

Britain and the Gulf War - Chronology

1979

16 July – Iraqi President al-Bakr resigned. Saddam Hussein assumed absolute power and executed scores of potential rivals.

27 December – The USSR invaded Afghanistan.

1980

22 September – Iraq attacked Iran.

December – HMS Apollo and HMS Ardent deployed to commence Armilla patrol.

1981

7 June – Israel attacked Iraqi nuclear research centre at Osirak (Operation OPERA).

1982

6 June – Israeli troops entered Lebanon (Operation PEACE FOR GALILEE).

21 August – French peacekeeping forces began arriving in Lebanon as part of tri-nation Multi-National Force (MNF).

24 August – US Marines arrived in Lebanon to join MNF.

26 August – The Italian contingent for MNF arrived.

1983

February – British troops joined peacekeeping force in Beirut.

11 September – As part of Operation PULSATOR, in support of UK peacekeeping effort, two RAF Buccaneers made a show of force over Beirut.

23 October – Suicide bombers attacked US and French barracks, killing 299 troops. The French responded with air strikes in Beqaa Valley.

4 December – US Navy air strikes against Syrian positions in Shouf Mountains. Two US aircraft lost; one crewman killed, another captured (released January 1984).

1984

February – MNF began withdrawal from Lebanon.

1985

January – Israelis began withdrawal from Lebanon into Security Zone.

March – Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of Communist Party of the USSR.

1986

5 April – Bomb in La Belle Disco, Berlin. One US serviceman killed; attack blamed on Libya.

15 April – USA carried out Operation EL DORADO CANYON against targets in Tripoli and Benghazi, Libya, in response to disco bombing.

1987

The First Intifada (until 1993).

20 July – UNSCR 598 called for cease-fire between Iran and Iraq.

1988

16 March – Iraq employed chemical weapons against the Kurdish town of Halabjah. Saddam Hussein blames Iranian forces for the attack.

April – Iraqi forces begin a new offensive in the Iran-Iraq War.

20 August – Iran-Iraq war ceasefire under the terms of UNSCR 598.

December – The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) accepted UNSCR 242.

1989

May – Egypt took part in Arab League summit at Casablanca for the first time in 10 years.

July – The Cabinet decided to prohibit sale of BAe Hawk to Iraq.

1990

10 March – Farzad Bazoft, an Iranian-born journalist with London's Observer newspaper, accused of spying for Israel on a military installation was convicted and sentenced to death. His companion, Daphne Parish, sentenced to 15 years in prison.

15 March – Farzad Bazoft hanged in Baghdad. HM Ambassador Harold Walker recalled.

March – 'Supergun' parts confiscated at London Heathrow Airport.

2 April – Saddam Hussein threatened to use chemical weapons against Israel.

April – Anglo-American decision not to sell nuclear triggers to Iraq.

May – Ambassador Harold Walker returned to Baghdad to resume dialogue with the Iraqi government with the possibility of a visit by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1991.

28 May – Saddam Hussein declared that oil overproduction by Kuwait and UAE represents 'economic warfare' against Iraq.

15 July – Iraq accused Kuwait of stealing oil from Rumaylah oil field near the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border and warned of military action.

17 July – Daphne Parish freed in Iraq. Saddam Hussein addressed Iraqis and claimed Kuwait and the UAE have conspired to cut off Iraq's livelihood.

18 July – Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz claimed that Kuwait had stolen US\$2.4 billion worth of Iraqi oil and had built military posts on Iraqi land.

19 July – The Iraqi Ambassador to Washington told by the State Department that the United States continued to support the sovereignty and integrity of the Gulf States.

22 July – Iraq began deploying troops to the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border.

23 July – Egypt offered to mediate the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait. Tom King, the Secretary of State for Defence, announced 'Options for Change'.

24 July – US warships on alert in the Gulf; joint military exercise with UAE. Iraq amassed 30,000 troops on Iraqi border. Egypt's President Mubarak began his mediation mission with visits to Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

25 July – Saddam Hussein summoned April Glaspie, the American Ambassador to Baghdad, to a meeting 'to hold comprehensive political discussions'.

26 July – Egypt proposed a peace deal and Kuwait agreed compensation.

27 July – 100,000 Iraqi troops on the Kuwait border.

28 July – OPEC agreement on oil price rise.

29 July – King Hussein of Jordan attempted to save peace talks.

31 July – Peace talks between Iraq and Kuwait in Jeddah; approximately 140,000 Iraqi troops on Kuwait's border. Kuwait rejected Iraq's claims to the islands of Bubiyan and Warbah.

1 August – Iraq broke off peace talks.

2 August – Iraq began invasion of Kuwait at 0200 hours local (2300 1 August GMT). UNSCR 660 condemned the invasion and demanded Iraq's withdrawal. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was in Washington on day of invasion. The USA, UK and France froze Iraqi assets. The USSR halted weapons sales. US Secretary of State James Baker flew to Moscow. Oil prices rose by 15 per cent.

3 August – The USA despatched a naval force to the Gulf. The UN demanded Iraqi withdrawal. The Arab League condemned the invasion but 7 members abstained. Saudi Arabia threatened as Iraqi troops are moved to the Kuwaiti-Saudi border. A meeting of the Cabinet's Overseas and Defence Committee was chaired by Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in Mrs Thatcher's absence,

which endorsed full economic sanctions, but debated whether or not Saudi Arabia or Turkey would be prepared to accept Western support.

4 August – The European Community banned imports of Iraqi oil and froze Kuwait's assets.

5 August – Mrs Thatcher's speech in Aspen Institute in Colorado:

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait defies every principle for which the United Nations stands. If we let it succeed, no small country can ever feel safe again. The law of the jungle would take over from the rule of law. The United Nations must assert its authority and apply a total economic embargo unless Iraq withdraws without delay. The United States and Europe both support this. But to be fully effective it will need the collective support of all the United Nations' members. They must stand up and be counted because a vital principle is at stake: an aggressor must never be allowed to get his way'.

6 August – The UN imposed mandatory comprehensive sanctions on Iraq. UNSCR 661 demanded an 'immediate and unconditional' withdrawal of Iraqi troops and ordered a trade boycott on Iraq, except for medicine and in humanitarian circumstances food, in a 13-0 vote and Cuba and Yemen abstain. In private Mrs Thatcher concerned about the enforcement of 661 but in public warned Baghdad that Iraq faces NATO retaliation. Riyadh moved forces to the border with Iraq. US Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney travelled to Saudi Arabia and Egypt to discuss deployment of US Forces. Egypt granted permission for US ships to transit Suez Canal. The Gulf Co-operation Council meeting resolution condemned Iraq.

7 August – Saudi Arabia requested US aid to defend their country against Iraq. President Bush ordered 4,000 combat troops and air craft to Saudi Arabia. USS Independence Carrier Battle Group arrived in Gulf of Oman; USS Dwight D Eisenhower Carrier Battle Group transited Suez Canal en route to Red Sea.

8 August – The USA announced first deployments in response to request from Saudi Arabia. Iraq formally annexed Kuwait. First US troops from 101st Airborne Division arrived in Saudi Arabia. The decision was made that RFAs Fort George, Diligence and Olna should deploy to Gulf.

9 August – UNSCR 662 recalled UNSCRs 660 and 661, stating that the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq under any form was illegal and asked that there should be no international recognition of the annexation. Iraq closed borders. Operation GRANBY began. The UK announced first deployments of Tornado F3s and Jaguars to Gulf. UN declared Iraqi annexation of Kuwait invalid. Advanced RAF party under Group Captain R.S. Peacock-Edwards arrived at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, to prepare for arrival of RAF detachment. AVM 'Sandy' Wilson appointed Air Commander British Forces Arabian Peninsula with HQ at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

10 August – The Arab League met in Cairo and voted by a narrow margin to send Egyptian, Syrian and Moroccan troops to join the Western troops to defend Saudi Arabia. Saddam Hussein declared 'jihad' against the US and Israel; UK refused to close Embassy in Kuwait. USAF F-16s and C-130s begin arriving in Saudi Arabia.

11 August – The first British aircraft arrived in Saudi Arabia. No 5 (Composite) Squadron [Tornado F3] arrived at Dhahran from Akrotiri, Cyprus. No 6 (Composite) Squadron, with 12 Jaguar GR1As left Coltishall for Thumrait, Oman. Egyptian troops arrived in Saudi Arabia; Saddam Hussein allowed the nationals of third world and Arab states to leave Iraq and Kuwait.

12 August – No 6 (Composite) Squadron arrived in Oman. The first Nimrod MR2P leaves Kinloss for Seeb, Oman, to help enforce the maritime blockade. Detachment of VC10 tankers of No 101 Squadron established at Seeb, Oman. Saddam Hussein's peace plan linked Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait with the resolution of all other outstanding problems in the Middle East. The peace plan was rejected by the USA and Israel and the Arab members of the coalition.

13 August – UNSCR 666 recalled UNSCRs 661 and 664 and reminded Iraq of its humanitarian responsibilities to third state nationals and asked the Secretary-General to report on the food situation in Iraq and Kuwait. The RN began to stop and search Iraqi shipping to enforce sanctions. RN Minesweepers left for the Persian Gulf.

14 August – The UK announced additional naval forces for Gulf. First elements of US 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade arrived in Saudi Arabia. President Bush threatened to blockade Aqaba if Jordan did not support the UN sanctions.

15 August – Iran and Iraq reopened diplomatic relations after Iraq proposed peace talks. The Saratoga Carrier Battle Group transit Straits of Gibraltar. The USS John F Kennedy Carrier Battle Group left USA.

16 August – King Hussein of Jordan went to Washington to meet President Bush. Saddam Hussein ordered 4000 Britons and 2500 Americans in Kuwait to report to hotels. British weapons bound for Jordan stopped. UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar said that the use of force to back sanctions was not permitted unless agreed by the UNSC.

17 August – President Gorbachev declared Iraqi invasion 'an act of perfidy'. Six RAF Phantom FGR2s arrived at Akrotiri from Wildenrath, Germany, for local air defence.

18 August – Iraq declared that the nationals of 'hostile countries' still in Kuwait would be held as 'guests' at strategic sites in Kuwait. UNSCR 664 reaffirmed UNSCRs 660, 661 and 662 and that demanded that Iraq permit and facilitate the departure of nationals from third countries from within Iraq and Kuwait, calling for consular and diplomatic access to the third state nationals and denounced the use of human shields. Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz said that Iraq would use chemical weapons if attacked by American nuclear warheads. In two separate incidents, USS Reid and USS Bradley fire warning shots across bows of two Iraqi tankers leaving Persian Gulf. Freighters heading for Iraq are diverted by USN ships.

19 August – The British government rejected calls for a recall of Parliament. Vice Admiral Henry H. Mauz USN appointed as Commander, US Naval Forces, Central Command.

20 August – Iraq ordered foreign embassies in Kuwait to close within four days.

21 August – Mrs Thatcher declared she would not negotiate over the hostages and urged the West to unite over sanctions. The UNSC declined to approve military force to enforce the embargo against Iraq. 6 Western European nations (UK, France, the Netherlands, Belgium Spain and Italy) agreed to co-ordinate naval operations to enforce sanctions.

22 August – The USA announced the call-up of reservists. China would not veto any UNSC resolution approving military action.

23 August – Saddam Hussein appeared on state television with Western hostages to whom he had refused exit visas. They were seen as human shields, though Saddam Hussein denied the claim. In the video he was seen ruffling the hair of a young boy named Stuart Lockwood. Britain announced plans for despatch of Tornado GR1s to Muharraq, Bahrain, and replacement of Dhahran Tornado F3s.

24 August – Deadline to close embassies in Kuwait passed and Iraqi tanks surrounded the embassies compounds. Iranian President Rafsanjani said that he had no objection to pushing Iraq out of Kuwait but that foreign forces would have to leave the region afterwards.

25 August – UNSCR 665 authorised member states to use limited naval force to verify that the trade embargo against Iraq was working giving the right to disable ships that refused to stop and have their cargoes inspected. UNSCR 666 approved the shipment of food to Iraq and Kuwait in humanitarian circumstances if it was distributed by the UN or similar bodies. The USA announced would deploy USAF F-111 aircraft to Saudi Arabia.

26 August – The UN voted to allow use of force to uphold sanctions on Iraq. C-in-C US Central Command, General Norman H Schwarzkopf, established command headquarters in Saudi Arabia. Mrs Thatcher said there could be no negotiations with 'a dictator, a despot, a tyrant' in advance of UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar's meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz due to take place in Amman on 29 August. Austria's President Kurt Waldheim urged the West to talk to Saddam Hussein following his return from Baghdad after securing the release of 95 Austrian hostages.

27 August – No 14 (Composite) Squadron RAF [Tornado GR1] sent to Muharraq (Bahrain).

28 August – Baghdad declared Kuwait Iraq's nineteenth province and renames Kuwait City as al-Kadhima. Saddam Hussein announced that foreign women and children were free to leave Kuwait. Defence Secretary Tom King's press conference in Dhahran as part of a three day tour to Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain.

29 August – In Helsinki Mrs Thatcher called for all hostages to be released. The Leader of the Opposition, Labour Opposition Leader Neil Kinnock wrote to the Prime Minister to ask for the recall of Parliament. AVM Sir 'Sandy' Wilson became Commander British Forces Middle East (CBFME) as well as Air Commander (ACBFME).

30 August – The US Department of Defense announced that, to date, there had been around 250 interceptions and 4 boardings of ships as part of maritime blockade.

31 August – Talks in Downing Street between Mrs Thatcher and King Hussein of Jordan. Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd visited HMS Battleaxe and later arrived in Qatar.

1 September – Jesse Jackson returned from Baghdad with 47 American hostages. Iraq began food rationing.

2 September – Mrs Thatcher said holding hostages was not a bar to military action and that Saddam Hussein would face Nuremberg-style war crimes trials if they were harmed. Pérez de Cuéllar conceded that his peace mission had failed.

3 September – Mrs Thatcher met the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Saad al-Sabah.

4 September – A convoy of 150 British women and 156 children reached Baghdad from Kuwait and 66 other British nationals arrived at London Gatwick airport.

5 September – Saddam Hussein called for Arabs and Muslims to topple King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and President Mubarak of Egypt. King Hussein of Jordan visited Saddam Hussein after promising Foreign Secretary Hurd he would try and persuade Iraq to release the hostages and leave Kuwait; more British hostages moved from Kuwait to Baghdad. Mrs Thatcher promised funds to Jordan, Turkey and Egypt, the countries hardest hit by the sanctions.

6 September – House of Commons debate on Kuwait began. Mrs Thatcher said she would send more British forces to the region and in spite of RN recommendations the COS decide against sending a carrier. The Opposition urged that military action should only be taken with a specific UN Mandate.

7 September – In the Parliamentary debate Foreign Secretary Hurd said that the UK should not be bound to search for UN authority, 'it cannot be right to put that choice totally and wholly with the machinery of the UN ... we know that machinery includes vetoes'. The House of Commons voted: 437 to 35, in favour of UK participation in the Coalition. The EC agreed a US\$2 billion aid package for Jordan, Turkey and Egypt.

9 September – At the Helsinki Summit, Presidents Bush and Gorbachev issued a joint statement demanding Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

10 September – US Secretary of State James Baker asked NATO countries for a bigger military contribution to the region, and for tanks in particular; Iran and Iraq resume diplomatic relations. Saddam Hussein offered free oil to the Third World.

11 September – The Overseas and Defence Committee took the decision in principle to send an armoured brigade.

12 September – Iranian Ayatollah Khamenei declared that the American presence in the Gulf represented a holy war and suggested that Iran would send food and medicines to Iraq. Brigadier Patrick Cordingley told to prepare to deploy to Saudi Arabia.

13 September – James Baker visited President Assad in Syria. The USA told allies that war would be unlikely for another 2 months.

14 September – Secretary of State for Defence Tom King announced deployment of 7th Armoured Brigade and that a further squadron of Tornado GR1s would deploy to the Gulf, and a further six Tornado F3s would also be sent, the purpose of the forces being ‘to ensure that Saddam Hussein understand that while we seek the implementation of the UN resolutions by peaceful means, other option remain available and, one way or another, he will lose’.

16 September – Egypt pledges another 15,000 troops (Syria committed 11,000 the previous week). The UN Security Council condemned the raids by Iraqi troops on French and other diplomatic missions in occupied Kuwait.

17 September – Britain expelled 31 Iraqi envoys and civilians and other EC countries do the same and 1400 British citizens were still trapped in Kuwait. The USSR and Saudi Arabia restored diplomatic relations.

19 September – Six Tornados from RAF Laarbruch, Germany, to Bahrain, followed by six more on 26 September for second unit here. No 617(C) Squadron (Wg Cdr Bob Iveson).

20 September – Defence Secretary Tom King and US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney agreed on the military command structure in the Gulf and that British forces would be under US command.

21 September – Saddam Hussein ordered the expulsion of European and Egyptian military attaches and support staff.

23 September – French President François Mitterrand’s peace plan.

24 September – 2 Labour MPs in Amman to petition for help in finding the 35 British military advisors in Kuwait who appeared to have ‘disappeared’ in Iraq.

25 September – UNSCR 670 passed to establish an air blockade of Iraq except in humanitarian circumstances and it called on states to detain registered Iraqi ships which enter their ports and have been or are being used to violate sanctions. The USSR was prepared to send troops to the region under a UN commander. Moscow backs the use of force if sanctions fail.

27 September – Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd announced that diplomatic relations with Iran are to be restored.

28 September – British troops of 7th Armoured Brigade embarked for the Persian Gulf by sea, arriving 18 October.

30 September – Mrs Thatcher called for Iraq to give reparations to Kuwait after they withdraw. The Royal Navy conducted first boarding of merchant vessel in Gulf.

1 October – Lt Gen Sir Peter de la Billiere became Commander British Forces Middle East with AVM Wilson as Deputy. 7th Armoured Brigade to be located with the USMC. President Bush hinted that a wider Middle East settlement was possible if the Iraqis withdrew from Kuwait. Douglas Hurd at CSCE meeting in New York. New York Declaration granted sovereignty to a united Germany.

3 October – Saddam Hussein visited Kuwait. The Soviet Special Envoy Yevgeny Primakov met King Hussein of Jordan and Yasser Arafat in Amman. German reunification day.

4 October – Primakov arrived in Baghdad.

8 October – Britain joined the ERM. The USA condemned Israel in the UN over the death of 19 Palestinians on Temple Mount, Jerusalem.

9 October – Saddam Hussein claimed to possess a new ballistic missile which could reach Israel.

11 October – RAF Tristar flew from Gütersloh, Germany, to Saudi Arabia, with advanced party of 7th Armoured Brigade. The main airlift started 16 October employing mix of RAF and civilian aircraft.

12 October – Douglas Hurd flew to the Middle East. Edward Heath went to Amman and then on to Iraq. UNSCR 672 condemned Israel for the Mount Temple shootings and ordered an investigative mission to Israel.

14 October – Hurd and Edward Heath clashed over Heath's hostage mission. While in Cairo, Hurd condemned Saddam Hussein invasion of Kuwait and said that if he does not leave peacefully he would be made to do so at gun point. The Israeli Cabinet decided not to co-operate with the UN mission on the Temple Mount shooting.

18 October – Israeli PM Yitzhak Shamir agreed to attend a Middle East peace conference in Madrid later in the month.

21 October – Edward Heath met Saddam Hussein.

23 October – Edward Heath returned from Baghdad with 33 freed British hostages.

24 October – Plans announced for despatch of RAF Puma support helicopters.

28 October – The EC summit in Rome deplored Saddam Hussein's attempt to divide the alliance and undertook not to send European envoys to Baghdad to negotiate the release of hostages.

29 October – UNSCR 674 passed demanded that Iraq fulfil its obligations to third State nationals in Kuwait and Iraq, including the personnel of diplomatic and consular missions, under the Charter, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations.

30 October – The USA urged compromise and a land for peace deal.

1 November – First RAF Puma HC1s leave Brize Norton via USAF C5 Galaxy.

4 November – US Secretary of State, James Baker, arrived in Saudi Arabia as part of an eight day, seven nation tour of the region.

5 November – Baker and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia agreed on the joint command of operations in Saudi Arabia and US command in Iraq and Kuwait.

6 November – The US Congressional elections.

7 November – Former German Chancellor Willi Brandt's trip to Baghdad resulted in the release of 120 hostages. In the House of Commons Mrs Thatcher said if Iraq did not leave Kuwait soon that the Coalition would drive Iraqi forces out.

8 November – The USA announced substantial reinforcement of forces to Saudi Arabia and Gulf area, including three aircraft carriers and the battleship USS Missouri. Moscow meeting of Baker and Shevardnadze; the USSR did not rule out the use of force as long as it was in a UN context.

12 November – The Second Secretary of the British Embassy in Baghdad, James Tansley, was expelled from Iraq. Britain responded by expelling the Second Secretary of the Iraqi Embassy in London.

13 November – China indicated that it would not block any UN Resolution on the use of force against Iraq.

14 November – US Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney announced activation of 72,500 more reservists. Egypt, Syria and Kuwait reject King Hassan of Morocco's call for an emergency meeting of the Arab League to avert war.

15 November – Saddam Hussein said he was willing to negotiate as long as he was not required to withdraw from Kuwait first. Bush expresses willingness to talk but would not compromise on the issue of withdrawal. Bush calls up an additional 72,000 reservists.

15-21 November – Exercise Imminent Thunder conducted in Saudi Arabia.

17 November – AVM W J 'Bill' Wratten replaced AVM Wilson as ACBFME and Deputy CBFME.

18 November – CSCE meeting in Paris to negotiate the CFE treaty. Saddam Hussein declared he would release the hostages by Christmas. Lieutenant-General Sir Peter de la Billière told Saudi journalists that war would be over in days.

19 November – At the CSCE meeting Presidents Bush and Gorbachev condemned Iraq but Gorbachev rebuffed Bush's attempts to secure Soviet backing for the use of force as he wanted negotiations to be given every chance.

20 November – Saddam Hussein announced that all German hostages would be released following Chancellor Kohl's call for a negotiated settlement.

22 November – Mrs Thatcher steps down as Prime Minister. The UK announced deployment of 4th Armoured Brigade, a divisional headquarters, and supporting units to form 1st (British) Armoured Division – 14,000 more troops to be sent.

23 November – Presidents Bush and Assad met in Geneva and agreed the invasion of Kuwait was 'unacceptable'.

24 November – First RAF Chinook HC1s flown to Saudi Arabia inside USAF C-5 Galaxy transports from Mildenhall.

25 November – Under-Secretary of State at the FO, David Gore-Booth was joined by 3 British MPs in Syria as Britain prepared to resume diplomatic relations with Damascus. 14 British peers and MPs visited British forces in Saudi Arabia. The equipment of 4th Armoured Brigade loaded in Germany for sea transport to Saudi Arabia.

26 November – The 5 permanent members of the UNSC reached agreement on a draft resolution on a 'pause of goodwill' before the use of force but disagreed over the deadline; at a press conference in Saudi Arabia, Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine ruled out the annihilation of Iraqi power. Tony Benn arrived in Baghdad to promote a peace settlement. President Gorbachev told Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz that Iraq should withdraw from Kuwait and release all hostages.

27 November – John Major became Prime Minister. President Gorbachev backed the use of force.

28 November – UNSCR 677 asked the UN Secretary-General to keep safe a copy of Kuwait's pre-invasion population register.

29 November – UNSCR 678 set a deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait before 15 January 1991 and authorised 'all necessary means' to force Iraq out if it did not comply; Yemen and Cuba voted against and China abstained from the UNSC vote. Coalition forces in the region go to 'yellow' alert; in Jubail, Brigadier Patrick Cordingley warned the British public to expect a lot of casualties. Tony Benn left Iraq with 15 British hostages. Commodore Christopher Craig succeeded Commodore Paul Haddocks as commander of RN task force in Gulf.

30 November – Bush's 'extra mile offer', invited Iraq to hold direct talks with the USA.

1 December – Saddam Hussein agreed to direct talks as long as they were linked to the Palestinian question.

4 December – Prime Minister Major and Defence Secretary Tom King met US General Colin Powell in Downing Street.

6 December – Saddam Hussein announced the release of 3,000 foreign nationals being held in Iraq and Kuwait. Israeli Premier Itzhak Shamir meets Major in London and Major said that Britain favoured an international conference on the Middle East.

9 December – King Hussein of Jordan called for Arab states to join in dialogue in parallel with talks between the USA and Iraq. USA rejected Saddam Hussein's proposed date for bilateral talks on 12 January as too late.

10 December – In a speech to the Voroshilov Academy in Moscow, Chief of the Defence Staff, Marshal of the RAF Sir David Craig talked of his fears of 'substantial' casualties; 100 British hostages arrived home.

11 December – In a House of Commons debate on Kuwait, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd suggested that sanctions alone might not be enough to achieve Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. US President Bush made an undertaking to Prime Minister Shamir that a resolution of the Gulf crisis would not occur at Israel's expense.

14 December – RAF Victor K2 tankers No 55 Squadron left RAF Marham for Muharraq, Bahrain, followed by three more next day.

16 December – HM Ambassador to Kuwait, Michael Weston, and the British Consul Larry Banks flew out of Kuwait for Baghdad accompanied by 10 other British citizens.

17 December – The UK government warned British citizens in the Gulf region to send their families home before the 15 January deadline. The government called for 1500 medical volunteers.

18 December – The EC ruled out peace talks until US President Bush met Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz.

21 December – Prime Minister John Major arrived in Washington where he pledged total support for the USA and said that a partial Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait would not be good enough.

22 December – HRH Prince of Wales visited British forces in the Gulf.

23 December – Atlantic Conveyor loads at Southampton Docks with four RAF, Pumas eight Chinooks and 12 RN Sea Kings. Arrived Jubail, Saudi Arabia, 8 January 1991.

24 December – Saddam Hussein said that Israel would be his first target if war breaks out.

25 December – Shamir warned of severe Israeli retaliation if Iraq attacks her.

26 December – Saddam Hussein said that he was ready for 'serious and constructive dialogue'.

28 December – The biggest British call-up of reserves since the 1956 Suez Crisis.

29 December – Classified MOD documents relating to the situation in the Gulf were stolen from a car in London.

30 December – Planned despatch of third RAF Tornado GR1 squadron to the Gulf was announced.

1991

2 January – NATO approved deployment of air defence aircraft to Turkey. King Husain of Jordan arrived in London. A French peace mission to Baghdad. The British government called for volunteers from naval reserves.

3 January – UK expelled all Iraqi diplomats remaining in the country.

4 January – Iraq accepted offer of final talks, to be held in Geneva on 9 January.

6 January – US Secretary of State James Baker in London for talks. Saddam Hussein said he was ready for the ‘mother of all battles’.

8 January – US Secretary of State Baker visited Paris, Bonn, Milan and Geneva. Prime Minister Major in the Middle East and visited British forces in Saudi Arabia. Israeli forces placed on highest state of alert.

9 January – US Secretary of State met Iraqi Foreign Minister in Geneva but several hours of talks failed to produce results.

10 January – UN Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar flew to Baghdad. The Cabinet discussed contingency plans. Foreign Secretary Hurd flew to the Middle East to reassure Allies. HM Ambassador to Iraq Harold Walker and his staff arrive in Amman while British Counsel-General Christopher Segar remained as acting Head of Mission.

12 January – US Congress voted in favour of war, by 250 votes to 183 in House of Representatives and 52 votes to 47 in the Senate.

13 January – UN Secretary General had fruitless meeting in Iraq. RAF Tornado GR1 was lost in a fatal flying accident in Saudi Arabia.

14 January – Prime Minister Major flew to Paris. France proposed that the UNSC call for ‘a rapid and massive withdrawal’ from Kuwait along with a statement to Iraq that Council members would bring their ‘active contribution’ to a settlement of other problems of the region, ‘in particular, of the Arab-Israeli conflict and in particular to the Palestinian problem by convening, at an appropriate moment, an international conference’ to assure ‘the security, stability and development of this region of the world’. The French proposal was supported by Belgium (one of the rotating Security Council members), and Germany, Spain, Italy, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and several non-aligned nations. The USA and UK rejected it, along with the Soviet Union. MOD issued guidelines to the media.

15 January – UN deadline expired. House of Commons voted 534 to 57 in favour of UK participation in the Coalition. 580,000 coalition troops in the Gulf faced 540,000 Iraqi troops.

16 January – In the Foreign Affairs Committee, Foreign Secretary Hurd said that Britain and the USA would consider the use of nuclear weapons if Iraq acquired a nuclear capability.

17 January – Operation DESERT STORM began with air strikes against Iraq. President Bush promised to crush Iraqi chemical and nuclear plants. 07:00 meeting of the British War Cabinet (Major, King, Hurd, John Wakeham [Energy Secretary] and CDS Marshal of the RAF Sir David Craig). Major made a statement to the House of Commons and broadcasts to the nation. One RAF Tornado GR1 failed to return from operations.

18 January – Iraqi Scud missile attacked against Tel Aviv and Haifa (03:00 local; 01:00 GMT). The USA warned Israel against retaliation saying it was an attempt to widen the war and break up the opposition. US President Bush declared that Israel would not respond; Patriot missiles deployed to Israel and Saudi Arabia. The MOD announced a second British Tornado aircraft was missing.

19 January – Iraq began to release oil into Gulf. US troops raid oil platforms off Kuwait, capturing first Iraqi prisoners of war.

20 January – Iraqi television broadcasts pictures of seven captured coalition airmen; Iraq fires 10 Scuds at Saudi Arabia. The Iraqi Ambassador to London, Azmi Shafiq al-Salihi summoned to the FCO to be reminded of his country's obligations under the Geneva conventions. The bombing of Iraqi targets in Kuwait began.

21 January – Iraq declared POWs have been scattered as human shields. In a House of Commons debate Prime Minister Major pledged there would be no pause in fighting until Iraq withdrew from Kuwait. An assessment of the conflict so far – 8000 sorties and 30 aircraft destroyed. Queen Elizabeth visited Portsmouth.

22 January – Iraq launched more Scuds at Saudi Arabia. An Iraqi Scud hits Tel Aviv killing 3 and injuring 70. Iraq began blowing up Kuwaiti oil wells. 5 Tornados lost in air campaign to date. Another RAF Tornado GR1 failed to return from operations.

23 January – The USA denied Iraqi claims that the coalition bombed a baby-food factory. The Coalition claimed it had achieved air superiority.

24 January – The first indication of Iraqi aircraft fleeing to Iran. Coalition forces capture the island of Qarawa. Prime Minister Major addressed the 1922 Committee. RAF to deploy Buccaneers with Pave Spike laser designator pods and four Tornado GR1s with capability to employ the new TIALD designator pod.

25 January – Japan announced sending of aircraft to support non-combat coalition missions. Iraqi Scuds fired at Israel and Saudi Arabia. Lieutenant-General Sir Peter de la Billière said Iraqi pilots were too scared to fight.

26 January – USAF F-111s employing guided weapons destroyed manifolds at Sea Island which have been releasing oil into Gulf to stem flow of oil and the spill continued to grow in meantime. The Pentagon confirmed the USS Louisville was the first submarine to launch a cruise missile in combat. More Scuds were fired at Israel and Saudi Arabia.

27 January – Defence Secretary Tom King said that Iraq would not be allowed to withdraw from Kuwait leaving their war machine intact.

28 January – Saddam Hussein said he would use nuclear weapons if he must.

29 January – US-USSR communiqué offering a cease-fire if Iraq made an 'unequivocal commitment' to withdraw from Kuwait. 17 Iraqi fast patrol boats were destroyed.

30 January – Iraqi forces invade Saudi Arabia, entering town of Al Khafji and were forced to withdraw by end of 31 January.

1 February – Saudi and Qatari troops, backed by US artillery, retake Al Khafji, Saudi Arabia. The Coalition bomb 10-mile-long Iraqi armoured column headed into Saudi Arabia.

2 February – RAF Buccaneers flew first sorties in support of Tornado GR1 laser-guided bomb attacks. Scud attacked on Israel and Saudi Arabia.

4 February – Iran offered to mediate peace talks and resumed official relations with the USA. The war entered third phases as freedom of the air and sea control was achieved. Bush declared 'our goal is not the conquest of Iraq, but the liberation of Kuwait'.

5 February – The first Syrian troops in combat action repulse Iraqis along the Kuwait-Saudi Arabian border.

6 February – King Hussein of Jordan made a tribute to the Iraqi people's courage in what he called 'the war against Islam'.

7 February – The Provisional IRA launched a mortar attack against 10 Downing Street, blowing in all the windows of the Cabinet Room during a session of the War Cabinet. US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Colin Powell went to the Gulf. US reviews American aid to Jordan. Lieutenant-General Sir Peter de la Billière said that a ground war was inevitable.

8 February – En route to Saudi Arabia, US Defense Secretary Cheney gave strongest indication to date that a ground war was coming. Defence Secretary King announced that the coalition has wiped about approximately 20 per cent of Iraq's battle winning equipment. Foreign Secretary Hurd arrived in Egypt.

9 February – US Defense Secretary Cheney, Powell met Schwarzkopf and other military leaders. Gorbachev warned against operations exceeding the UN Mandate and announced he was sending Primakov to Baghdad.

12 February – Coalition shifted focus of air and artillery attacks to Iraqi forces in Kuwait.

13 February – USAF F-117 'stealth fighters' dropped two bombs on fortified underground facility in Amiriya, Baghdad (also known as the Al Firdos Bunker). Iraqi officials claimed at least 500 civilians (Coalition claim approximately 300) were killed in what they claimed to be a bomb shelter. The UN Security Council voted to meet in camera to discuss war.

14 February – Pentagon announced Allied planes have destroyed at least 1,300 of Iraqi 4,280 tanks, 800 of 2,870 armoured vehicles and 1100 of 3110 artillery pieces. The UN Security Council met in closed session to discuss the war and Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar said he saw no hope of a ceasefire unless Iraq withdraws.

15 February – Iraq announced she was prepared to withdraw from Kuwait but added a long list of conditions which included Israeli withdrawal from the 'occupied territories', cancellation of Iraqi debt and a commitment by the coalition to rebuild Iraq. Bush dismissed the Iraqi offer as a 'cruel hoax' and challenged the Iraqi people to topple Saddam Hussein. Coalition forces reinforced the front in preparation for the ground offensive.

16 February – Iraq claimed 130 civilians were killed by RAF Tornados in bombing raid; Scuds attacks against Israel. Abdul Amir Al-Anbari, the Iraqi Ambassador to the UN declared Iraq would use WMD if coalition bombing continued.

17 February – Tariq Aziz, Iraqi Foreign Minister, arrived in Moscow for talks.

18 February – The IRA bombs Paddington and Victoria railway stations. In the House of Commons Foreign Secretary Hurd said that the Iraqi peace offer represented an attempt to divide the Coalition.

19 February – A Baghdad Radio report announced Foreign Minister Aziz's return to Baghdad with a Soviet peace proposal. US President Bush declared the Soviet proposal was 'well short' of what would be required to end the war.

20 February – US General Schwarzkopf announced Iraq was on the 'verge of collapse'. Baghdad Radio report announced Foreign Minister Aziz would go to Moscow with the Iraqi reply to the peace proposals.

21 February – Vitaly Ignatenko, a Soviet spokesman, announced Iraq and the Soviet Union had agreed on plan that could lead to Iraqi withdrawal. Saddam Hussein declared Iraq remains ready to fight ground war. Cheney declared the coalition was preparing 'one of the largest land assaults of modern times'. In a House of Commons debate the Minister of State at the FCO Douglas Hogg declared that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was not a war aim.

22 February – Soviet diplomatic efforts to secure peace failed, when Iraq refused to consider unconditional acceptance of UN resolutions. Coalition issued statement setting out final terms for cessation of hostilities with a deadline for acceptance of 23 February. Iraq rejected this deadline, and commenced firing Kuwaiti oil wells.

23 February – The Coalition ground assault began at 20:00 EST (USA); Iraqis ignited an estimated 700 oil wells in Kuwait. US President Bush declared 'the liberation of Kuwait had reached its final phase'.

24 February – The Coalition ground assault began in Iraq at 04:00 local time. The first day of ground war resulted in the capture of 5500 Iraqis. 300 coalition attack and supply helicopters strike 50 miles into Iraq. The SAS was the first to enter Iraqi territory. HM Queen Elizabeth's broadcast told the country she prayed for victory. Major said coalition military plans 'are ahead of schedule'.

25 February – Coalition forces were reported on the outskirts of Kuwait City on Kuwait's Independence Day. Iraqi Scud attacks on US base at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia killing 28; 1st (British) Armoured Division entered Kuwait; HMS Gloucester shot down Iraqi Silkworm missile.

26 February – Iraqi forces in full retreat with coalition forces in pursuit. Saddam Hussein announced the Iraqi forces would withdraw from Kuwait completely, but he did not renounce claim to Kuwait. Approximately 10,000 Iraqi troops in retreat were killed when bombed by coalition forces along the 'Highway of Death'. Iraqi POWs number more than 30,000.

27 February – The Iraqi Republican Guard encircled. The first Kuwaiti troops entered Kuwait City. US President Bush declared 'Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army was defeated. Our military objectives are met' and the suspension of offensive combat and ordered a cease-fire effective at

midnight Kuwait time. The Coalition said they had destroyed more than half the Iraqi divisions and captured 500,000 prisoners. Within Iraq, Saddam crushed Shi'ite and Kurdish opposition. Michael Weston fled to Riyadh to then go on to Kuwait to re-open the British Embassy.

28 February – Kuwait was liberated, and Coalition suspended offensive operations; Iraq agreed to comply with UN demands. In the House of Commons, Prime Minister John Major said it represented a 'victory for what is right', that Iraq must lose its WMDs and in a broadcast on the BBC said he believed that Saddam Hussein's days as leader were likely to be numbered. It was reported that 42 Iraqi divisions were destroyed, 3700 out of 4200 tanks destroyed, 2100 artillery pieces out of 3100 destroyed, 1800 out of 2800 armoured vehicles destroyed, 60,00 Iraqis taken prisoner, 16 British armed forces killed in action and 12 British aircrew missing.

1 March – Cease-fire terms were negotiated in Safwan, Iraq. Rumours circulate that Saddam Hussein would step down and seek asylum in Algeria. King Hussein of Jordan turned his back on Saddam Hussein and looked forward to 'a new Arab era'.

2 March – 24th Infantry Division fought Hammurabi Division as it fled, destroying 600 vehicles. UNSCR 686 noted that all the previous 12 Resolutions continue to have full force, set out the terms of the cease-fire, including the return Kuwaiti property and to give information about WMD and mines in Kuwait and Iraq.

3 March – Iraqi leaders formally accepted cease-fire terms. Defence Secretary Tom King arrived in Bahrain.

4 March – Ten coalition POWs were freed. Basra fell to Shi'ite rebels and the Kurds also rose up against Saddam Hussein. Crown Prince Sheikh Saad al-Sabah of Kuwait returned home.

5 March – Thirty-five coalition POWs were released. Prime Minister Major in Moscow for Middle East peace talks.

6 March – Prime Minister Major visited Kuwait. The Shi'ite rebellion faces attacked by the Republican Guard; the Kurds control 5 cities in the North. In the House of Commons Defence Secretary Tom King reported that 36 British members of the Armed Forces had been killed and 43 injured, 45,000 involved in the conflict and that the cost of the war would be £1.75 billion. The RAF had flown 6,500 sorties since 17 January and had dropped 3,000 tonnes of explosives. RN helicopters had sunk or disabled 15 patrol craft and had traced 228 mines and destroyed 133. The British Army had destroyed 200 tanks, 100 armoured vehicles and 100 artillery pieces.

8 March – After two weeks of non-stop minesweeping operations, the port of Kuwait City was declared safe and allowed to reopen.

14 March – The Emir of Kuwait returned from exile.

17 March – The USA rejected Iraq pleas to use war planes to put down the revolt.

20 March – USAF F-15 shot down Iraqi Su-22 breaching terms of truce.

21 March – China called for an early end to sanctions.

1 April – Border incidents took place between Iran and Iraq and Kurdish refugees fled into Turkey.

3 April – UNSCR 687, allowing Saddam to stay in power but demanding he destroy all weapons of mass destruction, established UNSCOM and tasked the IAEA, a UN Peacekeeping Observer mission would be established on the border to deter border violations, economic sanctions are to remain in place (this gives way to the oil-for-food programme in August). There would be compensation made by Iraq for war damage; Iraqi officials began hiding weapons and data. Turkey and Iran closed their borders.

4 April – Iran and Turkey re-open their borders, 1 million refugees; UK provided £20 million to UN appeal for refugees.

5 April – US President Bush announced Coalition relief supply airdrops to Kurdish refugees in Turkey and northern Iraq. Britain stops short of declaring events in Iraq as 'genocide'. UNSCR 688 condemned the repression of the Iraqi population and Kurds in particular and urged Baghdad to co-operate with international humanitarian relief operations and began preparations for Operation Provide Comfort.

6 April – Iraq accepted UN terms for a formal cease-fire.

7 April – Iran closed border with Iraq after taking in half a million refugees.

8 April – Prime Minister John Major, at the European Council meeting in Luxembourg, proposed the Safe Havens initiative. US President Bush initially sceptical about this plan.

9 April – UNSC approved Resolution 689, establishing a United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission to monitor a permanent cease-fire.

10 April – Britain and the USA threaten renewed military action against Saddam Hussein over the Kurdish refugee situation. The USA supports the Safe Havens plan.

11 April – UNSC announced that a formal cease-fire has been established, ending the Gulf War. The first UN observers would be sent to the Iraq-Kuwait border.

15 April – Iraq allowed the UN in to aid the Kurds. In the House of Commons Foreign Secretary Hurd said that the priority was now to help the Kurds, committed British helicopters to Turkey to aid this effort, rejects called for the use of force to remove Saddam Hussein and announced that Lynda Chalker, the Minister for Overseas Development, would visit Iran.

16 April – British, French and American troops went into Northern Iraq to establish the safe havens.

18 April – Iraq agreed to the UN aid operation.

Aftermath

1992

August – US President Bush declared a 'no-fly' zone for Iraqi aircraft in southern Iraq, adding to a similar no-fly zone declared over the Kurdish north of Iraq in 1991. The policy was aimed at protecting Kurds and Shi'ites in the two regions from being attacked from the air by Saddam's forces. But it applied only to fixed-wing aircraft. Saddam continued to attack rebellious Shiites in the South with helicopter gunships. By then, Saddam Hussein had crushed the Kurdish and Shiite rebellions Bush had encouraged, but not defended. The Matrix-Churchill Arms to Iraq trial collapsed.

1993

14 April – Former US President Bush visited Kuwait; police arrest 14 people in a plot to assassinate the ex-President. US President Bill Clinton ordered a retaliatory strike against Iraqi intelligence headquarters.

June – US forces launched a cruise missile attack on Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in retaliation for the attempted assassination of former President George Bush in Kuwait in April.

1994

10 November – Iraqi National Assembly recognised Kuwait's borders and independence.

1995

14 April – UNSCR 986 allowed the partial resumption of Iraq's oil exports to buy food and medicine (the 'oil-for-food programme').

October – Saddam Hussein won a referendum allowing him to remain president for another seven years.

1996

August – After call for aid from KDP, Iraqi forces launched offensive into northern no-fly zone and capture Irbil.

September – The USA extended northern limit of southern no-fly zone to latitude 33 degrees north, just south of Baghdad.

Publication of the Scott Report into arms to Iraq and the government survived a vote of no confidence, 319-320.

1998

5 August – Iraq suspended all co-operation with UN weapons inspectors. After four months of fruitless Security Council negotiations, Clinton ordered four days of air strikes beginning December 16. Weapons inspectors did not return to Iraq. The USA shifted to a strategy of containing Saddam.

October – Iraq ended co-operation with UN Special Commission to Oversee the Destruction of Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (UNSCOM).

31 October – President Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act.

16-19 December – After UN staff were evacuated from Baghdad, the USA and UK launched a bombing campaign, Operation Desert Fox, to destroy Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes.

1999

February – Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, spiritual leader of the Shi'ite community, was assassinated in Najaf.

December – UNSC Resolution 1284 creates the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to replace UNSCOM. Iraq rejected the resolution.

2001

February – Britain, USA carried out bombing raids to try to disable Iraq's air defence network. The bombings had little international support.

15 September – President George W. Bush signed a directive for the Afghan campaign and instructed the Pentagon to develop plans for a possible war in Iraq.

2002

June 1 – At West Point, President George W. Bush declared that the USA should be ready to use pre-emptive action against possible threats.

September 12 – US President Bush addressed the UN General Assembly and challenged it to hold Iraq to its promise to disarm. The following week the Administration discussed possible resolutions and stressed that Iraq would have 'days and weeks, not months', to comply. In the same month Prime Minister Tony Blair published a 'dodgy' dossier on Iraq's military capability.

October 10 – The US Congress authorised President Bush to use force against Iraq.

November 8 – Following two months of diplomacy and three proposals, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1441 by a 15-to-0 vote. The first UNMOVIC teams arrived in Baghdad 17 days later. Iraq did not give inspectors full co-operation and refused to acknowledge stockpiles of chemical weapons.

2003

1 January – The first 25,000 US troops started deploying to the Persian Gulf region.

5 February – In an address to the Security Council, US Secretary of State Colin Powell presented the case for force against Saddam Hussein's regime. The USA's former War Coalition Allies were unmoved.

5 March – More than 200,000 US troops, five carrier groups and 1000 aircraft were in place or en route to the Middle East. France and Russia pledged to veto any resolution authorising force. Two days later, the UK began a final effort at diplomacy.

16 March – Bush, Blair and Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar convened for a summit in the Azores. They announced the next day would be the UN Security Council's last chance to act.

17 March – President Bush issued an ultimatum to Saddam, giving him 48 hours to leave the country or face war.

19 March – Operation IRAQI FREEDOM began.

This article has been republished online with Open Access.

Ministry of Defence © Crown Copyright 2023. The full printed text of this article is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>. Where we have identified any third-party copyright information or otherwise reserved rights, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned. For all other imagery and graphics in this article, or for any other enquires regarding this publication, please contact: Director of Defence Studies (RAF), Cormorant Building (Room 119), Shrivenham, Swindon, Wiltshire SN6 8LA.

 **ROYAL
AIR FORCE**
**Centre for Air and
Space Power Studies**

OGL