it. With no effort on their own part, the Soviets were looking at a situation that could deny the West some of the Gulf oil upon which it was dependent. With a little more urging and a guarantee of Soviet protection, Hussein could be moved to take northeastern Saudi Arabia and most of the Saudi oil fields. With the majority of the world's oil reserves in Soviet hands, the West could be leveraged into providing food and loans to the USSR. A Soviet nuclear guarantee to Iraq would prevent the Americans from using nuclear weapons against Iraq, while a steady supply of Soviet parts and equipment to Iraq would be more than sufficient to offset whatever forces the American could get to the Gulf over the next few months.

Danilov and a few of his more visionary allies saw things differently. The hard-liners were right that Iraqi seizure of the Saudi oil fields would put the West in a bad situation. An Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia was likely to backfire. While it was true that the heavy divisions of the Republican Guard would destroy the 82nd Airborne, the United States hardly could be counted on to take this lying down. CENTCOM would continue to deploy to Saudi Arabia—to whatever port could receive the American equipment. The Iraqi Army lacked the troops and the logistical capability to occupy the ports of Saudi Arabia on the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, plus the ports of the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman. The United States would base air and ground units in whatever portion of the Saudi Peninsula was available to them, then open operations against Iraq. The results would be a massive US expenditure, a general Western shift to non-Gulf sources of oil, an overall lessening of consumption, and an heightened American enmity with the USSR that would last for years to come.



*In the event Hussein had sent his Republican Guard south to seize the Saudi oil fields along the Gulf coast in early August, the only armor available to the defenders would have been the M551 Sheridan tanks of 3-73 AR (3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Armored Regiment). Though battle tested, the Sheridans would have been unable to stand against an equal number of T-72s, much less hundreds of the best Iraqi tanks.*

The Kremlin hard-liners countered that the United States had no stomach for a protracted war in the Gulf. With the aid of Soviet submarines and other naval power, the ports ringing the Saudi Peninsula might be closed to the Americans. Faced with the prospect of fighting their way into Omani or Saudi ports, followed by a campaign over long stretches of desert against an opponent using modern Soviet weapons, the Americans would concede the point. The

fact that intense fighting in northeastern Saudi Arabia and Kuwait would ruin the very oil wells the US wanted to control would only make the option of bargaining with the Soviet Union that much more attractive.

Seeing that the Kremlin was deadlocked on the issue of whether the Americans would continue to fight in the Gulf once the 82nd Airborne had been smashed, Danilov changed tactics. He asked his fellow top Communists, who sets policy for the Soviet Union? Regardless of the potential usefulness of current developments in the Gulf, the fact remained that Hussein had not obtained Soviet permission before starting his adventure in Kuwait. As a result, the Soviet Union was thrust into a situation in which could not plan, only react. Supporting Iraq now would set a very bad precedent. Other Soviet client states might take unilateral action for their own reasons in their parts of the world, thereby dragging the Soviet Union into one confrontation with the West after another. Sooner or later, the Americans would fight. More to the point, Moscow was supposed to set policy for the client states, not the other way around.

In the light of the current situation, Danilov and a few of his supporters did not agree that the West could be extorted into trading food for oil. More likely, the West would be so incensed and threatened that they would refuse to trade. Non-Arab members of OPEC, as well as non-OPEC oil producers like Mexico and Norway, would be glad to make up the difference in global oil production and reap the profits of higher oil prices.

There was another factor to consider. Hussein had invaded Kuwait because his economy was ailing. Even with Kuwait under his control, Hussein owed billions to other countries.

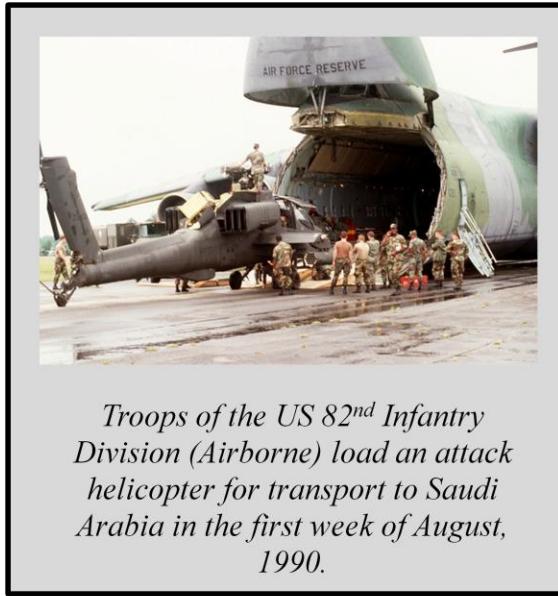
Defaulting on that debt or even conquering the other Gulf States (a feat which the Soviet advisors in Iraq did not think was possible) would not solve all of Iraq's problems, because Hussein needed hard currency to provide jobs for his million-man army. The Soviet Union could not provide hard currency for Iraq. To obtain hard currency, Hussein would have to sell oil to the West sooner or later, at which point the relationships between the USSR, Iraq, and the United States would become quite complex. Moscow might be put in the position of currying favor with a client state as opposed to the other way around, which again was contrary to the way things were supposed to be.

As the US 82nd Airborne was landing in Saudi Arabia, the United States began assembling support in the United Nations. Most of the UN believed as the United States did that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a Soviet-inspired scheme. Western governments which had rebuffed Danilov's efforts to obtain grain, credits, and machinery saw the invasion of Kuwait as a Soviet response. Given the events of the Black Winter, the United States had a certain currency in its efforts to build a coalition of nations to oppose the Iraqi action.

The US ambassador to the UN issued a thinly-veiled accusation that the USSR had masterminded the invasion. Naturally, the Soviet ambassador denied any wrongdoing.

At this point, the Soviet Defense Minister, who previously had supported getting Hussein to invade Saudi Arabia, changed his argument. If a US-led alliance did assemble forces in Iraq, as appeared likely, the enemy would be providing the Soviet Union an excellent chance to see the Western powers fight. The mood at the UN made it seem like the Americans were going to fight after all. That being the case, and given that Hussein had not sought permission for his actions, why not let Iraq stand on its own? If Hussein did not quickly give up Kuwait, the US-led alliance would have to attack. This would be a superb opportunity to observe the state-of-the-art in American war fighting without any risk to the USSR. At the same time, the USSR could send the message to the other client states that if they acted on their own, they would be hung out to dry. The Soviet Union would not be dragged into regional conflicts without prior consultation.

With the support of the Defense Minister, Danilov made his policy choice. He invited Bush to an emergency summit meeting in Switzerland in the second week of August. There, he and Bush came to terms. In two days of meetings that were often one-on-one, Danilov made it clear to Bush that the USSR had nothing to do with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and that the Soviet Union wanted no confrontation with the West. Bush told Danilov that he wanted Moscow to order Baghdad out of Kuwait. Danilov replied that he didn't believe Hussein would respond to that, but he promised to give the strongest advice he possibly could. To further impress Bush with his desire to normalize relations with the West, Danilov offered to issue a public



*Troops of the US 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division (Airborne) load an attack helicopter for transport to Saudi Arabia in the first week of August, 1990.*

proclamation condemning the Iraqi invasion. Soviet military aid would cease until Iraq pulled out of Kuwait. Perhaps most importantly, the USSR would support a UN resolution demanding an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait backed by military action if Hussein refused. Further, the Kremlin would line up as many of its clients as possible to support the US-led effort in the UN. Bush returned to Washington and waited for the Soviets to play their part at the UN. When Danilov proved good to his word, Bush had the grain embargo lifted. While some members of Congress protested, Bush made it clear that he felt the Danilov regime was one the US could work with “under certain conditions.”



*President Bush delivers his “under certain conditions” speech to Congress. In this speech, Bush outlined what he termed “restored stability”. For the foreseeable future, the Soviet and American spheres would remain unaltered, allowing business to return to its pre-1989 norms.*

Hussein refused to give up Kuwait. He was certain the West would bargain with him for the oil. He was equally certain that the USSR would back him again if he could score a battlefield success. Also, successful resistance on the part of the Iraqis would put Hussein in the forefront of the Arab world. This would make him impossible for the superpowers to simply manhandle. The Iraqi Army began to dig into Kuwait.

By the time the US XVIII Airborne Corps had finished its deployment to Saudi Arabia, it was obvious that Iraq was not going to invade Saudi Arabia. It was equally obvious that the US-led Coalition was going to have to eject the Iraqis from Kuwait. With the support of the Soviet Union, the Coalition had brought nations like Syria into the fold. To liberate Kuwait, the US was going to need more forces and additional diplomacy.

At a second summit, this one in Reykjavik, Bush and Danilov talked candidly about their desire for good relations. Notes written by Bush during the meeting indicate that Danilov told him a good deal more about his thinking than even people in the Kremlin knew. Danilov believed that the United States and the Soviet Union would always be rivals, but they need not be enemies. He told Bush he believed the military competition between East and West was no longer a viable option. He told Bush that while the Party fully intended to retain power in the Soviet Union, he intended to introduce reforms. He would have to do so in a more gradual manner than Gorbachev had done, or the remaining hard-liners would purge him as well. However, he hoped that over the course of the next ten years the US and USSR could agree to a 25-50% reduction in nuclear weapons and a 25-30% reduction in conventional forces. Beyond that, he hoped that the US and USSR could enter into trade agreements that would satisfy both their needs and give Danilov the political capital he would need to further advance reforms.

Danilov promised to back a US-sponsored resolution authorizing the Coalition to use force to liberate Kuwait. He told Bush that the Soviet ambassador would approve verbiage that enabled Coalition aircraft to use Iraqi airspace and Coalition ground forces to use Iraqi territory to the degree that said usage supported the goal of Kuwaiti liberation. However, Danilov stipulated that Iraq otherwise was to remain intact. Hussein was to remain in power in Iraq. Destruction of Iraqi equipment and personnel pursuant to the liberation of Kuwait was acceptable to the Soviet Union. Destruction of Iraqi equipment and personnel pursuant to the destruction of the Hussein regime was not.



*Upon assuming the mantle of supreme Soviet leadership, Dmitri Danilov embarked on a cult of personality-style campaign to convince the Soviet people that he (and he alone) could steer the Soviet Union towards the people's utopia which had been promised by Marxism. Stylized images of Danilov appeared in public places. The images consistently presented the idea that he was looking towards a brighter future that neither the old school Communists nor Gorbachev had been able to see properly. Peaceful co-existence with the West was a cornerstone of Danilov's vision, as peace would allow the transfer of the nation's productivity from the military to the civilian economy.*

Bush understood what Danilov was saying readily enough. The USSR would keep its clients essentially intact, though the clients were not free to do as they pleased. Back in Washington, the Bush Administration argued the virtues of being bound by such an agreement with the Soviets. If the US complied with the Soviet demand for a continuing Hussein-led Iraq that kept all its territory, there would be a de facto policy of detente. Had not the Reagan Administration built up US military might for a more aggressive policy? How would American clients feel about a policy that guaranteed that Soviet clients on their border would be assured their political survival (and likely rebuilding) by the proposed Iraq deal?

Voces of realism pointed out that agreeing to Danilov's condition was nothing more than the policy of containment the US had been applying for decades. Not since the Korean War had the US attempted to liberate or conquer a Soviet client by force of arms. There did not appear to be any good opportunities for that on the horizon, either—even if future US leadership felt inclined to go that route. Danilov was giving the US his permission to do what was necessary to liberate Kuwait without any threat of Soviet involvement. This represented an opportunity to put

the US armed forces through their paces without risking an all-out war with the Soviet Union. The deal was too good to pass up.

The US military wanted to use some of its European formations in the effort to liberate Kuwait. The experience would be invaluable in any future European conflict. The Army tapped VII US Corps with two heavy divisions and an armored cavalry regiment. Not yet ready to trust the Soviets completely, the Army moved two divisions and an armored cavalry regiment from CONUS to Europe before moving VII US Corps to Saudi Arabia.

*III US Corps moved to Europe along with 5th ID(M). Two National Guard formations, 35th ID(M) and 116th ACR were called up and deployed to Europe to take over the duties of VII US Corps. 4th ID(M), which was supposed to transit by air to Europe to draw POMCUS equipment, remained on alert at Fort Carson, CO. 1st CD, 2/2nd AD, and 3rd ACR, all of which were slated for deployment to Europe, were replaced by 49th AD (TXNG), 194th Armd Bde (sep), and 278th ACR (TNNG) as CONUS-based reserves for air deployment and drawing of POMCUS equipment. The USMC activated 4th Marine Division to take the place of 1st Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, which deployed to Saudi Arabia.*

The Coalition build-up in Saudi Arabia continued through the end of 1990. Eventually, twenty-seven nations would provide ground, air, or naval combat forces, with another twelve nations providing non-combat support units, financial support for the war, or significant humanitarian support. The main combat power of the Coalition came from the United States, which had five heavy Army divisions, two light Army

divisions, two armored cavalry regiments, two Marine divisions, plus separate Marine brigades in its ground forces. Air elements included more than 1300 combat aircraft, while major naval elements included eight aircraft carriers and two battleship groups. Contingents of division size or greater came from Egypt, France, Kuwait, Pakistan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the UK. Contingents of brigade size came from Oman, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, and Bangladesh.



*M1A1 Abrams of VII US Corps roll forward during the grand flanking maneuver often referred to as the "Hail Mary play". While the Arab forces and US Marines attacked directly into Kuwait, VII US Corps attacked along the right flank of the Iraqi army in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO) in an effort to turn the flank and destroy the Republican Guard quickly. The M1A1 proved itself superior to its Iraqi rivals. The qualities that made the M1A1 so effective in the Gulf would bear fruit again in East Germany during the NATO dash across the northern half of the country in December 1996. The real weakness of the M1 series—its exceptional fuel consumption—would trouble the Americans later.*

UN Resolution 678 stifled ongoing objections from hawkish anti-Soviets in the Bush Administration regarding the fate of Iraq. Passed on November 29 1990, the resolution authorized the US-led Coalition to liberate Kuwait. The overthrow of the Iraqi government and/or conquest of the Iraqi state were not included among the authorized actions. The Soviet Union deliberately stayed on the sidelines in the formulation of the resolution. Bush pointed out that this was evidence that detente was in the international interest and that the United States would reap the greatest benefit from respecting international opinion on the matter.

The Coalition opened its air offensive against Iraq on January 17, 1991. In an extraordinary display of technical prowess and fighting skills, the Coalition air assets literally annihilated one of the densest air defense networks in the world, then severed the logistical links between the Iraq and the Iraqi forces in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO). Aerial bombardment had robbed the Iraqi forces in the KTO of fifty percent of their combat power by the time the Coalition ground offensive got underway a month later.



*The F-117 was the darling of Operation Desert Storm. On the first night of the air campaign, F-117s successfully attacked critical and heavily defended air defense targets in Baghdad without loss, opening the door for conventional aircraft. The light stealth bomber would play a critical role in Europe five years later, where the Warsaw Pact never developed a satisfactory defense against it.*

At the start of the ground offensive, the Iraqi Army had approximately thirty-seven divisions in the KTO. Somewhat more than half of these were non-mechanized infantry divisions occupying extensively prepared defensive positions. Backing these divisions were eight armored and mechanized divisions of the regular Iraqi Army; still further back were six divisions of the elite Republican Guard. This daunting assembly of conventional forces was overrun, routed, and destroyed by Coalition ground forces in a sweeping mechanized offensive that lasted four days. Losses to the Iraqi Army included more than 2,500 tanks, comparable numbers of APCs and IFVs, huge quantities of other

equipment, and more than a quarter-million men wounded, killed, or captured.

True to his agreement with Danilov and the letter of the UN resolution authorizing the use of force in Kuwait, Bush stopped the Coalition forces south of the Euphrates River. The Americans pulled back, and Saddam Hussein was left in control of Iraq.

The results of the Second Gulf War (the First Gulf War was fought between Iran and Iraq) were far-reaching. The emirate of Kuwait was liberated. The oil-rich Gulf states of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman were more closely tied to the West than ever before. The United States had put its forces and doctrine to the test, resulting in the

most one-sided victory in the recorded history of warfare. It was a sea change in the global perception of the balance of power.

Danilov had scored a major victory over the hawks in his own government. Most of them were forced to admit that the United States would have destroyed any Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia that did not involve massive quantities of Soviet troops. By staying on the sidelines, Danilov had secured fresh grain shipments and a measure of East-West good will that would have been difficult to imagine a year prior. The Soviet Union had shown a willingness to respect international law outside its existing sphere of influence. The other Soviet client states were effectively reined in by the example of Iraq. And the Soviets now had a sobering idea of the capabilities of the United States. Danilov had accomplished all this with virtually no cost to the USSR.

In the West, Bush was able to partially redeem himself in the eyes of a public who still ridiculed him for inaction during the Black Winter. This was unfair to Bush, who had no good options at the time. Unfortunately for Bush, the stigma of the Black Winter weighed more heavily against him than his success in the Gulf, even though the results of the Second Gulf War were far more important for the United States. Bush would be voted out of office in 1992.



*F-16s were the workhorses of the Coalition air effort. While smart munitions commanded media attention, standard unguided munitions represented the overwhelming majority of the tonnage dropped. F-16s performed admirably, dropping more bombs than any other fighter-bomber in the campaign. They would play a similar role in Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf six years later.*



*RAF Tornadoes executed the very difficult ultra-low penetration mission against Iraqi targets. Losses to the RAF Tornadoes were the highest in the Coalition as a percentage of airframes committed. The West German Luftwaffe paid very close attention to the lessons of Tornado operations in Operation Desert Storm, as did the Soviets.*

When the guns had cooled in Iraq and Kuwait, all parties moved quickly to establish themselves in the new order. The USSR offered to rebuild the Iraqi Army in exchange for oil. In the wake of the war, the USSR found willing Western and Third World buyers for its oil; the

Soviets accepted Iraqi oil as payment in kind, then sold the oil on the international market for hard currency. Hussein readily accepted the Soviet offer, despite the fact that his sponsors had abandoned him so completely. The Western-aligned Gulf states established a new defensive alliance. Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) forces were stationed in Kuwait to discourage further Iraqi adventures. The United States left a single heavy brigade in Kuwait and pre-positioned the equipment for the balance of a heavy division. Iraq rapidly began rearming. The GCC girded for a likely second round of conflict with Iraq, not trusting the apparent agreement between the US and USSR.

The stage was set for further conflict. For the time being, however, Danilov could get on with his program of reform.

*Convinced that further conflict with an Iraq rearmed by the Soviet Union was unavoidable, the United Arab Emirates placed early orders for the new French LeClerc MBT. Gulf State generals believed that Hussein, once rearmed, would make another attempt to capture Kuwait if the opportunity presented itself. Moreover, he would not stop at the Kuwaiti border. The UAE was determined to maintain the freedom of action made possible by possessing powerful indigenous forces.*

