

# UNIIMOG

(United Nations Iran Iraq Military Observer Group)



(Figure 1: Map of Iraq and Iran)

## Situation in Iran

The situation in Iran in 1988 was largely defined by the Iran-Iraq War, which had been ongoing since 1980. By 1988, the war had become a stalemate, and both sides had suffered heavy casualties and economic losses. The war was further complicated by the Iranian Revolution, which had taken place in 1979 and resulted in the establishment of an Islamic Republic led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

As a result of the revolution, Iran had become a highly conservative and isolationist country, and its foreign policy was dominated by its anti-Western stance. The economy was also struggling with high levels of inflation and unemployment. In addition, human rights violations were widespread, and the country was subject to international sanctions.

## IRAQ

Iraq, officially the Republic of Iraq, is a country in Western Asia. It is bordered by Turkey to the north, Iran to the east, the Persian Gulf and Kuwait to the southeast, Saudi Arabia to the south, Jordan to the southwest and Syria to the west.

The capital and largest city is Baghdad. Iraq is home to diverse ethnic groups including Iraqi Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Armenians, Yazidis, Mandaeans, Persians and Shabakis with similarly diverse geography and wildlife.

The majority of the country's 40 million residents are Muslims – the notable other faiths are Christianity, Yazidism, Mandaism, Yarsanism and Zoroastrianism.

The official languages of Iraq are Arabic and Kurdish; others also recognised in specific regions are Suren (Assyrian), Turkish and Armenian.

During ancient times, lands that now constitute Iraq were known as Mesopotamia ("Land Between the Rivers"), a region whose extensive alluvial plains gave rise to some of the world's earliest civilizations, including those of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, and Assyria.



(Figure 2: Map of Iraq)



(Figure 3: Flag of Iraq in 1988)

## Geography

Iraq is the 58th-largest country in the world. It is comparable in size to the US state of California, and somewhat larger than Paraguay.

Iraq has a coastline measuring 58 km (36 miles) on the northern Persian (Arab) Gulf. Further north, but below the main headwaters only, the country easily encompasses the Mesopotamian Alluvial Plain.

Two major rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, run south through Iraq and into the Shatt al-Arab, then the Persian (Arab) Gulf. Broadly flanking this estuary are marshlands, semi-agricultural. Iraq has the northwestern end of the Zagros mountain range and the eastern part of the Syrian Desert.

Rocky deserts cover about 40 percent of Iraq. Another 30 percent is mountainous with bitterly cold winters.

## Climate

Much of Iraq has a hot arid climate with subtropical influence. Summer temperatures average above 40 °C (104 °F) for most of the country and frequently exceed 48 °C (118.4 °F). Winter temperatures infrequently exceed 21 °C (69.8 °F) with maxima roughly 15 to 19 °C (59.0 to 66.2 °F) and night-time lows 2 to 5 °C (35.6 to 41.0 °F).

Typically, precipitation is low; most places receive less than 250 mm (9.8 in) annually, with maximum rainfall occurring during the winter months. Rainfall during the summer is rare, except in northern parts of the country. The northern mountainous regions have cold winters with occasional heavy snows, sometimes causing extensive flooding.

## Politics

The Ba'ath Party is a socialist political party that originated in Syria in the 1940s and later spread to other countries in the Middle East, including Iraq. In Iraq, the Ba'ath Party first came to power in 1963, but its rule was short-lived and it was overthrown in a military coup in 1968.

After taking power in 1968, the Ba'ath Party, led by Saddam Hussein, gradually consolidated its control over Iraq's government, military, and economy. The party pursued a policy of Arab nationalism, socialism, and secularism, and implemented a number of social and economic reforms, including nationalizing industries and expanding access to education and healthcare.

However, the Ba'ath Party also relied on repression and violence to maintain its grip on power. Saddam Hussein was known for his brutal tactics, including the use of torture and execution against political opponents, dissidents, and ethnic and religious minorities. His regime was responsible for numerous human rights abuses, including the genocide of the Kurdish population in northern Iraq and the suppression of Shia Muslim uprisings in the south.

The Ba'ath Party's rule came to an end in 2003, when a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq and toppled Saddam Hussein's government. The invasion was justified in part by allegations that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, although these claims were later found to be unfounded. Following the invasion, the Ba'ath Party was disbanded and Iraq was placed under a transitional government led by the U.S. military.

## **Administrative divisions**

Iraq is composed of nineteen governorates (or provinces) (Arabic: muhafadhat; Kurdish: پارێزگا Pârîzgah).

The governorates are subdivided into districts (or qadhas), which are further divided into sub-districts (or nawāḥī).

The Kurdistan Region gained autonomy in the 1990s. The Kurdistan region has its own parliament.

## **Economy**

Iraq's economy is heavily reliant on its oil sector, which accounts for about 95% of its foreign exchange earnings. Iraq has some of the largest oil reserves in the world, and the oil industry has been the backbone of the country's economy for decades.

However, this heavy reliance on oil has also made the country vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices and other external factors. In addition, the Iraqi government has struggled to diversify the economy and develop other sectors, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. This has contributed to high levels of unemployment, which have been estimated at between 18% and 30%, depending on the source of the data.

The lack of economic diversification has also contributed to other economic challenges in Iraq, including poverty, inequality, and corruption. Despite the country's oil wealth, many Iraqis still

struggle to access basic services and necessities such as electricity, clean water, and healthcare.

## Currency, (Iraqi dinar)

The Iraqi dinar (Arabic pronunciation: [diːˈnaːr]) (code: IQD) is the currency of Iraq. It is issued by the Central Bank of Iraq and is subdivided into 1,000 files (فلس), although inflation has rendered the files obsolete since 1990.



(Figure 4. Iraqi dinar in 1988)

## Oil and energy

With its 143.1 billion barrels ( $2.275 \times 10^{10} \text{ m}^3$ ) of proved oil reserves, Iraq ranks third in the world behind Venezuela and Saudi Arabia in the amount of oil reserves.

Only about 2,000 oil wells have been drilled in Iraq, compared with about 1 million wells in Texas alone.

Iraq was one of the founding members of OPEC.

## Demographics

Iraq's population was estimated to be 30-35 million in 1990. No census was held in those years and decades.

## Ethnic groups

Iraq's population is diverse and includes various ethnic and religious groups. The majority of Iraq's population is Arab, and both Sunni and Shiite Muslims are represented among the Arab

population. However, there are also significant Kurdish, Turkmen, Assyrian, and other minority communities in the country.

Kurds are the largest ethnic minority group in Iraq, with a population of around 6-7 million people. They are predominantly Sunni Muslims, and most live in the northern region of the country known as Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish population has a distinct language, culture, and history, and has long sought greater autonomy and independence.

Turkmens are another minority group in Iraq, with a population of around 2 million people. They are predominantly Sunni Muslims and live primarily in the north of the country, in areas that are also home to Kurdish communities.

Assyrians are an ancient Christian community in Iraq, with a population of around 300,000 people. They are concentrated in the north of the country, particularly in the Nineveh Plains region, and have faced persecution and violence from extremist groups.

## **Languages**

The main languages spoken in Iraq are Mesopotamian Arabic and Kurdish. Arabic and Kurdish are written with versions of the Arabic script.

## **Religion**

Religions in Iraq are dominantly Abrahamic religions; 95% were Muslim (Shia 64–69%, Sunni 29–34%), Christian, Yazidi, Mandaean, Bahá'í, Zoroastrian, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, folk religion, unaffiliated, other 5%. It has a mixed Shia and Sunni population.

## **Situation in Iraq in 1988**

In 1988, Iraq was in the midst of a long and devastating war with Iran. The war had caused significant destruction and loss of life on both sides and had placed a huge burden on the Iraqi economy.

In 1988, the Iraqi government was led by Saddam Hussein, who had taken power in 1979. Hussein had a brutally authoritarian rule, and the people of Iraq were subject to strict censorship, surveillance, and human rights abuses. In 1988, there was widespread unrest, with protests against the government, and the government responded with violent repression. The war with Iran had weakened Iraq's economy and strained its resources, and the government was in a state of near bankruptcy by 1988. The country's infrastructure had also been badly damaged by the war, leaving many areas without basic services such as electricity, water, and healthcare.

In this context, Saddam Hussein's regime committed one of the worst atrocities in modern history: the chemical attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja. On March 16, 1988, Iraqi aircraft dropped bombs filled with mustard gas, sarin, tabun, and VX nerve gas on the town, which killed an estimated 5,000 people and injured over 10,000 more.

The attack was part of a larger campaign by Saddam Hussein's regime to crush Kurdish opposition and assert control over the northern regions of Iraq. The Kurds had long been seeking greater autonomy and independence from the central government in Baghdad, and had formed armed resistance groups to further their cause. The Iraqi government responded with a brutal campaign of repression, which included the use of chemical weapons, forced displacement, and mass killings.

The chemical attack on Halabja was widely condemned by the international community and brought renewed attention to the atrocities being committed by Saddam Hussein's regime. However, it was not until years later, after the fall of the Ba'ath Party, that the full extent of the regime's crimes against humanity were uncovered, including the genocide of the Kurdish population in northern Iraq, the suppression of Shia Muslim uprisings in the south, and the torture and execution of political opponents and dissidents.

## **Iran-Iraq, 8 years of war**

The Iran-Iraq War was a major armed conflict that took place in the Middle East from 1980 to 1988. It was one of the deadliest wars in modern history, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths and injuries on both sides.

The roots of the conflict can be traced back to a long-standing territorial dispute between Iran and Iraq over the Shatt al-Arab waterway, which marks the border between the two countries. The dispute was exacerbated by the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini to power in Iran in 1979, which led to tensions between the two countries due to Iran's support for Shia Muslim movements in Iraq.

On September 22, 1980, Iraq launched a surprise invasion of Iran, starting what would become a long and brutal war. The Iraqi government hoped to quickly seize control of Iranian territory, but Iran's military proved to be a formidable opponent, and the war soon turned into a protracted conflict with no clear winner.

The war was marked by a series of battles, offensives, and counter-offensives, with both sides suffering heavy casualties. The use of chemical weapons by Iraq, including mustard gas and nerve agents, was a particularly devastating aspect of the conflict and caused widespread death and suffering among Iranian civilians and soldiers.

The war also had a significant impact on the broader region, with both Iran and Iraq seeking support from other countries and becoming embroiled in larger geopolitical conflicts. The United States, for example, provided military and financial support to Iraq, while the Soviet Union backed Iran.

After eight years of fighting, the war ended in a stalemate, with neither side achieving a decisive victory. The conflict had a devastating impact on both countries, causing immense human suffering and leaving behind a legacy of political, social, and economic instability.

## **Use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war**

The Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988, is one of the most deadly and prolonged wars of the 20th century. It is also the only major conflict during that time to make extensive use of chemical weapons. Both sides used these weapons in an attempt to gain an advantage over the other.

Initially, Iraq was the first to use chemical weapons, launching a series of attacks against Iranian soldiers and civilians. Iran later retaliated with its own chemical attacks. The use of these weapons caused widespread damage and resulted in an estimated 100,000 casualties.

The most commonly used chemical agents in the war were mustard gas and nerve agents such as sarin and tabun. However, the use of these weapons did not have the desired effect, and the war ended in a stalemate with neither side able to achieve a decisive victory.

The use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq War was widely condemned by the international community and led to the introduction of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibited the development, production, and stockpiling of chemical weapons.

## **Iraq-Iran boundary as of 1988-89**

The Iran–Iraq border has separated the two countries since the signing of the Treaty of Zuhab in 1639.

There have always been border disputes between the two countries, primarily not for the purpose of gaining territory, but because there were very rich oil and gas fields in those areas. It was not even possible to agree on a border line recognized and accepted by both sides, which could also be recognized internationally. (*This was one of the main reasons for the “8-years War” between these two countries.*) That is why they agreed on an Internationally Recognised Boundary (IRB) between Iran and Iraq.

As of 1989 the Iran–Iraq IRB runs for 1,599 km (994 mi) from the tripoint with Turkey in the north down to the Shatt al-Arab (known as Arvand Rud in Iran) waterway and out to the Persian Gulf in the south.



Now the “border”, internationally recognized boundaries (IRB) consists of a demilitarized zone of 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) in width, with a fortified zone of 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) each side of the demilitarized zone. The border was heavily fortified by both countries during the Iran–Iraq War from 1980 to 1988.

## **End of the war according to UN Security Council Resolutions 598 (1987) and 612 (1988)**

The war ended after both sides accepted Security Council Resolution 598 and as it was declared in Resolution 612.

*“Decides to set immediately, under its authority, a UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to this effect in accordance with his report; further decides that UNIIMOG shall be established for a period of 6 months, unless the Council decides otherwise.”*

## **Mandate of UNIIMOG**

UNIIMOG’s mandate, in accordance with resolution 598, was in particular as follows:

- To establish with the parties agreed on ceasefire lines based on the localities occupied by the two sides on D-Day (20 August 1988), but adjusting these, as may be agreed, when the positions of the two sides were
- Judged to be dangerously close to each other.
- To monitor compliance with the ceasefire.
- To investigate any alleged violations of the ceasefire and restore the situation if a violation took place.
- To prevent, through negotiation, any other change in the status quo, pending withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries (IRB).
- To supervise, verify and confirm the withdrawal of all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries.
- To monitor the ceasefire on the internationally recognized boundaries, investigate alleged violations and prevent, through negotiation, any other change in the status quo, pending negotiation of a comprehensive settlement.
- To obtain the agreement of the parties to other arrangements which, pending negotiation of a comprehensive settlement, could help to reduce tension and build confidence between them, such as: the establishment of areas of separation of forces on either side of the international border; limitations on the number and caliber of weapons to be deployed in areas close to the international border; and patrolling by United Nations naval personnel of certain sensitive areas in or near the Shatt al-Arab.

## **UN Iran Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG)**

The United Nations Iran Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) was a significant peacekeeping operation administered by the United Nations from 1988 to 1991. The inception of UNIIMOG was sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council via the adoption of Resolution 619 on 30 May 1988, in response to the Iran-Iraq War. The mission's overarching purpose was to monitor the ceasefire agreement between the two nations and facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid.

The distinguished mission was under the leadership of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Chief Military Observer (CMO), Major-General Slavko Jovic (Yugoslavia), with military observers hailing from more than 30 countries, including Hungary. These intrepid UN soldiers from 15 countries displayed remarkable valor as they patrolled the border areas of the two nations.

The UNIIMOG mission in both Iran and Iraq was spearheaded by an Assistant Chief Military Observer (ACMO). The ACMO on the Iranian side was an Irish Brigadier General, while on the Iraqi side, the mission was steered by the experienced, capable, and qualified mission officer from the Indian military, Brigadier General V. Patil.

Resolution 619 (1988) of 9 August, which endorsed the Secretary-General's report, was approved by the Security Council, leading to the immediate establishment of UNIIMOG for a period of six months.

At its peak, UNIIMOG had a total military strength of approximately 400 ranks, including around 350 military observers. The participating nations that contributed military observers included Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ghana, **Hungary**, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Senegal, Sweden, Turkey, Uruguay, Yugoslavia, and Zambia. New Zealand supplied an air unit, and the Observer Group also had military police from Ireland and medical orderlies from Austria. At the beginning of the operation, and pending the establishment of a civilian-operated communications system, a signals unit from Canada ensured the vital communications required by UNIIMOG. As with other peacekeeping operations, UNIIMOG had both internationally and locally recruited civilian staff.

## **The Structure of the Mission**

The UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) set up its Mission Headquarters in two places, Tehran and Baghdad. The mission commenced its operations on August 20th, 1988. In

the beginning, the UNIIMOG Iraqi HQ worked in collaboration with other UN facilities in the region before locating a suitable complex named the Canal Hotel to establish its headquarters.

## **Sectors**

The United Nations Iran Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) deployed military observers in a total of seven sectors, four on the Iranian side and three on the Iraqi side, in order to effectively monitor the ceasefire agreement between the two countries during the period of 1988 to 1991. Each sector was led by a sector headquarters stationed at strategic locations, such as Saqqez, Bakhtaran, Dezful, and Ahwaz on the Iranian side, and Sulaymaniyah (Northern), Ba'qubah (Central), and Basra (Southern) on the Iraqi side.

The military observers were tasked with monitoring a significant stretch of the ceasefire line, with team sites located as close to the line as possible in order to minimize travel time between the team site and ceasefire line. The length of the ceasefire line monitored by a team site varied, ranging from 70 kilometers in the south to 250 kilometers in the north. This approach ensured that the ceasefire agreement was being upheld and that the flow of humanitarian aid was being facilitated in accordance with the UNIIMOG mission objectives.

## **Tasks Assigned to the Sectors**

The mission in the **Southern sector** was responsible for monitoring the border between Iraq and Iran, investigating ceasefire violations, reporting on military activity in the region, and conducting humanitarian relief operations.

The mission in the **Central sector** was responsible for monitoring the border between Iraq and Iran, investigating ceasefire violations, reporting on military activity in the region, and providing assistance to refugees, with two Team Sites in al-Kut (South) and in al Mansuriya (North).

The mission in the **Northern sector** was responsible for monitoring the border between Iraq and Iran, investigating ceasefire violations, reporting on military activity in the region, and conducting demining operations.

## **First UN Mission of Hungary**

Group of 15 officers led by Lt. Colonel Laszlo Forgacs was sent to UNIIMOG, 1988.

In 1988, Hungary made its debut as a contributor to the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission. 15 officers, led by Lieutenant Colonel Laszlo Forgacs, were dispatched to UNIIMOG. The objective of the mission was to monitor the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq, which had been established following the end of the Iran-Iraq War. The officers were responsible for supervising

the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 598 and reporting any violations of the ceasefire.

The Hungarian military officers selected for the UNIIMOG mission underwent rigorous preparation in areas such as health, military, political, security, and chemical defense to ensure that they were ready to depart for Baghdad on August 16, 1988. This was essential because the ceasefire was scheduled to come into effect at midnight on August 20, and the officers needed to be present at the ceasefire lines to "Show the Flag."

The Hungarian Military Observers arrived on schedule and commenced their duties, representing the United Nations and hoisting the UN flag.

## **Role and tasks of Hungarian Military Observers of UNIIMOG**

The Hungarian military observers were part of the United Nations Iraq-Iran Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) from 1988 to 1989. This was the first Hungarian mission in a UN peacekeeping mission, and the officers involved took into account the difficult situation they faced. In extreme circumstances, they stood up to the challenge and accomplished their task with excellence. They gained valuable experience that would later be applied to other UN peacekeeping missions.

The Hungarian UN military observers were more or less evenly distributed in the three sectors and two remained in the staff of the HQ.

Lt. Colonel Forgács received almost the greatest trust and honor when he was appointed **commander of the Central Sector** (HQ at Ba'qubah) as this Sector was considered one of the most important and sensitive.

According to the operating procedure generally accepted in the missions, the Military observation staff was rotated every 3 months, so that those who performed their tasks in less favorable conditions were placed in more favorable conditions, and maintain a balance of command functions between nations.

Only Lt. Col. Forgács retained his command position as the commander of the Central Sector. His deputy, a Polish Lt. Col. became the commander of the Northern Sector, the commander of the Northern Sector became the deputy commander of the Southern Sector, and so on.

This was the greatest recognition and respect for the Hungarian military staff and for the Lieutenant Colonel.

After an additional 3 months a new, so-called "regular" rotation has taken place. Lt. Col Forgacs as the commander of the first Hungarian UN contingent and the most senior Hungarian officer was transferred to the UNIIMOG HQ in Baghdad.

The Iraqi mission leader (ACMO) assigned Lt. Col. Forgacs as ACLO/DVLO (Assistant/Deputy Chief Liaison Officer), deputy of CLO, Colonel Bustamante (Peru), having the task to contact with Iraqi Authorities, mainly with the Military Liaison Group of the Iraqi Army to settle and solve all problems and questions, differences between UNIIMOG and the host country.

This was one of the most important posts at the HQ, as it was here that matters concerning the whole mission could be handled, from the investigation of (alleged) ceasefire violations, to freedom of movement and personal immunity, to inviolability, to the CAA (custom), fuel procurement and so on. The task was also important and special, not the usual one, because it was necessary to understand what the mission wanted to communicate, ask for, achieve, and to "present" it in the way it should be presented in the Arab world.

In addition, since Col. Bustamante, CLO - shortly after my appointment as ACLO - went to his home country, Peru, for a two-week vacation and did not return nearly for 2 months, so I had to stand alone both in terms of Command, HQ, and the host country (Iraq) with its official bodies. But I managed, it worked!

### **Special features, peculiarities, interesting facts, surprising events from the Mission:**

- Accommodation, board and lodging:
  - On the Iraqi side, the accommodation and provision of the Sector and Team Sites headquarters and accommodation was provided by the Iraqi side (basically the Iraqi Army). These were all owned or used by the military.
  - Accordingly, the Central Sector headquarters, under the command of Lt. Colonel Forgács, was located in Baq'ubah in a (most probably former) recreational facility, where accommodation was also provided. On the ground floor were the Command, HQ, intelligence, logistics, supply, storage and canteen rooms. Upstairs were the accommodations.
  - The building was quite large, with UNIIMOG on one side and the Iraqi Army Liaison Group on the other.
  - Just as a curiosity, I note that Lieutenant Colonel Forgacs was partnered by two Iraqi Brigadier Generals in the Central Sector command - a symbol of importance.
  - A very capable Hungarian military officer, Dr. Géza Pálmai (reserve lieutenant - later he was the Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to India) was appointed at the Central Sector headquarters and took care of our food and supplies.
  - With limited local food supplies, the Iraqi Army provided some supplies (rice, pasta, dried vegetables and sometimes fruit), as well as cooking facilities and cooks, all supervised and coordinated by Lieutenant Dr. Pálmai very well.

- One other noteworthy oddity, later UNIIMOG received a very adequate supply of the US Army's reserve stock of the about-to-expire (in half a year) "ration pack"(meal ready to eat - MRE)<sup>1</sup>, which we unpacked and distributed to the kitchen according to rations for our staff.
- Security, control, "protection":
  - From the first minute of the mission, when our plane landed and we disembarked, to the last minute, we were under the strictest control. Our every move was checked, observed, probably reported to the security service and the secret police;
  - Video recording and photography were prohibited. I learned this and felt it firsthand when I photographed the heroic monument (two gilded swords) in the center of Baghdad while sitting and traveling in a white UN car in uniform, with a blue beret (with a UN badge). Our car hadn't even gone a corner when several "civilian" cars surrounded us, they forced us to stop and if they could have, they (Secret Police) would have arrested us. They wanted to confiscate my camera, and in the end they asked for the film so that they would analyze it, but I took it out and pulled out the film (i.e. exposed it), and then they let me go!  
The best part is that what I photographed, the military monument was not a secret military object - it was found in every book about Baghdad!
- UN patrol vehicles and refueling:
  - In order to start monitoring the peace process as soon as possible, the military personnel had to arrive at the scene, but UN equipment, including the vehicles, had not yet arrived. Therefore, in order to launch the Mission, the State of Kuwait generously provided 80 off-road vehicles driven by Iraqi drivers (secret agents).  
Thanks and gratitude (for the vehicles provided by Kuwait) as a well-known non-political category, Iraq attacked and overran Kuwait in 1990!
  - If not immediately, UN vehicles kept arriving to replace those provided by the Iraqi authorities, and since these vehicles could only be driven by UN soldiers and UN civilian staff, it became more difficult for the Iraqi authorities (secret police) to control UNIIMOG activities. For them, a special "so-called escort" staff had to be created and maintained;
  - A special interest is the fuel supply - as we drove our cars, we had to refuel them, keeping a strict "logbook" of where we went, how many kilometers we drove and how much we refueled at the Iraqi filling stations, written down in liters. I refueled several times at an Iraqi air base, where

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<sup>1</sup> MREs are U.S. military operational rations, each package contains roughly 1,250 calories with the precise amount of protein, fat, and carbohydrates to keep you sustained throughout the day.

only one refueling hose came out of the ground and a tiny clockwork measured (approximately) how much we had refueled, it measured 5-10 liters to the nearest liter - I asked "how much was?" The answer was "write down whatever you wanted". This was the basis for the calculation, of course the liters of fuel were in cents.

- Maps, orientation in the field:
  - At the start of the mission (on August 20, 1988), accurate UN maps were not yet available, which is why we used the Middle East and Iraqi maps we had taken with us - which were publicly available. Their accuracy has always been in doubt, as the two warring parties heavily concealed and even falsified the data. So we initially relied heavily on what was reported by the Iraqi side, but it was very difficult to verify them.
  - Later on, we were provided with "real" (mostly American, non-secret) maps, but orientation was somewhat improved, but not completely accurate, as these maps - at that time did not yet contain data recorded from satellites - and were not clear in the field (e.g. triangulation) points of reference (desert, swampland, untraveled mountainous area, etc.).
- Communication, radio traffic:
  - Mobile (handheld) radio telephones were available relatively soon, but they only had a limited range (line of sight), so the patrols could use them among themselves, but the Commands/Headquarters could no longer be reached, so the Team Sites could only reach the Sector by wire. The Sector is also the UNIIMOG HQ, which the Iraqis constantly checked and monitored!
  - Later, these problems disappeared, as the UN/UNIIMOG communication section installed high-power amplifying and repeating stations.
  - A very interesting event happened because all radio traffic was in English, openly, not encrypted, so there was a need to communicate something very important, but how? Since we knew that the Iraqi authorities were monitoring us, we searched for and found two military officers at the two points who speak some special, possibly extinct, language. It was the Old Irish (also called Old Gaelic is the oldest form of the Goidelic/Gaelic ) language - a conversation took place, but the next day the Iraqi authorities protested in the Minutes that the UN communication language was English, so they could not decipher what we communicated!
- Mines, unexploded ordnance, chemical weapons:
  - During the 8-year war, both sides used all possible and available weapons (artillery, bombs, mines, chemical weapons, etc.), which is why there were so many unexploded devices along and near the cease-fire line. That is

why we, as UN military observers, had to perform our task with the greatest possible care and caution.

- Taking all of this into account, we exercised maximum caution and acted prudently, but despite this, 2 worthy cases should be mentioned:  
the first - we visited the advanced positions several times, where we parked our vehicles in a certain - according to the Iraqis - controlled and safe place. The next time, when we went to the same place, there was a big hole in the parking lot - there were anti-tank mines, which got old due to the weather and exploded. It's a matter of luck!  
the second: this had a much more serious consequence. Our military observers went to investigate an alleged ceasefire violation, the place was in a desert area inaccessible by car, so they continued their patrol on foot. After climbing several bucks, our Iraqi escort officers wanted to turn back, complaining of heat, fatigue and heat, even the drinking water ran out, but an UN soldier - I won't mention his name or nationality directly - wanted to go even further and went, then fainted and collapsed. Immediate evacuation, helicopter to hospital! Her body developed blisters. We were frightened and convinced that it was a chemical weapon injury (characteristic of a blistering agent like mustard). Despite the best hospital treatment, we lost him after eight days.
- He said something surprising about this case - right away - an Indonesian doctor who has already encountered similar cases, it is nothing more than the complete dehydration of the body - unfortunately he was right, it is also deadly. As a lesson from this, we demanded to the maximum that everyone have an adequate supply of water and drink it.
- It should be mentioned and thanked that Hungary and the Hungarian Army equipped and allowed the mission to be equipped with the most appropriate protective equipment and chemical decontamination means available at the time.

Fortunately, we didn't have to use it!

- Patrolling, boat and mule patrols:
  - Regular patrols and investigations of alleged ceasefire violations were mainly carried out by car or on foot, but two unusual forms of patrols were also used: boat and mule UN patrols.
  - UN boat patrol in Marshland. Marshland in Iraq is a region that has been heavily impacted by the Iran-Iraq War.





(Figure 5. Marchland and inhabitants)

As a result, UN boat patrols have been deployed in the area since 1988 to help ensure that no military activity is taking place. The patrols are conducted to ensure that no weapons are being smuggled into the region and to ensure the safety of civilians living in the area. The patrols also help to monitor the presence of armed militants in the area.

- UN Mule patrol. This particular form of patrol could and should be used to climb very steep, rocky hillsides to get to the top of the mountain, the best observation point. In fact, without it, they might not have been able to get to the top. They used the special skill, which is primarily a property of donkeys, but also partly of mules, to find places and points on the cliff side where it is still safe to stand or walk, but not to fall. This has been called "mule patrol."

- *You can imagine what it looked like: 6-8 UN and Iraqi soldiers in field uniforms on donkeys holding UN flags jogging up to the top of the hill. There was no other safe option!*
- Exchanging remains of enemy war victims, “Body Exchange”:
  - The Body Exchange program was established in 1988 as part of the UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG). The UNIIMOG was responsible for supervising the Body Exchange program as part of their humanitarian mission. The program was also seen as a way to promote human rights, as it provided a way for countries to acknowledge the tragedy of war and to honor those who had died in it. The program operated primarily at the cease-fire line, where UN personnel would oversee the exchange of remains. Both countries were obligated to cooperate in the program, and the UN could intervene if either party failed to do so.
  - The Body Exchange program was a successful humanitarian effort, with over 500 exchanges taking place between 1988 and 1991. The program not only provides closure to families of the deceased, but it also helped to reduce animosity between the two countries by providing a symbol of respect for their fallen soldiers.
  - UNIIMOG MILOBs from both (Iran and Iraq) side participated in every "body exchange", observed and checked its conduct, which is a very sad, but noble, humanitarian task.
  - On one occasion, since it was held at a specific location on the ceasefire line of the Central Sector, I took part myself - not exactly a "pleasant event, but we had to do it!"
  - There was also a case when the Iranians could not identify the deceased (with papers, military book, ID Card "dead tag"), but they insisted that he was an Iraqi soldier, and it even happened that the bones were not placed in the coffin in accordance with the human body, for example; it had 3 legs, but only one arm - it's bad to remember that!
- Weather conditions, temperature:
  - In the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, the average temperature ranges from 11 °C in January to 36.5 °C in July, when highs are as high as 45 °C (113 °F). Here too, summer is hot and the sunshine reigns supreme, with peaks around 50 °C (122 °F): these temperatures make Baghdad one of the hottest capitals in the world. No rain is from June to September. Average sunshine - 11-11,5 hours daily.
  - It is understandable that it is difficult for a Central European citizen like the Hungarians to get used to and tolerate this. I would like to mention just one example: sometime in the middle of September, we went by helicopter near the cease-fire line and when we returned after the investigation and

negotiations and got into the helicopter, it was 57 C inside. My opinion is that it is very hot when "one's knees are also sweaty and wet" - it was wet for me.

- There was an air conditioner in all patrol cars. But when we went to the cease-fire line for the investigation and negotiation, and after we returned to the car, it was so hot that it couldn't be started, but the drivers jumped in, started the car, turned on the air conditioner to the maximum, and got out and we waited approx. ten minutes because it was simply impossible to hold the steering wheel and drive the car.
- Burning oil wells:
  - The Iran-Iraq war - among other things, almost primarily - broke out and continued in order to gain territory, since the oil fields were and are in the area of the IRB (Internationally Recognized Boundary), the so-called "border"! From the first moment of the war, both sides tried to acquire the working oil wells, or at least make them unusable for the other side, destroy them, and/or set them on fire.
  - For the reasons described above, a very interesting and noteworthy case took place. We went by helicopter to investigate a "supposed" ceasefire violation, when we saw that the oil well we were supposed to go to was on fire, in an interesting "V" shape. One stem burns brightly with light smoke, the other burns darkly with black smoke - a Canadian major aptly and jokingly remarked: "one is gasoline, the other one is diesel"!







(Figure 6. UN Medal)

After 10 months of service in UNIIMOG, before returning to home country, the Hungarian military contingent as a whole and each member was praised for their work in contribution to establish peace in this area, in the peace process and awarded the United Nations Medal "IN THE SERVICE OF PEACE" (see above).

(Leo - esetleg beszerkeszteni vagy ide, vagy a szövegbe)

In 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the United Nations peacekeeping forces. The press release stated that the forces "represent the manifest will of the community of nations" and have "made a decisive contribution" to the resolution of conflict around the world.

## **Postscript:**

After our return to Hungary - unfortunately - there was not much interest in our Iraqi, UNIIMOG experience, which could have been used - directly - in training further UN soldiers, in mission-specific adjustments of their supplies.

We produced a general report - nothing specific - which hopefully they read and did not lose in the bottom of their cupboards.

I was - somewhat - in a more fortunate position, because a year later I was in a position (Commander of ACVC, Arms Control and Verification Center), where I could use some of my experience, even if not immediately, because my primary task was to set up and start the unit, implement the Vienna Agreement on verification and reduction of conventional forces in Europe (CFE) was signed in Vienna on November 19, 1990, by the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the former Warsaw Pact, but later,

**“Yes”, although that's another story.**