
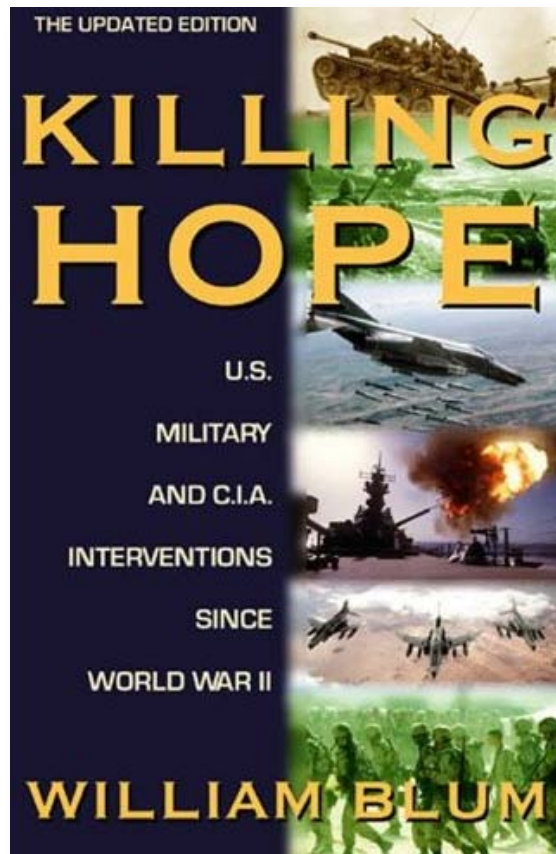


An excerpt from **KILLING HOPE: US Military  
and CIA Interventions Since World War II**

**WILLIAM BLUM**



**DESERT  
HOLOCAUST  
IRAQ 1990-1991**



This excerpt consists of Chapter 51 of

## **KILLING HOPE**

**US MILITARY AND CIA INTERVENTIONS SINCE WORLD WAR II**

By William Blum

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# DESERT HOLOCAUST

*Iraq 1990 - 1991*

*“This is the one part I didn’t want to see,” said a 20-year-old private.  
“All the homeless, all the hurting. When we came through the refugee camp, man,  
that’s something I didn’t need.”*

*“It’s really sad,” said the sergeant. “We’ve got little kids come up and see my gun,  
and they start crying. That really tears me up.”*

*“At night, you kill and you roll on by,” said another GI. “You don’t stop.  
You don’t have to see anything. It wasn’t until the next morning the rear told us  
the devastation was total. We’d killed the entire division.”<sup>{1}</sup>*

**W**hile many nations have a terrible record in modern times of dealing out great suffering face-to-face with their victims, Americans have made it a point to keep at a distance while inflicting some of the greatest horrors of the age: atomic bombs on the people of Japan; carpet-bombing Korea back to the stone age; engulfing the Vietnamese in napalm and pesticides; providing three decades of Latin Americans with the tools and methods of torture, then turning their eyes away, closing their ears to the screams, and denying everything ... and now, dropping 177 million pounds of bombs on the people of Iraq in the most concentrated aerial onslaught in the history of the world.

What possessed the United States to carry out this relentless devastation for more than 40 days and nights against one of the most advanced and enlightened nations in the Middle East and its ancient and modern capital city?

It’s the first half of 1990. The dismantling of the Berlin wall is being carried out on a daily basis. Euphoria about the end of the cold war and optimism about the beginning of a new era of peace and prosperity are hard to contain. The Bush administration is under pressure to cut the monster military budget and institute a “peace dividend”. But George Bush, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, former Texas oil man, and former Director of the CIA, is not about to turn his back on his many cronies in the military-industrial-intelligence complex.

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He rails against those who would “naively cut the muscle out of our defense posture”, and insists that we must take a cautious attitude towards reform in the USSR.<sup>{2}</sup> In February, it’s reported that “the administration and Congress are expecting the most acrimonious hard-fought defense budget battle in recent history”; and in June that “tensions have escalated” between Congress and the Pentagon “as Congress prepares to draft one of the most pivotal defense budgets in the past two decades”.<sup>{3}</sup>

A month later, a Senate Armed Services subcommittee votes to cut military manpower by nearly three times more than recommended by the Bush administration ... “The size and direction of the cuts indicate that President Bush is losing his battle on how to manage reductions in military spending.”<sup>{4}</sup>

During this same period Bush’s popularity was plummeting: from an approval rating of 80 percent in January – as he rode the wave of public support for his invasion of Panama the previous month – to 73 in February, down to the mid-60s in May and June, 63 on 11 July, 60 two weeks later.<sup>{5}</sup>

George Herbert Walker Bush needed something dramatic to capture the headlines and the public, and to convince Congress that a powerful military was needed as much as ever because it was still a scary and dangerous world out there.

Although the official Washington version of events presented Iraq’s occupation of neighboring Kuwait as an arbitrary and unwarranted aggression, Kuwait had actually been a district of Iraq, under Ottoman rule, up to the First World War. After the war, to exert leverage against the abundantly oil-rich Iraq, the British Colonial Office established tiny Kuwait as a separate territorial entity, in the process cutting off most of Iraq’s access to the Persian Gulf. In 1961, Kuwait became “independent”, again because Britain declared it to be so, and Iraq massed troops at the border, backing down when the British dispatched their own forces. Subsequent Iraqi regimes never accepted the legitimacy of this state of affairs, making similar threats in the 1970s, even crossing a half-mile into Kuwait in 1976, but Baghdad was also open to a compromise with Kuwait under which Iraq would gain access to its former islands in the Gulf.<sup>{6}</sup>

The current conflict had its origins in the brutal 1980-88 war between Iraq and Iran. Iraq charged that while it was locked in battle, Kuwait was engaged in stealing \$2.4 billion of oil from the Rumaila oil field that ran beneath the vaguely-defined Iraq-Kuwait border and was claimed in its entirety by Iraq; that Kuwait had built military and other structures on Iraqi territory; and worst of all, that immediately after the war ended, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates began to exceed the production quotas established by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), flooding the oil market, and driving prices down. Iraq was heavily strapped and deeply in debt

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because of the long war, and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein declared this policy was an increasing threat to his country – “economic war”, he called it, pointing out that Iraq lost a billion dollars a year for each drop of one dollar in the oil price.<sup>{7}</sup>

Besides compensation for these losses, Hussein insisted on possession of the two Gulf islands which blocked Iraq’s access to the Gulf as well as undisputed ownership of the Rumaila oilfield.

In the latter part of July 1990, after Kuwait had continued to scorn Iraq’s financial and territorial demands, and to ignore OPEC’s request to stick to its assigned quota, Iraq began to mass large numbers of troops along the Kuwaiti border.

The reaction to all this by the world’s only remaining superpower and self-appointed global policeman became the subject of intense analysis and controversy after Iraq actually invaded. Had Washington given Iraq a green light to invade? Was there, at a minimum, the absence of a flashing red light? The controversy was fueled by incidents such as the following:

19 July: Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney stated that the American commitment made during the Iran-Iraq war to come to Kuwait’s defense if it were attacked was still valid. The same point was made by Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, at a private luncheon with Arab ambassadors. (Ironically, Kuwait had been allied with Iraq and feared an attack from Iran.)

Later, Cheney’s remark was downplayed by his own spokesman, Pete Williams, who explained that the secretary had spoken with “some degree of liberty”. Cheney was then told by the White House: “You’re committing us to war we might not want to fight”, and advised pointedly that from then on, statements on Iraq would be made by the White House and State Department.<sup>{8}</sup>

24 July: State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutweiler, in response to a question, responded: “We do not have any defense treaties with Kuwait, and there are no special defense or security commitments to Kuwait.” Asked whether the United States would help Kuwait if it were attacked, she said: “We also remain strongly committed to supporting the individual and collective self-defense of our friends in the gulf with whom we have deep and longstanding ties” – a statement that some Kuwaiti officials said privately was too weak.<sup>{9}</sup>

24 July: The US staged an unscheduled and rare military exercise with the United Arab Emirates, and the same Pete Williams then announced: “We remain strongly committed to supporting the individual and collective self-defense of our friends in the gulf with whom we have deep and longstanding ties.” And the White House declared:

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“We’re concerned about the troop buildup by the Iraqis. We ask that all parties strive to avoid violence.”<sup>{10}</sup>

25 July: Saddam Hussein was personally told by the US ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, in a now-famous remark, that “We have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait.” But she then went on to tell the Iraqi leader that she was concerned about his massive troop deployment on the Kuwaiti border in the context of his government’s having branded Kuwait’s actions as “parallel to military aggression”.<sup>{11}</sup>

25 July: John Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, killed a planned Voice of America broadcast that would have warned Iraq with the identical party-line words used by Tutweiler and Williams.<sup>{12}</sup> Hussein may not have known of this incident, although in April he had been personally assured by visiting Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole, speaking in behalf of the president, that the Bush administration dissociated itself from a Voice of America broadcast critical of Iraq’s human-rights abuses and also opposed a congressional move for economic sanctions against Iraq.<sup>{13}</sup>

27 July: The House and Senate each voted to impose economic sanctions against Iraq because of its human-rights violations. However, the Bush administration immediately reiterated its opposition to the measure.<sup>{14}</sup>

28 July: Bush sent a personal message to Hussein (apparently after receiving Glaspie’s report of her meeting with the Iraqi leader) cautioning him against the use of force, without referring directly to Kuwait.<sup>{15}</sup>

31 July: Kelly told Congress: “We have no defense treaty relationship with any Gulf country. That is clear. ... We have historically avoided taking a position on border disputes or on internal OPEC deliberations.”

Rep. Lee Hamilton asked if it would be correct to say that if Iraq “charged across the border into Kuwait” the United States did “not have a treaty commitment which would obligate us to engage U.S. forces” there.

“That is correct,” Kelly responded.<sup>{16}</sup>

The next day (Washington time), Iraqi troops led by tanks charged across the Kuwaiti border, and the United States instantly threw itself into unmitigated opposition. Official statements notwithstanding, it appears that the United States did indeed have an official position on the Iraq-Kuwait border dispute.

After the invasion, one of the documents the Iraqis found in a Kuwaiti intelligence file was a memorandum concerning a November 1989 meeting between the head of

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Kuwaiti state security and CIA Director William Webster, which included the following:

We agreed with the American side that it was important to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq in order to put pressure on that country's government to delineate our common border. The Central Intelligence Agency gave us its view of appropriate means of pressure, saying that broad cooperation should be initiated between us on condition that such activities be coordinated at a high level.

The CIA called the document a “total fabrication”. However, as the Los Angeles Times pointed out, “The memo is not an obvious forgery, particularly since if Iraqi officials had written it themselves, they almost certainly would have made it far more damaging to U.S. and Kuwaiti credibility.”<sup>{17}</sup> It was apparently real enough and damaging enough to the Kuwaiti foreign minister – he fainted when confronted with the document by his Iraqi counterpart at an Arab summit meeting in mid-August.<sup>{18}</sup>

When the Iraqi ambassador in Washington was asked why the document seemed to contradict US Ambassador Glaspie's avowal of neutrality on the issue, he replied that her remark was “part and parcel of the setup”.<sup>{19}</sup>

Was Iraq set up by the United States and Kuwait? Was Saddam provoked into his invasion – with the conspirators' expectation perhaps that it would not extend beyond the border area – so he could be cut down to the size both countries wanted?

In February 1990, Hussein made a speech before an Arab summit which could certainly have incited, or added impetus to, such a plot. In it he condemned the continuous American military presence in the Persian Gulf waters and warned that “If the Gulf people and the rest of the Arabs along with them fail to take heed, the Arab Gulf region will be ruled by American will.”

Further, that the US would dictate the production, distribution and price of oil, “all on the basis of a special outlook which has to do solely with U.S. interests and in which no consideration is given to the interests of others.”<sup>{20}</sup> In examining whether there was a conspiracy against Iraq and Saddam Hussein, we must consider, in addition to the indications mentioned above, the following:

Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat has asserted that Washington thwarted the chance for a peaceful resolution of the differences between Kuwait and Iraq at an Arab summit in May, after Saddam had offered to negotiate a mutually acceptable border with Kuwait. “The US was encouraging Kuwait not to offer any compromise,” said Arafat, “which meant there could be no negotiated solution to

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avoid the Gulf crisis.” Kuwait, he said, was led to believe it could rely on the force of US arms instead.<sup>{21}</sup>

Similarly, King Hussein of Jordan revealed that just before the Iraqi invasion the Kuwaiti foreign minister stated: “We are not going to respond to [Iraq] ... if they don’t like it, let them occupy our territory ... we are going to bring in the Americans.” And that the Kuwaiti emir told his military officers that in the event of an invasion, their duty was to hold off the Iraqis for 24 hours; by then “American and foreign forces would land in Kuwait and expel them.” King Hussein expressed the opinion that Arab understanding was that Saddam had been goaded into invading, thereby stepping into a noose prepared for him.<sup>{22}</sup>

The emir refused to accede to Iraq’s financial demands, instead offering an insulting half-million dollars to Baghdad. A note from him to his prime minister before the invasion speaks of support of this policy from Egypt, Washington and London. “Be unwavering in your discussions,” the emir writes. “We are stronger than they [the Iraqis] think.”<sup>{23}</sup>

After the war, the Kuwaiti Minister of Oil and Finance acknowledged:

But we knew that the United States would not let us be overrun. I spent too much time in Washington to make that mistake, and received a constant stream of visitors here. The American policy was clear. Only Saddam didn’t understand it.<sup>{24}</sup>

We have seen perhaps ample reason why Saddam would fail to understand.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz declared that a sharp drop in the price of oil was something the Kuwaitis, with their vast investment holdings in the West, could easily afford, but which undercut the oil revenues essential to a cash-hungry Baghdad.

“It was inconceivable,” said Aziz, that Kuwait “could risk engaging in a conspiracy of such magnitude against a large, strong country such as Iraq, if it were not being supported and protected by a great power; and that power was the United States of America.”<sup>{25}</sup> There is, in fact, no public indication that the United States, despite its very close financial ties, tried to persuade Kuwait to cease any of its provocative actions against Iraq.

And neither Washington nor Kuwait seemed terribly concerned about heading off an invasion. In the week prior to the Iraqi attack, intelligence experts were telling the Bush administration with increasing urgency that an invasion of at least a part of Kuwait was likely. These forecasts “appear to have evoked little response from



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Government agencies.”<sup>{26}</sup> During this period Bush was personally briefed and told the same by CIA Director William Webster, who showed the president satellite photos of the Iraqi troops massed near the Kuwaiti border. Bush, reportedly, showed little interest.<sup>{27}</sup> On 1 August, the CIA’s National Intelligence Officer for Warning (sic) walked into the offices of the National Security Council’s Middle East Staff and announced: “This is your final warning.” Iraq, he said, would invade Kuwait by day’s end, which they did. This, too, did not produce a rush to action.<sup>{28}</sup> Lastly, a Kuwaiti diplomat stationed in Iraq before the invasion sent many reports back to his own government warning of an Iraqi invasion; these were ignored as well. His last warning had specified the exact date (Kuwaiti time) of 2 August. After the war, when the diplomat held a press conference in Kuwait to discuss the government’s ignoring of his warnings, it was broken up by a government minister and several army officers.<sup>{29}</sup>

In July, while all these warnings were ostensibly being ignored, the Pentagon was busy running its computerized command post exercise (CPX), initiated in late 1989 specifically to explore possible responses to “the Iraqi threat” – which, in the new war plan 1002-90, had replaced “the Soviet threat” – the exercise dealing with an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait or Saudi Arabia or both.<sup>{30}</sup> At a war-games exercise at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., participants were also being asked to determine the most effective American response to a hypothetical invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.<sup>{31}</sup> While at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina, another war “game” involved identifying bombing targets in Iraq.<sup>{32}</sup>

And during May and June, the Pentagon, Congress and defense contractors had been extensively briefed by the Center for Strategic and International Studies of Georgetown University on a study of the future of conventional warfare, which concluded that the most likely war to erupt requiring an American military response was between Iraq and Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.<sup>{33}</sup>

Another person who seems to have known something in advance was George Shultz, who was Reagan’s Secretary of State and then returned to the Bechtel Corp., the multinational construction giant. In the spring of 1990, Shultz convinced the company to withdraw from a petrochemicals project in Iraq. “I said something is going to go very wrong in Iraq and blow up and if Bechtel were there it would get blown up too. So I told them to get out.”<sup>{34}</sup>

Finally, there was this disclosure in the Washington Post:

Since the invasion, highly classified U.S. intelligence assessments have determined that Saddam took U.S. statements of neutrality ... as a green

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light from the Bush administration for an invasion. One senior Iraqi military official ... has told the agency [CIA] that Saddam seemed to be sincerely surprised by the subsequent bellicose reaction.{35}

On the other hand we have the statement from Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz, who was present at the Glaspie-Hussein meeting.

She didn't give a green light, and she didn't mention a red light because the question of our presence in Kuwait was not raised. ... And we didn't take it as a green light ... that if we intervened militarily in Kuwait, the Americans would not react. That was not true. We were expecting an American attack on the morning of the second of August.{36}

But one must be skeptical about so casual an attitude toward an American attack. And these remarks, in effect denying that Iraq was played for a sucker, must be considered in light of the Iraqi government's stubborn refusal for some time to admit the harm done to the country by US bombing, and to downplay the number of their casualties.

The Bush administration's position was that Iraq's Arab neighbors, particularly Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, had urged the United States all along not to say or do anything that might provoke Saddam. Moreover, as Ambassador Glaspie emphasized, no one expected Hussein to take "all" of Kuwait, at most the parts he already claimed: the islands and the oilfield. But, of course, Iraq had claimed "all" of Kuwait for a century.

### **THE INVASION**

When Iraq invaded, the time for mixed signals was over. Whatever devious plan, if any, George Bush may have been operating under, he now took full advantage of this window of opportunity. Within hours, if not minutes, of the border crossing, the United States began mobilizing, the White House condemned Iraq's action as a "blatant use of military aggression", demanded "the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces", and announced that it was "considering all options"; while George Bush was declaring that the invasion "underscores the need to go slowly in restructuring U.S. defense forces".{37}

Before 24 hours had passed, an American naval task force loaded with fighter planes and bombers was on its way to the Persian Gulf, Bush was seeking to enlist world leaders for collective action against Iraq, all trade with Iraq had been embargoed, all

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Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets in the United States had been frozen; and the Senate had “decisively defeated efforts to end or freeze production of the B-2 Stealth bomber after proponents seized on Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait to bolster their case for the radar-eluding weapon”; the attack, they said, “demonstrates the continuing risk of war and the need for advanced weapons” ... Said Senator Dole: “If we needed Saddam Hussein to give us a wake-up call at least we can thank him for that.”<sup>{38}</sup>

“One day after using Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait to help save the high-tech B-2 bomber, senators invoked the crisis again Friday to stave off the mothballing of two World War II-vintage battleships.”<sup>{39}</sup>

Within days, thousands of American troops and an armored brigade were stationed in Saudi Arabia. It was given the grand name of Operation Desert Shield, and a heightened appreciation for America’s military needs was the prevailing order of the day ...

Less than a year after political changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union sent the defense industry reeling under the threat of dramatic cutbacks, executives and analysts say the crisis in the Persian Gulf has provided military companies with a tiny glimmer of hope.

“If Iraq does not withdraw and things get messy, it will be good for the industry. You will hear less rhetoric from Washington about the peace dividend,” said Michael Lauer, an analyst with Kidder, Peabody & Co. in New York.

“The possible beneficiaries” of the crisis, added the Washington Post, “cover the spectrum of companies in the defense industry.”<sup>{40}</sup>

By September, James Webb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration, felt moved to speak out:

The President should be aware that, while most Americans are laboring very hard to support him, a mood of cynicism is just beneath their veneer of respect. Many are claiming that the buildup is little more than a “Pentagon budget drill,” designed to preclude cutbacks of an Army searching for a mission as bases in NATO begin to disappear.<sup>{41}</sup>

Remarkably, yet another cynical former Assistant Secretary of Defense was heard from. Lawrence Korb wrote that the deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia “seems driven more by upcoming budget battles on Capitol Hill than a potential battle against Saddam Hussein.”<sup>{42}</sup>

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But can anything be too cynical for a congressman stalking re-election? By the beginning of October we could read:

The political backdrop of the U.S. military deployment in Saudi Arabia played a significant role in limiting defense cuts in Sunday's budget agreement, halting the military spending "free fall" that some analysts had predicted two months ago, budget aides said. Capitol Hill strategists said that Operation Desert Shield forged a major change in the political climate of the negotiations, forcing lawmakers who had been advocating deep cuts on the defensive.

The defense budget compromise ... would leave not only funding for Operation Desert Shield intact but would spare much of the funding that has been spent each year to prepare for a major Soviet onslaught on Western Europe.<sup>{43}</sup>

Meanwhile, George Bush's approval rating had recovered. The first poll taken in August after the US engagement in the Gulf showed a jump to 74 percent, up from 60 percent in late July. However, it seems that the American public needs the rush of a regular patriotic-fix to maintain enthusiasm for the man occupying the White House, for by mid-October, due to Bush's extreme obfuscation of why the US was in the Persian Gulf, the rating they granted him was down to 56 – since Bush's first month in office, it had never been lower; and it stayed close to that level until the citizenry's next patriotic-invasion-fix in January, as we shall see.<sup>{44}</sup>

### **PRELUDE TO WAR**

As Iraq went about plundering Kuwait and turning it into Iraqi Province 19, the United States was building up its military presence in Saudi Arabia and the surrounding waters, and – employing a little coercion and history's most spectacular bribes – creating a "coalition" to support US-fostered United Nations resolutions and the coming war effort in a multitude of ways: a figleaf of "multinational" respectability, as Washington had created in Korea, Grenada and Afghanistan, for what was essentially an American mission, an American war. Egypt was forgiven many billions of dollars in debt, while Syria, China, Turkey, the Soviet Union, and other countries received military or economic aid and World Bank and IMF loans, had sanctions lifted, or were given other perks, not only from the US but, under Washington's pressure, from Germany, Japan and Saudi Arabia. As an added touch, the Bush administration stopped criticizing the human rights record of any coalition member.<sup>{45}</sup> But Washington and the media were unhappy with Germany for not enthusiastically jumping on the war

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bandwagon. The Germans who only yesterday were condemned as jackbooted fascists marching through Poland, were now called “cowards” for marching for peace in large demonstrations.

Washington pushed a dozen resolutions through the Security Council condemning Iraq, imposing severe economic sanctions, and getting “authorization” to wage war. Only Cuba and Yemen voted against any of them. When Yemen’s delegate received some applause for his negative vote on the key use-of-force resolution of 29 November, US Secretary of State Baker, who was presiding, said to his delegation: “I hope he enjoyed that applause, because this will turn out to be the most expensive vote he ever cast.” The message was relayed to the Yemenis, and within days, the tiny Middle-East nation suffered a sharp reduction in US aid.<sup>{46}</sup>

UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar acknowledged that “It was not a United Nations War. General Schwarzkopf [commander of the coalition forces] was not wearing a blue helmet.”<sup>{47}</sup> The American control of the United Nations prompted British political commentator Edward Pearce to write that the UN “functions like an English medieval parliament: consulted, shown ceremonial courtesy, but mindful of divine prerogative, it mutters and gives assent.”<sup>{48}</sup>

The paramount issue in the United States soon became: how long should we wait for the sanctions to work before resorting to direct military force? The administration and its supporters insisted that they were giving Hussein every chance to find a peaceful, face-saving way out of the hole he had dug himself into. But the fact remained that each time President Bush made the Iraqi leader any kind of offer, it was laced with a deep insult, and never offered the slightest recognition that there might be any validity to Iraq’s stated grievances.<sup>{49}</sup> Indeed, Bush had characterized the Iraqi invasion as being “without provocation”.<sup>{50}</sup> The president’s rhetoric became increasingly caustic and exaggerated; he was putting it on a personal level, demonizing Saddam, as he had done with Noriega, as Reagan had done with Qaddafi, as if these foreigners did not have pride or reason like Americans have. Here’s how the Los Angeles Times viewed it:

Shortly after Iraq’s invasion ... Bush carefully compared Iraq’s aggression with the German aggression against Poland that launched World War II. But he stopped short of a personal comparison of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein with Adolf Hitler. That caution went out the window last month, when Bush not only compared Hussein to Hitler but also threatened Nuremberg-style war crime trials. Then, last week, Bush went further, briefly maintaining that

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the Iraqi leader is worse than Hitler because the Germans never held U.S. citizens as “human shields” at military sites.

After this trivializing of the Holocaust, Bush went on to warn that any acceptance of uncontrolled aggression “could be world war tomorrow”. Said one of his own officials: “Got to get his rhetoric under control.”<sup>{51}</sup>

Saddam Hussein could not help but soon realize that by seizing all of Kuwait – not to mention sacking and pillaging it – he had bitten off substantially more than he could chew. In early August and again in October, he signaled his willingness to pull Iraqi forces out of the country in return for sole control of the Rumaila oil field, guaranteed access to the Persian Gulf, the lifting of sanctions, and resolution of the oil price/production problem.<sup>{52}</sup> He also began to release some of the many foreigners who had had the misfortune of being in Iraq or Kuwait at the wrong time. In mid-December the last of them was freed. Earlier that month, Iraq began laying out a new Iraqi-Kuwait border, which might have meant a renunciation of its claim of Kuwait being a part of Iraq, though its meaning was not clear.<sup>{53}</sup> And in early January, as we shall see, his strongest peace signal was reported.

The Bush administration chose to not respond in a positive manner to any of these moves. After Saddam’s August offer, the State Department “categorically” denied it had even been made; then the White House confirmed it.<sup>{54}</sup> A later congressional summary of the matter stated:

The Iraqis apparently believed that having invaded Kuwait, they would get everyone’s attention, negotiate improvements to their economic situation, and pull out. ... a diplomatic solution satisfactory to the interests of the United States may well have been possible since the earliest days of the invasion.

The Bush administration, said the congressional paper, wanted to avoid seeming in any way to reward the invasion. But a retired Army officer, who was acting as a middle man in the August discussions, concluded afterward that the peace offer “was already moving against policy”.<sup>{55}</sup>

After a certain point in the American military buildup, could the United States have given peace a chance even if it wanted to? Former Assistant Defense Secretary Lawrence Korb observed in late November that all the components of the defense establishment were pushing to get in on the action, to prove their worth, to prove that there was still a need for them, to assure their continued funding ...

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By mid-January ... the United States will have over 400,000 troops in the Gulf [it turned out to be over 500,000] from all five armed services (yes, even the Coast Guard is there). This is about 100,000 more troops than we had in Europe at any time during the Cold War. The Army will eventually have eight divisions on the ground in Saudi Arabia, twice as many as it had in Europe. ... two-thirds of the entire Marine Corps' combat power [will be there] ... The Navy will deploy six of its 14 aircraft carrier battle groups, two of its four battleships and one of its two amphibious groups ... The Air Force already has fighters from nine of its 24 active tactical wings ... as well as bombers ... Even the combat reserves are scheduled to be sent ... The reserve lobby recognized that their future funding may be jeopardized if their units do not get involved. ... Just as every service wants to be involved in the deployment, will not each want a piece of the real action?

And would the military high-command be able to resist the pressures from each service, Korb wondered. The Navy, which had moved some its carriers into the narrow and dangerous waters of the Gulf just to be closer to the action? The Marines, who might want to demonstrate the continuing viability of amphibious warfare by staging an assault on the coast? And could the Army lay back while air power carried the day?<sup>{56}</sup> [They couldn't, and it prolonged the war.]

The US military and President Bush would have their massive show of power, their super-hi-tech real war games, and no signals from Iraq or any peacenik would be allowed to spoil it. Fortune magazine, in an ingenuous paean to Bush's fortitude, later summed up the period before the war began thusly:

The President and his men worked overtime to quash freelance peacemakers in the Arab world, France, and the Soviet Union who threatened to give Saddam a face-saving way out of the box Bush was building. Over and over, Bush repeated the mantra: no negotiations, no deals, no face-saving, no rewards, and specifically, no linkage to a Palestinian peace conference [a point raised by Iraq on several occasions].<sup>{57}</sup>

On 29 November, the UN Security Council authorized the use of "all necessary means" to compel Iraq to vacate Kuwait if it didn't do so by 15 January. Over Christmas, we have learned, George Bush pored over every one of the 82 pages of Amnesty International's agonizing report of Iraqi arrests, rape, and torture in Kuwait. After the holiday, he told his staff that his conscience was clear: "It's black and white, good vs. evil. The man has to be stopped."<sup>{58}</sup>

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It's not reported whether Bush ever read any of Amnesty's many reports of the period on the equally repulsive violations of human rights and the human spirit perpetrated by Washington's allies in Guatemala, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Angola and Nicaragua. If he did, the literature apparently had little effect, for he continued to support these forces. Amnesty had also been reporting about Iraq's extreme brutality for more than a decade, and only a few months before the August invasion had testified about these abuses before the Senate, but none of this had filled George Bush with righteous indignation.

As the 15 January deadline neared, the world held its breath. Was it possible that in five and a half months no way could have been found to avoid inflicting another ghastly war upon this sad planet? On the 11th, Arab diplomats at the UN said that they had received reports from Algeria, Jordan and Yemen, all on close terms with Iraq, that Saddam planned an initiative soon after the 15th that would express his willingness "in principle" to pull out of Kuwait in return for international guarantees that Iraq would not be attacked, an international conference to address Palestinian grievances, and negotiations on disputes between Iraq and Kuwait. The Iraqi leader, the diplomats said, wanted to wait a day or two after the deadline had passed to demonstrate that he had not been intimidated. For the United States, with half-a-million troops poised for battle in Saudi Arabia, this was unacceptable. Saddam Hussein will "pass the brink at midnight, January 15", said Secretary of State Baker, and could not expect to save himself by offering to pull out of Kuwait after that time.<sup>{59}</sup>

### **THE MULTIPLE EXPLANATIONS OF GEORGE BUSH**

Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom, and the freedom of friendly countries around the world will suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell in the hands of that one man, Saddam Hussein.<sup>{60}</sup>

Thus spaketh George Herbert Walker Bush to the people of America. As Theodore Draper observed:

These reasons were both mundane and implausible. That "jobs" should have been mentioned first suggested that Bush, as in a domestic political campaign, sought primarily to appeal to the voters' pocketbook. It was, however, a peculiarly crass reason to go to war, if it came to that, halfway around the world.<sup>{61}</sup>



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During the entire lengthy buildup to the war, during the war, after the war, no one was sure they understood why Bush had intervened in the Persian Gulf, and then taken the United States into war. Congressmen, journalists, editors, plain citizens kept asking, almost pleading at times, for the president to clearly and unambiguously explain his motivations, and without contradicting what he had said the previous week. (Economists and think-tank intellectuals found it professionally awkward to admit their uncertainty, and thus wound up writing lots of authoritative-sounding mumbo-jumbo.)

The prevailing bewilderment prompted the Wall Street Journal to assemble a group of “voters” to discuss the issues. “They are confused about what’s happening and are crying out for more information,” reported the newspaper about the participants. “And they are unsettled by the perception that Mr. Bush seems to be switching his reasoning day to day.” Said one participant: “So far it’s been like David Letterman’s Top 10 Reasons for Being There. There’s a different story every week or so.”<sup>{62}</sup> Taking place in the Persian Gulf, as it all did, of course lent itself to the belief that the liquid gold had a lot, if not everything, to do with the conflict. This, however, is a thesis which can not be supported by the immediate circumstances. Supply was not a problem – the Energy Department acknowledged that there was not an oil shortage, and Saudi Arabia and other countries increased their production to more than make up for the oil lost from Iraq and Kuwait, which, in any event, together accounted for only about five percent of American consumption.

There was a whole world ready to supply more oil, from Mexico to Russia, as well as large untapped American sources. This indicates the difficulties faced by any single producer – Hussein or anyone else – who might try to control or dominate the market; which in turn raises the question: what would such a country do with all the oil, drink it? By December it was reported that “OPEC is pumping oil at the highest levels since early summer, and unless a war in the Middle East disrupts supplies, there’s a prospect again of an oil glut and sharply lower prices.”<sup>{63}</sup>

As to the price of oil: did oilmen George Bush and James Baker and the depressed American oil states want it to go up or down? A case could be made for either hypothesis. (In January 1990 the US had secretly urged Saddam to try to raise the OPEC oil price to \$25 a barrel.)<sup>{64}</sup> And how easily could Washington control it either way in a chaotic situation? As it is, oil prices fluctuate on a regular basis, often sharply – between 1984 and 1986, for example, the price of a barrel of oil fell from around \$30 to less than \$10, despite the ongoing Iraq-Iran war which cut into the production of both countries.

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However, this analysis of the immediate circumstances does not take into consideration the formidable and continual influence of the “mystique of oil” upon the thinking of American policy makers. If Bush was looking for a “crisis” to impress upon the congressional mind the enduring danger of the world we live in, then getting involved in a conflict between two major oil producing countries would certainly generate the desired effect much more readily than if he had seized upon Bolivia attacking Paraguay, or Ghana occupying Ivory Coast.

The president’s remark about the American way of life and everyone’s freedom reflects the life-and-death seriousness that he and other policy makers publicly ascribe to oil. (What these men really believe and feel in each instance is something we are not privy to.) Earlier in the year, CIA Director William Webster had told Congress that oil “will continue to have a major impact on U.S. interests” because “Western dependence on Persian Gulf oil will rise dramatically” in the next decade; while General Schwarzkopf, who had lifelong ties to the Middle East, testified:

Mideast oil is the West’s lifeblood. It fuels us today, and being 77 percent of the Free World’s proven oil reserves, is going to fuel us when the rest of the world has run dry. ... It is estimated that within 20 to 40 years the U.S. will have virtually depleted its economically available oil reserves, while the Persian Gulf region will still have at least 100 years of proven oil reserves.<sup>{65}</sup>

It was actually 69 percent at the time, and since the Soviet Union has joined the “Free World”, it’s even less.<sup>{66}</sup> It should also be noted that the good general’s prediction for the US is rather speculative, and that the term “economically available” is a reference to the fact that US domestic oil reserves are more costly to exploit than those in the Gulf. But this only makes it a profit problem, not an oil-supply problem. Moreover, the vast potential residing in alternative energy sources must be included in the equation.

At this time, the United States – seemingly in a panic about danger to the Gulf oil supply – was receiving about 11 percent of its oil from the region, while Japan, which got 62 percent of its oil, and Europe which got 27 percent from there, were hardly stirred up at all, except for Margaret Thatcher who foamed at the mouth when it came to Saddam and former colony Iraq.<sup>{67}</sup> Germany’s figure was about 35 percent, yet both Bonn and Tokyo had to have their arms twisted by Washington to support the war effort. The two countries may, in fact, have been leery about helping the United States acquire greater influence and control over the region’s oil.

Official Washington’s embrace of the oil mystique has given rise to a long-standing

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policy, expressed as follows by political analyst Noam Chomsky:

It's been a leading, driving doctrine of U.S. foreign policy since the 1940s that the vast and unparalleled energy resources of the Gulf region will be effectively dominated by the United States and its clients, and, crucially, that no independent, indigenous force will be permitted to have a substantial influence on the administration of oil production and price.<sup>{68}</sup>

This has not always meant the use of force. In 1973, when OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, used substantial price increases and an oil boycott in an attempt to force Washington to influence Israel into withdrawing from its recently occupied territories, the United States did not launch, or even threaten, an invasion. The matter was resolved through extensive diplomacy without a shot being fired. What saved the OPEC states from a violent fate may have been the combination of the Vietnam war still hanging heavy in the air in Washington, and the Nixon administration on the verge of being swallowed up by Watergate.

In addition to issuing several dire warnings early on about the invasion's severe economic consequences for the United States, which never came to pass, Bush warned of an even worse fate if Iraq took over Saudi Arabia. The danger-to-Saudi Arabia explanation was a non-starter. Iraq never had any designs on Saudi Arabia, as a simple look at a map makes clear. The Iraqis have a long border with that country; they didn't have to go through Kuwait to invade the Saudis; and even if they did, they could have moved into Saudi Arabia virtually unopposed during the three weeks following their takeover of Kuwait, as General Colin Powell later conceded.<sup>{69}</sup> Bush administration officials in fact admitted that neither the CIA nor the Defense Intelligence Agency thought it probable that Iraq would invade Saudi Arabia.<sup>{70}</sup> The Saudis didn't think so either, until Defense Secretary Cheney flew to Riyadh on 5 August and personally told King Fahd that his country stood in great potential danger and desperately needed a very large infusion of American military forces to defend it.<sup>{71}</sup>

Bush backed away from the oil rationale when critics charged that he was only trying to protect the interests of the oil industry. In October, he was interrupted while making a speech by some people calling out: "Mr. President, bring our troops home from Saudi Arabia! No blood for oil!" To which George Bush replied – as the hecklers were hustled out – "You know, some people never get the word. The fight isn't about oil. The fight is about naked aggression that [we] will not stand." A month later, if not sooner, the president again began to play the oil card, tying America's economic security to that of Saudi Arabia.

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Shortly afterward, he returned to “the devastating damage being done every day” to the US and international economies by the disruption of oil markets.<sup>{72}</sup>

As to Iraq’s naked aggression – a remark requiring selective-memory skills of a high order coming from a government that held all modern records for international aggression, naked or otherwise, and from a man who, less than a year before, had nakedly invaded Panama – both Syria and Israel had invaded Lebanon and still occupied large portions of that country, Israel bombarding Beirut mercilessly in the process, without a threat of war emanating from Washington. Saddam Hussein, perhaps wondering when they had changed the rules, said to the United States: “You are talking about an aggressive Iraq ... if Iraq was aggressive during the Iran war, why then did you speak with [us] then?”<sup>{73}</sup>

During Iraq’s epic struggle against the Ayatollah Khomeini, the United States of course had more than spoken to Baghdad. Washington – choosing Iraq as the lesser evil against Shiite extremism – was responsible for huge amounts of weaponry, military training, sophisticated technology, satellite-photo intelligence, and billions of dollars reaching a needy Hussein, who was also lavishly supported by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, they being concerned that Iran’s anti-monarchist sentiments might spread to their own realms. Indeed, there is evidence that

Washington encouraged Iraq to attack Iran and ignite the war in the first place.<sup>{74}</sup> And during this period of American support of Hussein, he was certainly the same odious, repressive, beastly thug as when he later came under American moralistic rhetorical fire. Similarly, absent Washington’s prodding, the UN did not condemn Iraq’s invasion, nor did it impose any sanctions or lay down any demands.

Even as it officially banned arms sales to either combatant, the US secretly provided weapons to both. The other *bête noire* of the region, the Ayatollah, received American arms and military intelligence on Iraq during the war, so as to enhance the ability of the two countries to inflict maximum devastation upon each other and stunt their growth as strong Middle-East nations.

In contrast to Iraq-the-enemy now were the two “allies” most involved, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Although Washington did not make a big thing about the “virtue” of either country, official policy was always that the United States had a principled commitment to defending the former and liberating the latter.

And they were not a pretty pair. Saudi Arabia regularly featured extreme religious intolerance, extrajudicial arrest, torture, and flogging.<sup>{75}</sup> It also practiced gender apartheid and systematic repression of women, virtual slavery for its foreign workers,

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stoning of adulterers, and amputation of the hands of thieves. US chaplains stationed in the country were asked to remove crosses and Stars of David from their uniforms and call themselves “morale officers”.<sup>{76}</sup>

Kuwait, oddly enough, was virulently anti-American in its foreign policy.<sup>{77}</sup> Though more socially enlightened than Saudi Arabia (but less than Iraq), it was nonetheless run by one family as an elitist oligarchy, which closed down the parliament in 1986, had no political parties, and forbade criticism of the ruling emir; no more than 20 percent of the population possessed any political rights at all. After the country had been returned to its rightful dictators, it behaved very brutally toward its large foreign-worker population, holding them without charge or trial for several months; death squads executed scores of people.

“Torture of political detainees was routine and widespread,” said Amnesty International, and at least 80 “disappeared” in custody. The targets of the campaign, which took place in the presence of thousands of US troops, were primarily those who were accused of collaboration with the Iraqis, although this was something most of them had no choice in, and those who were involved in a nascent pro-democracy movement. Additionally, some 400 Iraqis were forced to return to Iraq despite fears that they would be harmed or executed there.<sup>{78}</sup>

The elite of the region did not display much gratitude for all that George Bush said America was doing for them. Said one Gulf official: “You think I want to send my teen-aged son to die for Kuwait?” He chuckled and added, “We have our white slaves from America to do that.” A Saudi teacher saw it this way: “The American soldiers are a new kind of foreign worker here. We have Pakistanis driving taxis and now we have Americans defending us.”

Explaining the absence of expressed gratitude on the part of Gulf leaders, a Yemeni diplomat said: “A lot of the Gulf rulers simply do not feel that they have to thank the people they’ve hired to do their fighting for them.”<sup>{79}</sup> Apart from anything else, people in the Arab world were very sensitive about the killing of Muslims and Arabs by foreigners, as well as foreign military presence on Arab soil, a reminder of a century of Western, white colonialism.

Bush also warned that Iraq posed a nuclear threat. True enough. But so did the United States, France, Israel, and every other country that already had nuclear weapons. Iraq, on the other hand, according to American, British and Israeli experts, was five to ten years away from being able to build and use nuclear weapons.<sup>{80}</sup> It’s unlikely that the president himself believed there was any such danger. His warning came only after a poll showed that a plurality of Americans felt that preventing Iraq

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from acquiring nuclear weapons was the most persuasive argument for going to war.<sup>{81}</sup>

One factor not mentioned by Bush as a reason for the intervention, but which, in fact, probably played an important role, was the Pentagon's desire to make or strengthen agreements with Gulf-region countries for an ongoing US military presence; and considerable progress along these lines appears to have been made.<sup>{82}</sup> General Schwarzkopf had earlier told Congress that "U.S. presence" in the Gulf is one of the three pillars of overall military strategy, along with security assistance and combined exercises, all of which lead to all-important "access", which one can take as a euphemism for influence and control.<sup>{83}</sup>

After the war, the existence of a network of military-communication -systems "superbases" in Saudi Arabia was revealed. Ten years in the building by the United States, in maximum secrecy, its cost of almost \$200 billion paid for by the Saudis, its use during the Gulf War indispensable, it may explain why Bush moved so quickly to defend Saudi Arabia, albeit against a non-existent threat.<sup>{84}</sup>

### **"STOP ME BEFORE I KILL AGAIN!"**

Josef Stalin studied for the priesthood ... Adolf Hitler was a vegetarian and anti-smoking ... Herman Goering, while his Luftwaffe rained death upon Europe, kept a sign in his office that read: "He who tortures animals wounds the feelings of the German people." ... this fact Elie Wiesel called the greatest discovery of the war: that Adolf Eichmann was cultured, read deeply, played the violin ... Charles Manson was a staunch anti-vivisectionist ...

About Panama, as we have seen, after he ordered the bombing, George Bush said that his "heart goes out to the families who have died in Panama." And when he was asked, "Was it really worth it to send people to their death for this? To get Noriega?", he replied, "... every human life is precious, and yet I have to answer, yes, it has been worth it."

About Iraq, Bush said: "People say to me: 'How many lives? How many lives can you expend?' Each one is precious."<sup>{85}</sup> Just before ordering the start of the war against Iraq in January, Bush prayed, as tears ran down his cheeks. "I think," he later said, "that, like a lot of others who had positions of responsibility in sending someone else's kids to war, we realize that in prayer what mattered is how it might have seemed to God."<sup>{86}</sup>

God, one surmises, might have asked George Bush about the kids of Iraq. And the adults. And, in a testy, rather un-godlike manner, might have cracked: "So stop wasting

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all the precious lives already!”

Tanks pulling plows moved alongside trenches, firing into the Iraqi soldiers inside the trenches as the plows covered them with great mounds of sand. Thousands were buried, dead, wounded, or alive.<sup>{87}</sup>

US forces fired on Iraqi soldiers after the Iraqis had raised white flags of surrender. The navy commander who gave the order to fire was not punished.<sup>{88}</sup>

The bombing destroyed two operational nuclear reactors in Iraq. It was the first time ever that live reactors had been bombed, and may well have set a dangerous precedent. Hardly more than a month had passed since the United Nations, under whose mandate the United States was supposedly operating, had passed a resolution reaffirming its “prohibition of military attacks on nuclear facilities” in the Middle East.<sup>{89}</sup> Sundry chemical, including chemical-warfare, facilities and alleged biological-warfare plants, were also targets of American bombs. General Schwarzkopf then announced that they had been very careful in selecting the means of destruction of these as well as the nuclear facilities, and only “after a lot of advice from a lot of very, very prominent scientists,” and were “99.9 percent” certain that there was “no contamination”.<sup>{90}</sup> However, European scientists and environmentalists detected traces of chemical- weapons agents that the bombings had released; as well as chemical fallout and toxic vapors, also released by the air attacks, that were killing scores of civilians.<sup>{91}</sup>

The American government and media had a lot of fun with an obvious piece of Iraqi propaganda – the claim that a bombed biological warfare facility had actually been a baby food factory. But it turned out that the government of New Zealand and various business people from there had had intimate contact with the factory and categorically confirmed that it had indeed been a baby food factory.<sup>{92}</sup>

The United States also made wide use of advanced depleted uranium (DU) shells, rockets and missiles, leaving tons of radioactive and toxic rubble in Kuwait and Iraq. The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, in an April 1991 secret report, warned that “if DU gets in the food chain or water this will create potential health problems.” The uranium-238 used to make the weapons can cause cancer and genetic defects if inhaled. Uranium is also chemically toxic, like lead. Inhalation causes heavy metal poisoning or kidney or lung damage. Iraqi soldiers, pinned down in their bunkers during assaults, were almost certainly poisoned by radioactive dust clouds.<sup>{93}</sup>

The civilian population suffered in the extreme from the relentless bombing. Middle East Watch, the human-rights organization, has documented numerous instances of

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the bombing of apartment houses, crowded markets, bridges filled with pedestrians and civilian vehicles, and a busy central bus station, usually in broad daylight, without a government building or military target of any kind in sight, not even an anti-aircraft gun.<sup>{94}</sup>

On 12 February, the Pentagon announced that “Virtually everything militarily ... is either destroyed or combat ineffective.”<sup>{95}</sup> Yet the next day there was a deliberate bombardment of a civilian air raid shelter that took the lives of as many as 1,500 civilians, a great number of them women and children; this was followed by significant bombardment of various parts of Iraq on a daily basis for the remaining two weeks of the war, including what was reported for the 18th in *The Guardian* of London as “one of [the coalition’s] most ferocious attacks on the centre of Baghdad.”<sup>{96}</sup> What was the purpose of the bombing campaign after the 12th?

The United States said it thought that the shelter was for VIPs, which it had been at one time, and claimed that it was also being used as a military communications center, but neighborhood residents insisted that the constant aerial surveillance overhead had to observe the daily flow of women and children into the shelter.<sup>{97}</sup> Western reporters said they could find no signs of military use.<sup>{98}</sup>

An American journalist in Jordan who viewed unedited videotape footage of the disaster, which the American public never saw, wrote:

They showed scenes of incredible carnage. Nearly all the bodies were charred into blackness; in some cases the heat had been so great that entire limbs were burned off. ... Rescue workers collapsed in grief, dropping corpses; some rescuers vomited from the stench of the still-smoldering bodies.<sup>{99}</sup>

Said White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater after the bombing of the shelter: It was “a military target ... We don’t know why civilians were at this location, but we do know that Saddam Hussein does not share our value in the sanctity of life.”<sup>{100}</sup> Said George Bush, when criticized for the bombing campaign: “I am concerned about the suffering of innocents.”<sup>{101}</sup> The crippling of the electrical system multiplied geometrically the daily living horror of the people of Iraq. As a modern country, Iraq was reliant on electrical power for essential services such as water purification and distribution, sewage treatment, the operation of hospitals and medical laboratories, and agricultural production. Bomb damage, exacerbated by shortages attributable to the UN/US embargo, dropped electricity to three or four percent of its pre-war level; the water supply fell to five percent, oil production was negligible, the food distribution system was devastated, the sewage system collapsed, flooding houses with raw



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sewage, and gastroenteritis and extreme malnutrition were prevalent.<sup>{102}</sup> Two months after the war ended, a public health team from Harvard University visited health facilities in several Iraqi cities. Based on their research, the group projected, conservatively, that “at least 170,000 children under five years of age will die in the coming year from the delayed effects” of the destruction of electrical power, fuel and transportation; “a large increase in deaths among the rest of the population is also likely. The immediate cause of death in most cases will be water-borne infectious disease in combination with severe malnutrition.”<sup>{103}</sup> One member of both the Harvard group and a later research group which visited Iraq testified before Congress that “Children play in the raw sewage which is backed up in the streets ... Two world renowned child psychologists stated that the children in Iraq were ‘the most traumatized children of war ever described’.”<sup>{104}</sup>

Despite repeated statements by American authorities about taking the greatest of care to hit only military targets, using “smart bombs” and laser-guided bombs, and “surgical strikes”, we now know that this was little more than an exercise in propaganda, just as referring to this suffering as “collateral damage” was. After the war, the Pentagon admitted that non-military facilities had been extensively targeted for political reasons.<sup>{105}</sup>

Comprehensive post-World War II government studies had concluded that “the dread of disease and the hardships imposed by the lack of sanitary facilities were bound to have a demoralizing effect upon the civilian population”, and that there was a “reliable and striking” correlation between the disruption of public utilities and the willingness of the German population to accept unconditional surrender.<sup>{106}</sup>

In the Iraqi case there was a further motivation: to encourage desperate citizens to rise up and overthrow Saddam Hussein. Said a US Air Force planner:

Big picture, we wanted to let people know, “Get rid of this guy and we’ll be more than happy to assist in rebuilding. We’re not going to tolerate Saddam Hussein or his regime. Fix that, and we’ll fix your electricity.”<sup>{107}</sup>

Those who tried to escape the bombing horror in Iraq by fleeing to Jordan were subjected to air attacks on the highway between Baghdad and the Jordanian border – buses, taxis, and private cars were repeatedly assaulted, literally without mercy, by rockets, cluster bombs and machine guns; usually in broad daylight, the targets clearly civilian, with luggage piled on top, with no military vehicles or structures anywhere to be seen, surrounded by open desert, the attacking planes flying extremely close to the ground ... busloads of passengers incinerated, and when people left the vehicles and

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fled for their lives, planes often swooped down upon them firing away. ... “You’re killing us!” cried a Jordanian taxi driver to an American reporter.

“You’re shooting us everywhere we move! Whenever they see a car or truck, the planes dive out of the sky and chase us. They don’t care who we are or what we are. They just shoot.” His cry was repeated by hundreds of others. ... The US military, it appears, felt that any vehicle, including those filled with families, might be a cover for carrying military fuel or other war materiel, some perhaps related to Scud missiles; and even carrying civilian fuel was a violation of the embargo.<sup>{108}</sup>

At the very end, when the hungry, wounded, sick, exhausted, disoriented, demoralized, ragged, sometimes barefoot Iraqi army, which had scarcely shown any desire to fight, left Kuwait and headed toward Basra in southern Iraq, Saddam tried to salvage a pathetic scrap of dignity by announcing that his army was withdrawing because of “special circumstances”. But even this was too much for George Bush to grant. “Saddam’s most recent speech is an outrage,” declared the president, forcefully. “He is not withdrawing. His defeated forces are retreating. He is trying to claim victory in the midst of a rout.”

This could not be permitted. Thus it was that American air power in all its majesty swept down upon the road to Basra, bombing, rocketing, strafing everything that moved in the long column of Iraqi military and civilian vehicles, troops and refugees. The nice, god-fearing, wholesome American GIs, soon to be welcomed as heroes at home, had a ball ... “we toasted him” ... “we hit the jackpot” ... “a turkey shoot” ... “This morning was bumper-to-bumper. It was the road to Daytona Beach at spring break ... and spring break’s over.”

Again and again, as loudspeakers on the carrier Ranger blared Rossini’s “William Tell Overture”, the rousing theme song of the Lone Ranger, one strike force after another took off with their load of missiles and anti-tank and anti-personnel Rockeye cluster bombs, which explode into a deadly rain of armor-piercing bomblets; land-based B-52s joined in with 1000-pound bombs. ...

“It’s not going to take too many more days until there’s nothing left of them.” ... “shooting fish in a barrel” ... “basically just sitting ducks” ... “There’s just nothing like it. It’s the biggest Fourth of July show you’ve ever seen, and to see those tanks just ‘boom,’ and more stuff just keeps spewing out of them ... they just become white hot. It’s wonderful.”

The British daily, The Independent, although it supported the war, denounced the glee with which the Americans carried out the barrage, saying it “turned the stomachs”

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and was “sickening to witness a routed army being shot in the back”.<sup>{109}</sup>

A BBC Radio reporter summed up the attack by asking: “What threat could these pathetic remnants of Saddam Hussein’s beaten army have posed? Wasn’t it obvious that the people of the convoy would have given themselves up willingly without the application of such ferocious weaponry?”<sup>{110}</sup>

And all this against a foe that had for five days been calling for a cease-fire.

But heaven forbid that the Americans should offend any of the people of the Gulf. Thus it was that GIs were taught things like never to use their left hand when offering food or drink, for that hand is traditionally reserved for sanitary functions; and the proper way to beckon an Arab with one’s hand and fingers, so as not to confuse it with beckoning a dog.<sup>{111}</sup>

We also have the story of the American pilot who, during an earlier bombing operation, stuffed into his identification packet a \$20 bill and a note written in Arabic, Farsi, Turkish and English. It said: “I am an American and do not speak your language. I bear no malice toward your people.” Then he was off, roaring through the skies toward Iraq with his payload of bombs.<sup>{112}</sup>

Did the GIs bear any malice toward their female soldiers- in-arms? One post-war study found that more than half the women who served in the Gulf War felt that they had been sexually harassed verbally, while eight percent (almost 3,000) had been the objects of attempted or completed sexual assaults.<sup>{113}</sup>

And immediately after George Bush ordered the bombing to begin, his rating with the American people jumped for joy: an 82 percent approval rating, the highest ever in his two years in office, higher even than after his invasion of Panama.<sup>{114}</sup> One journalist later noted:

One minute of nightly truth on this “popular” war would have changed American public opinion. ... if for just 60 seconds the 6 o’clock Monday news had shown 5,000 Iraqi soldiers with hideous phosphorous burns that alter human anatomy followed by 60 seconds Tuesday night of the slaughter at the Baghdad bomb shelter ... What if on Wednesday Americans had seen 10,000 Iraqi soldiers incinerated by American high-tech weapons?<sup>{115}</sup>

Ever since the Iraqi invasion in August, and despite the many confusing soundbites and heavy rhetoric emanating from the White House, one thing seemed clear enough: if Iraq agreed to withdraw from Kuwait, military attacks against it would not take place, or would cease, whatever other punishment or sanctions might continue. Thus,

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it seemed like a ray of hope, however late, when the Soviet Union succeeded on 21-22 February 1991 in getting Iraq to agree to withdraw completely the day after a cease-fire of all military operations went into effect. The agreement came with specified timetables and monitoring.<sup>{116}</sup>

George Bush refused to offer a cease-fire, per se. He could not even bring himself to mention the word in his replies. All he would say was that the retreating Iraqi forces would not be attacked (which turned out to be untrue), and that the coalition “will exercise restraint.” Saddam could have chosen to take this as the cease-fire, but he was as proud and stubborn as George.

The point Bush emphasized the most during these two crucial days, as well as earlier, was that Iraq must comply with all 12 UN resolutions. In evaluating Bush’s legalistic demands, it should be kept in mind that the policy and practice of the American war had repeatedly violated the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter, the Hague Conventions, the Geneva Conventions, the Nuremberg Tribunal, the protocols of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the US Constitution, amongst other cherished documents.<sup>{117}</sup>

In the end, Bush gave Saddam 24 hours to begin withdrawing from Kuwait, period. When the time came and went, the United States launched the long-expected ground war, while the aerial attacks – including the carnage on the road to Basra – continued until the end of the month.

Said Vitaly Ignatenko, a spokesman for Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev: “It seems that President Gorbachev cares more about saving the lives of American soldiers than George Bush does.”<sup>{118}</sup>

In a postwar survey, a United Nations inspection team declared that the allied bombardment had had a “near apocalyptic impact” on Iraq and had transformed the country into a “pre-industrial age nation” which “had been until January a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society.”<sup>{119}</sup> It will never be known how many hundreds of thousands of Iraqis died from the direct and indirect effects of the war; the count is added to every day. With the United States refusing to end the embargo against Iraq, everything has continued: malnutrition, starvation, lack of medicines and vaccines, contaminated drinking water, human excrement piling up, typhoid, a near-epidemic of measles, several other diseases ... Iraq’s food supply had been 70 percent dependent on imports, now billions of dollars were frozen in overseas accounts, and with prohibitive restrictions on selling its oil ... an inability to rebuild because vital parts could not be imported, industry closing its doors, mass unemployment, transportation and communications broken down<sup>{120}</sup> ... By September 1994, with

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Washington still refusing to release its death grip on the embargo, the Iraqi government announced that since the sanctions had begun in August 1990 about 400,000 children had died of malnutrition and disease.<sup>{121}</sup>

After the war, when the Iraqi government was repressing a Kurdish revolt – which the US had encouraged, then failed to support – Bush said: “I feel frustrated any time innocent civilians are being slaughtered.”<sup>{122}</sup>

This was the second time the United States had led the Kurdish lambs to slaughter with a broken commitment. The United States had also encouraged the Shiite muslims in Iraq to rebel, then did not back them, presumably because Washington only wanted to drive Saddam up the wall some more, make him irrational enough to incite a coup against him; but Washington was not looking to foster a pro-Iranian regime and inspire muslim fundamentalists elsewhere in the Middle East.

American mental hospitals and prisons are home to many people who claim to have heard a voice telling them to kill certain people, people they'd never met before, people who'd never done them any harm, or threatened any harm.

American soldiers went to the Persian Gulf to kill the same kind of people after hearing a voice command them: the voice of George Herbert Walker Bush.

## **NOTES**

1. Los Angeles Times, 17 March 1991, p. 8.
2. Washington Post, 13 January 1990, p. 11; 8 February 1990.
3. Ibid., 12 February 1990, 16 June 1990, p. 6.
4. Los Angeles Times, 11 July 1990, p. 1.
5. The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1990 (Wilmington, Del. 1991)
6. a) Ramsey Clark, *The Fire This Time: U.S. War Crimes in the Gulf* (Thunder's Mouth Press, NY, 1992), pp. 12-13; this book is based largely on the findings of the Commission of Inquiry for the International War Crimes Tribunal, which gathered testimony from survivors and eyewitnesses.  
b) Ralph Schoenman, *Iraq and Kuwait: A History Suppressed*, pp. 1-11, a 21-page monograph published by Veritas Press, Santa Barbara, CA.

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- c) New York Times, 15 September 1976, p. 17; the incursion was resolved without war.
7. a) “Note from the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tariq Aziz, to the Secretary-General of the Arab League, July 15, 1990”, Appendix 1 of Pierre Salinger and Eric Laurent, *Secret Dossier: The Hidden Agenda Behind the Gulf War* (Penguin Books, New York 1991), pp. 223-234.
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- d) John K. Cooley, *Payback: America’s Long War in the Middle East* (Brassey’s [US], McLean, Va., 1991) pp. 183-6.
8. Murray Waas, “Who Lost Kuwait? How the Bush Administration Bungled its Way to War in the Gulf”, *The Village Voice* (New York), 22 January 1991, p. 35; New York Times, 23 September 1990.
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16. “Developments in the Middle East”, p. 14, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 31 July 1990.
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30. a) Major James Blackwell, US Army Ret., *Thunder in the Desert: The Strategy and Tactics of the Persian Gulf War* (Bantam Books, New York, 1991), pp. 85-6.  
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c) *AIR FORCE Magazine* (Arlington, Va.), March 1991, p. 82. d) *Newsweek*, 28 January 1991, p. 61.
31. *Los Angeles Times*, 5 August 1990, p. 1.
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34. *Financial Times* (London), 21 February 1991, p. 3.
35. Waas, p. 30.
36. *New York Times*, 31 May 1991.
37. Ibid., 2 August 1990, p. 1; *Washington Post*, 3 August 1990, p. 7; the Bush quotation is the Post summary of his remarks.
38. *New York Times*, 3 August 1990; *Los Angeles Times*, 3 August 1990, p. 1; *Washington Post*, 3 August 1990, p. 7.
39. *Los Angeles Times*, 4 August 1990, p. 20.
40. *Washington Post*, 10 August 1990, p. F1.
41. *New York Times*, 23 September 1990, IV, p. 21.
42. *Washington Post*, 25 November 1990, p. C4.
43. *Los Angeles Times*, 2 October 1990, p. 18. See *Washington Post*, 10 October 1990, p.

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5, and 18 October, p. 1, for some of the actual numbers and programs testifying to how Congress went out of its way not to rock the new war boat.

44. The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1989 (Wilmington, Del. 1990); ditto for 1990, published in 1991.

45. Reported in many places; see, e.g., Wall Street Journal, 14 January 1991, p. 14; Fortune magazine (New York), 11 February 1991, p. 46; Clark, pp. 153-6; Washington Post, 30 January 1991, p. A30 (IMF and World Bank); Daniel Pipes, "Is Damascus Ready for Peace?", Foreign Affairs magazine (New York), Fall 1991, pp. 41-2 (Syria); Los Angeles Times, 18 June 1992, p. 1 (Turkey); Elaine Sciolino, The Outlaw State: Saddam Hussein's Quest for Power and the Gulf Crisis (John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1991), pp. 237-9 (China, Russia).

46. Sciolino, pp. 237-8. Baker's exact words differ slightly in several of the sources reporting this incident; also, whether he said it out loud or not; the amount of aid lost by the Yemenis differs widely as well.

47. Los Angeles Times, 4 May 1991, p. 8.

48. The Guardian (London), 9 January 1991. 49. For an analysis of the Bush administration's method of negotiating, see John E. Mack and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, "Is This Any Way to Wage Peace?", Los Angeles Times, 31 January 1991, op. ed.; also see *ibid.*, 1 October 1990, p. 1, and 2 November 1990, p. 18.

50. New York Times, 9 August 1990, p. 15.

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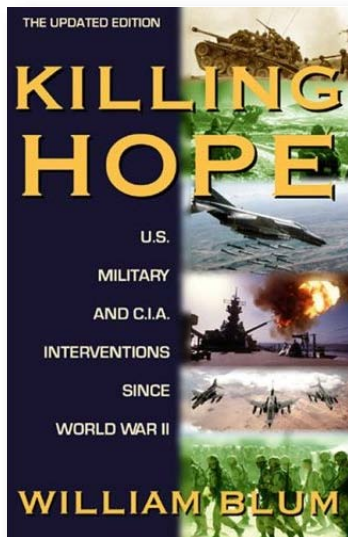
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