

# OPERATION DESERT STORM

JAN. 17-FEB. 27, 1991

## 43 DAYS OF WAR

### TIMELINE:

**Day 1:** Thursday Jan. 17, 1991: Desert Storm begins 3 a.m. Jan. 17 in Iraq (7 p.m. EST on Jan. 16) with massive air and missile attacks on targets in Iraq and Kuwait. In an address to the nation, U.S. President George H.W. Bush says, "We will not fail."



**Day 2:** Iraqi President Saddam Hussein declares: "The great showdown has begun! The mother of all battles is underway." A Scud fired at Saudi Arabia is downed by U.S. Patriot missile, the first anti-ballistic missile fired in combat.

**Day 4:** At least three Scuds explode in Tel Aviv, Israel. Israel vows to defend itself but refrains. United States rushes in Patriots, making Army crews the first U.S. soldiers to defend Israel.

**Day 6:** U.S. officials say despite more than 8,000 sorties have flown in five days, elusive mobile Scud missile launchers remain a threat.

**Day 7:** Iraq fires six Scud missiles at Saudi Arabia; one is destroyed by Patriot. Iraq sets fire to Kuwaiti oil well and tanks.



**Day 8:** President Bush urges Saddam Hussein be brought to "justice," suggesting removal of Iraqi president could be a goal.

**Day 11:** Massive oil spill grows, threatening Saudi Arabia's industrial and desalination plants and the gulf environment. More than 75,000 protesters march in Washington, D.C.

**Day 14:** In largest ground battle yet, battalion-size force of U.S. Marines (up to 800) fires artillery, mortars and missiles at Iraqi bunkers a half-mile away in Kuwait.

**Day 20:** Iran offers to mediate peace talks, resume official relations with United States.

**Day 25:** Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Joint Chiefs Chairman Colin Powell meet for more than eight hours with Desert Storm commander, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf and other military leaders.



**Day 26:** Saddam Hussein addresses his nation for first time since three days after war started, pledging victory and praising "steadfastness, faith and light in the chests of Iraqis."

**Day 28:** Allied forces open combined land-sea-air barrage against Iraqis in Kuwait — the largest battlefield action to date.

**Day 33:** President Bush says Iraq's takeover of Kuwait will end "very, very soon."

**Day 36:** U.S. helicopters destroy Iraqi bunker complex; up to 500 Iraqis taken prisoner. Schwarzkopf says Iraq's military is on "verge of collapse."

**Day 39:** Allies' ground offensive begins, President Bush tells nation, "The liberation of Kuwait has entered the final phase."

**Day 40:** Schwarzkopf hails first day of allied ground offensive as "dramatic success." More than 5,500 Iraqis captured.

**Day 41:** Baghdad Radio reports Saddam Hussein has ordered troops to withdraw from Kuwait.

**Day 42:** Saddam Hussein announces Iraqi occupation forces will withdraw completely.

**Day 43:** Kuwaiti troops raise emirate's flag in Kuwait City. President Bush declares suspension of offensive combat and lays out conditions for permanent cease-fire.



U.S. Army/Defense Visual Information Distribution Service

**Soldiers operate a small lightweight GPS receivers during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. The receivers, which facilitated GPS navigation in the open desert, along with other space-based capabilities such as missile warning, space-based imagery and satellite communications, played a major role in enabling the success of U.S. and coalition forces during 100 hours of sustained combat.**

## WORLD PUSHES BACK ON IRAQ

**IN** August 1990, Iraq, under President Saddam Hussein, invaded neighboring Kuwait following months of diplomacy between Iraq, the United States and other Mideast stakeholders. When Hussein did not abide by United Nations Security Council demands to withdraw, a United States-led coalition of dozens of countries initiated Operation Desert Shield, a relentless 43-day air and ground offensive.

On Nov. 29, 1990, the UN Security Council approved use of "all necessary means" of force against Iraq if it did not withdraw from Kuwait by mid-January, 1991. The initial response to Iraq's invasion was Operation Desert Shield, designed to protect neighboring Saudi Arabia from Iraq.

By January, the coalition forces prepared to go on the offensive against Iraq numbered 750,000, including 540,000 U.S. personnel and smaller forces from Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, Japan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among other nations.

On Jan. 17 — late on Jan. 16 in the United States — offensive action began under the Desert Storm umbrella. A U.S.-led air offensive hit Iraq's defenses, moving swiftly on to its communications networks, weapons plants and oil refineries. The coalition effort, known as Operation



President Bush greets troops in Saudi Arabia during his Thanksgiving visit on Nov. 22, 1990.

Desert Storm, benefited from some of the newest, modern military tools that became well-known at the time: Scud missiles, Stealth bombers, "smart bombs" with internal guidance systems and other infrared night-bombing capabilities.

From the start, under the direction of U.S. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, the objective was "to win the war in the air and minimize combat on the ground as much as possible."

In response to the initial attack in mid-January, Hussein launched missile attacks against Israel and coalition forces stationed within Saudi Arabia. By working diplomatic channels, U.S. officials kept Israel from

retaliating and when coalition forces began a ground campaign on Feb. 24, the end came quickly.

The ground war took about 100 hours, with coalition forces liberating Kuwait and surging into Iraq before halting their advances and declaring a ceasefire. The United States suffered 148 battlefield casualties throughout Desert Shield and Desert Storm, according to the Library of Congress.

"Saddam Hussein's rejection of diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis led to the final decision to restore Kuwait's sovereignty by military force," Naval History and Heritage Command wrote. "The ensuing air war and the effects of the economic embargo decimated Iraq's military infrastruc-

ture, severed communication and supply lines, smashed weapons arsenals, and destroyed morale."

According to the Army Center of Military History, American troops stayed in the region for more than two decades, first containing a resurgent Saddam Hussein and then dealing with his aftermath: "Equally important, the coalition partnerships cemented in that initial operation and in the regional peace-keeping operations that followed provided the basis for a growing series of multinational efforts that have characterized the post-Cold War environment."

— CNHI NEWS

## A NATION UNITED

### CNHI

**F**ar from the sands and oil fields of Iraq and Kuwait, one of the long-remembered moments from the Gulf War came ahead of Super Bowl XXV in Tampa Bay.

Ten days into the 43-day conflict — Jan. 27, 1991 — the world watched the NFL championship game between the New York Giants and the Buffalo Bills.

In front of nearly 74,000 fans and amid an incredible volume of security measures, pop star Whitney Houston delivered what is still considered by many to be the greatest rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner ever done.

"If you were there, you could feel the intensity," Houston, who died in 2012, said later. "We were in the Gulf War at the time. It was an intense time for our country. A lot of our daughters and sons were overseas fighting.

The moment continues to resonate. In 2000, VH1 listed her performance — of which the television audio was pre-recorded — as one the 100 Greatest Rock & Roll Moments on TV, along with the likes of the Beatles' performance on the Ed Sullivan Show and Elvis Presley's comeback special.

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Whitney Houston sings the national anthem before Super Bowl XXV on Jan. 27, 1991 in Tampa, Fla.

**"I could see the fear, the hope, the intensity, the prayers going up. It was hope, we needed hope, you know, to bring our babies home and that's what it was about for me."**

— Whitney Houston

## BY THE NUMBERS

The United States and 39 allied nations needed 43 days to end the conflict.



More than 690,000 U.S. troops were deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Storm in early 1991. According to the U.S. Department of War, 299 Americans lost their lives during the war.



The U.S. and its allies flew more than 116,000 combat air sorties and dropped 88,500 tons of bombs over a six-week period that preceded the ground campaign.



Operation Provide Comfort, the relief effort to help refugees, involved more than 21,000 U.S. personnel. The effort delivered: 4,416.6 tons of aid by ground transports and 12,683.2 tons in 3,901 air sorties, including 4.79 million prepackaged ration meals, 2,687.5 tons of bulk food, 200,711 gallons of water, 211,788 blankets and 23,500 tents.



The Associated Press  
U.S. forces medical evacuation team on exercise in Saudi Arabian Desert, Feb. 8, 1991, during Operation Desert Storm.

## NAMES TO KNOW

### U.S. President

#### George H.W. Bush

With a coalition of nation's in support, President Bush ordered the launch of Operation Desert Storm in the early morning hours of Jan. 17, 1991. "The world could wait no longer," he said in an address to the nation.



**Iraq President Saddam Hussein** In August 1990, Hussein's military invaded Kuwait, a major supplier of U.S. oil. The Iraqi military took over Kuwait in a matter of hours. The invasion led to a United Nations Security Council embargo and sanctions on Iraq.

**Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf** Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Forces in Operation Desert Shield and later

Desert Storm. His preliminary planning (Desert Shield) and execution of that plan (Desert Storm) are credited with bringing the ground assault to a close in four days.



U.S. Army  
A high-mobility multi-purpose vehicle drives in the Kuwaiti desert as oil fires burn.