

# **Douglas Kellner**

## **The Persian Gulf TV War**

### Chapter 3

#### **Bush Bombs Baghdad**

On the eve of the Gulf war, the public, the U.S. Congress, and the military and political establishment were deeply divided on the question of whether war or diplomacy was the best way to resolve the crisis in the Gulf. In congressional hearings, two former joint chiefs of staff and seven former secretaries of defense argued against the military option in Senate hearings; one of the most influential promilitary senators, Sam Nunn (D-Ga), had deep reservations about fighting a Persian Gulf war. Congress was also strongly divided in an emotional debate over what turned out to be a war resolution (see Figure 3.1). In addition, the citizens of the United States were split into those favoring or opposing a military solution to the crisis in the Gulf. A strong antiwar movement was already in place and was carrying out large peace demonstrations; in many parts of the country, antiwar strategies were set to begin if the war broke out (see Figure 3.2). But there were many who just as strongly supported a war to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait and to destroy his military machine. Debates took place in communities throughout the country and the United States was extremely tense and uneasy as the deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait passed.

Despite the intense division over a military solution to the crisis in the Gulf, the Bush administration was able to achieve strong backing for its war policy once the war started. Early polls pointed to overwhelming approval for the military adventure, and the Bush administration successfully promoted a propaganda line that all good Americans should support their troops, whatever their opinions on the war. Coverage of the war by the mainstream media, especially television, mobilized support behind Bush's decision to go to war; during the rest of the war the media would continue to be used by the Bush administration and Pentagon to manufacture consent to their war policies.

#### 3.1 TV War

Because the Persian Gulf war was perhaps the first war ever orchestrated for television, it was appropriate that it broke out during the prime-time television news.<sup>1</sup> On "ABC World News Tonight" at 6:32 p.m. EST,<sup>2</sup> Bill Redeker gave an early indication from eastern Saudi Arabia that something was up: There was an unusual amount of nighttime flight activity and he had counted about twenty fighter jets taking off. At 6:39 p.m., ABC's Gary Shepard from Baghdad reported live from his room in the Al-Raschid Hotel that:

throughout the entire sky there are flashes of light. It appears to be some sort of antiaircraft fire, a couple of flashes on the horizon now, something is definitely underway here, something is going on.

The whole sky lit, lit up with these flashes continually...occurring and now we can see an entire...an obvious tracers in the sky, planes, planes now coming toward this hotel and flashes. The

sound of flak and flares. Obviously an attack is underway of some sort. It appears that there is tracer fire coming up from the ground. An incredible panorama of flashes continuing as I speak....

We now see an entire stream of red tracer fire and now sirens, air raid sirens are beginning to sound over Baghdad. The lights of the city itself continue to burn on the ground, streetlights, houselights and as this occurs the flashes continue throughout the sky. There's obviously an air raid underway right now. The air raid sirens continuing. We see more tracer fire going up, huge flashes in the sky throughout the sky....

Sorts of antiaircraft fire now rising up from the ground going up into the sky in all directions. The tracers very obvious from here. You can hear the firing as well, explosions in the distance and the echoes of them. The tracers continuing now. The sky lighting up considerably from what it was like just a few minutes ago. And this is now continuing here. A huge, red tracers emerging from the horizon and going up into the night sky which is quite clear so we can see these tracers as they go up. Obvious antiaircraft fire from the ground being fired at whatever targets the Iraqis are aiming at. Once again it has now quieted down a little bit, but this is likely to be going on. Now, there's another a burst of tracers directly west of here going up into the very black and clear nighttime sky. One burst of tracers after another, huge. The sounds of thunderous explosions way off in the distance.

CNN reported live from Iraq at 6:35 p.m. that antiaircraft fire was lighting up the night sky over Baghdad where it was 3:35 a.m. in the morning. About the same time, "CBS Evening News" reported that their correspondent in Baghdad sighted flashes in the distance and Dan Rather added that there was also heavy air traffic around bases in Saudi Arabia where troops had been engaged in drills during the day. From Baghdad, CNN correspondents Bernard Shaw, John Holliman, and Peter Arnett began giving live accounts of the bombing of Baghdad around 6:50 p.m. EST. Holliman described antiaircraft fire lighting up the sky, but he saw no signs of bombing. Veteran Vietnam war correspondent Peter Arnett asserted: "There has been an attack. The antiaircraft fire began twenty minutes ago. There were loud explosions, obviously bombing. Perhaps near the airport, and a military barracks. The attack started at 2:30 Baghdad time. Perhaps they are seeking out Iraqi radar sites." The CNN reporters took turns looking out the window on two sides of the hotel and reported via telephone connections what they saw. Ironically, the TV war was employing what was basically telephone/radio technology to provide some of the most dramatic live reporting of the war.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the CNN "boys from Baghdad" were simply replicating the mode and style of journalism that Edward R. Murrow and others made famous during World War II, reporting live by radio during an actual bombardment.

The live CNN broadcast was highly dramatic and riveting.<sup>4</sup> Loud explosions interrupted their account of the bombing, and one could hear exclamations of "ooh" and "oow." Continuing his

report, Holliman said: "An airburst, the telecommunications center. Bombs are now hitting the center of the city. War has begun in Baghdad." According to the New York Times: "When there was a large explosion at 7 p.m., heard blasting through the phone line that a CNN reporter had left hanging out the window of his Baghdad hotel room, the President looked relieved to be back on the timetable he had approved. 'That's the way it was scheduled,' he nodded to others" (Jan. 17, 1991, p. A8). At that time, Bush turned to Fitzwater and told him to "go ahead and do it," referring to the press announcement that would ratify that the "liberation of Kuwait has begun." Bush's "thousand points of light," celebrated during his 1988 campaign, were indeed flashing over Iraq and would continue to do so for the next six weeks.

By 7:00 p.m. EST, other networks were also reporting that the war had started. ABC's Gary Shepard, on the telephone from Baghdad, reported that he heard a communications tower being blown up and saw "an incredible panorama of flashes" from his room at the al-Raschid Hotel on "a very black and clear night." Shortly thereafter, he stated: "Obviously, an air raid is under way right now." NBC's Tom Aspell, also reporting by telephone from Baghdad, exclaimed: "Red tracers! White tracers! It's going up all over the place!" The words were as dramatic as pictures and made evident that war with Iraq had erupted. Moments later communications were cut off in Baghdad and only CNN was able to provide live reports during the rest of the evening. Subsequently, when Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney was asked what was happening in Iraq, he replied, with a smile, that the best information which he had about Baghdad came from CNN—a sound-bite later used in CNN commercials. CNN's management had spent much time negotiating with the Iraqi government for the special four-wire telephone, which cost them \$16,000 per month and the investment paid off with first night's live scoops of the bombing of Baghdad.

By 7:30 p.m., CNN's John Holliman reported from Baghdad that the first waves of the attack had ended. "The sky is pitch black. There is a pallor of smoke over the whole city" produced by the "big explosions" earlier. Arnett summed up the attack at that point: "There were four or five waves of bombing. I think they were F-15Es. It has been deathly quiet for the last 15 or 20 minutes. It seems the first wave is over." Arnett concluded: "This was a surprise attack," explaining how reporters who had remained in Baghdad had not expected an attack so soon and that many of them, including Shaw, had planned to take a charter flight out of the city the next day. After the first day's bombing, the Iraqi government expelled almost all foreign journalists except Peter Arnett, and CNN soon managed to produce a live satellite TV feed that enabled Arnett to provide live telecasts from Baghdad throughout the war.

During the opening days of the war, CBS was the most cautious network in reporting the outbreak and progress of the war. At a time when other networks were reporting that U.S. planes were bombing Baghdad, CBS Pentagon correspondent David Martin noted that he did not believe that there were any U.S. aircraft currently over Baghdad. Instead, he suggested the reports might be describing Cruise missiles, which have a range of 1,200 miles. This would be a likely first strike weapon, Martin reasoned, because by using missiles you are not risking pilots' lives and you can target the missiles against sites that threaten U.S. air power. These missiles, however, only carry a small warhead, so more powerful weapons would be needed, such as aircraft that carry 2,000-pound bombs of the kind carried by F-117A Stealth fighters. The thrust of Martin's report, however, was that he thought that the beginning of a major air campaign was under way, using Cruise missiles to soften up Iraqi air defenses so that larger planes could then accelerate the bombing.

Throughout the evening, CBS anchor Dan Rather promised that his network would provide "steady, reliable reportage," and CBS military expert, former Air Force General Michael Dugan, warned that there is always disinformation at the start of the war and that some of the initial reports may be spurious (Dugan had been fired by Dick Cheney in mid-September when he leaked too many salient details of the planned U.S. air attack on Iraq to reporters; see 2.1). Rather agreed and the CBS reporting through the evening would be somewhat more skeptical of the official government version of the war than other networks, with Rather and some of his colleagues pointing out that the only sources of information so far were the Bush administration and Pentagon. But CBS also deployed a logo "Showdown in the Gulf" for its coverage, utilizing the codes of the Western, and employed the codes of entertainment for the entirety of the war.<sup>5</sup> In the two weeks previous to the January 15 deadline, CBS dramatized their newscasts as a "Countdown to Confrontation," ticking off the days one by one.

In fact, TV presented the Gulf War primarily as entertainment, complete with dramatic titles, graphics, and music. In Chapter 2, I discussed how TV utilized the codes of popular entertainment by personalizing the villain of the scenario, and presenting the conflict as that between good and evil. Throughout the war, the Bush administration continued to deploy this rhetoric and the media not only failed to criticize its applicability to the Gulf war, but employed the codes of popular culture which reinforce such rhetoric. In its presentation of the war, the TV networks used the codes of the war movie, Western, action/adventure, and miniseries to present the war as an exciting and dramatic conflict with exciting events, ups and downs, and threats and triumphs. The events themselves produced a happy ending and a restoration of order--though disorder would soon enough reappear (see 10.4). Thus the audience was positioned to watch the events as dramatic entertainment and to cheer for victory.

The CBS drama accelerated shortly after 7:00 p.m. when Bob Simon reported from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, that there was an air-raid siren on, and that Iraqi Scud missile attacks were expected. Simon opened up the mike to pick up the dramatic sound of the air-raid siren which Rather described as "the sound of war in Saudi Arabia." Immediately thereafter CBS lost its signal to Dhahran, and Rather explained that they did not know if there was an Iraqi air strike in Saudi Arabia, creating the specter that perhaps Saudi Arabia was under Iraqi air attack. Rather observed that there may be "retaliation" from Iraq's "so-called Scud missiles, the best that Iraq has." These missiles have a short range, he noted, but can reach targets in Saudi Arabia. "They are inaccurate, but ...," and Rather broke off his analysis by announcing that there were now air-raid sirens going off in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, its capital in the center of the country. Rather reiterated that it was not certain if Dhahran or Riyadh were under attack, as he played the sound of the blaring air-raid sirens.

These live moments were genuinely thrilling and constituted the most compelling TV drama of the Gulf war. It was not clear yet if Iraq did or did not possess the capacity for an air or missile attack on Saudi Arabia and the U.S. forces, so that the suspense was particularly acute this first evening. ABC correspondent Barrie Dunsmore reported in a chemical weapons protection suit from Riyadh that the air-raid sirens had gone off again and when Jennings gave him the option to put his gas mask on or to continue talking, Dunsmore chose the prudent response and the line went dead, accelerating the drama. In a sense, the network correspondents in Saudi Arabia, Baghdad, and Israel provided the most engaging moments of live drama, rather than the combat troops, who were rarely

seen. The correspondents under fire from Iraqi Scud attacks provided an illusion of audience participation in the drama of the war, and the fact that the TV personalities could actually be hit involved the audience in a new kind of live drama. The immediacy of the live broadcasts, I believe, helped mobilize public antipathy against the Iraqis, who were threatening the TV correspondents as well as the people of Saudi Arabia and Israel with the Scud attacks, which were a central aspect of TV coverage during the first weeks of the war (see Chapter 4).

The live reports were, at first, uncontrolled by the military censors, though each country quickly moved to control the flow of information and even cut off satellite communications when they did not like the live reports. Yet the moments of live drama produced a genuinely exciting situation where it was not certain what was happening, what would be the outcome, and what destruction might follow. At these moments, the discourse and images were not controlled by the Pentagon and the Bush administration, which struggled to manage the flow of information and images reaching the public through the media. On the whole, most experts would agree that the government carried out the most effective media management and control campaign in history, but the moments of live TV showed a situation out of control and provided real excitement and drama, capturing a large TV audience for the duration of the war.

The network anchors, correspondents, and experts, however, put their own spin on events and coded the drama of the war in ways that were sympathetic to the Bush administration and Pentagon. ABC's anchor Peter Jennings came through with the Freudian slip of the evening, announcing that "Operation Desert Cloud, I mean Storm, is now under way." Indeed, the mainstream media's function throughout the war was to provide a cloud of propaganda and disinformation over the brutal Desert Storm unleashed against the Iraqis. Throughout the war, ABC military correspondent Tony Cordesman praised the wonders of U.S. military technology and frightened the audience with his tales of Iraqi horror.<sup>6</sup> Cordesman and other military consultants told repeated tales of Iraqi chemical weapons, support of terrorism, and prowess on the battlefield. These tales of future terror, little of which actually materialized, helped scare the audience and position it against the Iraqis (see 6.1).

Tom Brokaw and his colleagues at the military-industrial network, NBC, provided steadily prowar and promilitary coverage, which no doubt pleased their corporate bosses at GE and RCA who were among the biggest defense contractors in the United States. Brokaw produced no memorable comments or insight, and as the hours moved on he became increasingly partisan. At one point, for instance, Brokaw and the NBC military adviser, General William Odum, chuckled about Saddam Hussein's merely having words and not weapons to hurl, and flashed triumphant smiles. The NBC correspondents and "experts" exposed their partisanship by constantly saying "our" and "we," obviously strongly identifying with the U.S. troops and war effort. Moreover, Brokaw soon discredited his news organization with his emotional and biased reporting of the major event of the second day of the Persian Gulf war, the Iraqi Scud missile attacks on Israel (see 4.4). In addition, NBC was the only network that totally submitted to the pool system, and media critics after the war agreed that it provided the most undistinguished coverage (see LaMay, et al. 1991, pp. 69-70).

NBC's military "expert," James Dunnigan, competed with Tony Cordesman of ABC in concocting Iraqi horror stories and radiated with glee as he described the ways that the U.S.-led coalition was destroying Iraq. With menacing, glowering eyes, Dunnigan's function seemed to be to

terrorize the public into submitting to the Bush administration's war policies by producing images of unspeakably horrible atrocities that would occur unless the Iraqis were soundly defeated. Indeed, as we shall see, all of the network military analysts were totally pro-Pentagon and for the Bush administration, serving more as propaganda instruments for the military than as dispassionate and objective analysts of events.

CBS's Dan Rather wavered between, at first, critical and skeptical reporting and then promilitary reporting. After it was clear the first night that a major attack was underway, Rather went into the sentimental mode that he would periodically assume, telling the audience with a lump in his throat that there are young American men on the planes, who might be dying, hyping up the drama and evoking sympathy for the military (though he never elicited any sympathy for dead Iraqis). Throughout the evening, Rather played the theme of Americans in peril and that the U.S. public should support the troops whether or not they agreed with Bush's policies or his handling of the Gulf crisis. Rather also played amateur war historian with references to Joshua, Alexander, and Caesar, to properly mythologize the war and elevate it to a higher stature than that of a slaughter of a Third World country by the most advanced technological military machine in history.

The live "real time" reporting made the TV coverage prey to wild rumors as well as carefully plotted disinformation. Early in the evening the first night, CBS's Rather breathlessly stated that an Associated Press (AP) reporter had just telephoned saying that "we are seeing activity within the hotel from Dhahran," suggesting a terrorist attack or some such danger, which turned out to be a mere rumor. Throughout the war, the networks reported almost anything that came over the wire services or that they received from their various sources in the theater of war.

The networks also dutifully and immediately reported whatever the Bush administration and Pentagon chose to tell them. When Marlin Fitzwater told reporters that President Bush would address the world in an hour and a half, the White House correspondents of all the major networks eagerly repeated the same PR line that the Bush administration fed them: that President Bush himself wrote the speech, after putting it through many drafts; that the president called major world and congressional leaders to tell them of his decision to begin the war; that when the war started, the president had been accompanied by John Sununu, his chief of staff, Vice-President Dan Quayle, and national security adviser Brent Scowcroft; and that President Bush was calm, expectant, and waiting for military reports. These reports extolled the President, making him a hero. The almost identical, straightforward transmission of White House reports, which would continue through the war, revealed the networks, especially the White House correspondents, to be mere transmission belts for the Bush administration, which controlled the discourse of the war by leaking information at key moments, which inevitably put the Bush administration "spin" on events.<sup>7</sup>

The networks also took the point of view of the military families, who they lavished with sympathy and attention. Dan Rather told how military people were pulling together in Norfolk, Virginia, and stated that it was important for military families to know how strongly people felt about U.S. troops abroad. However people may feel about the war policy, or about how President Bush has handled it, people feel great sympathy for the troops in peril, Rather pontificated, purporting to speak for the public itself. So, Rather continued, the military families should know how strongly everybody wants to bond with you and say "we're with you." Rather repeated this line over and over through the night and through the long days and nights to come, expressing a

combination of heartfelt emotion and an opportunistic attempt to bond the military and prowar audience to him and CBS.

Throughout the night, the other networks utilized similar clips of emotional scenes with military families. CNN's Tom Mintier was at a church service in Norfolk with a distraught and tearful navy wife, who made painfully clear how upset she was with the outbreak of the war. In San Diego, CNN's Robert Vito met with wives crying for their husbands; one tearful woman blamed everything on "this crazy man Saddam Hussein," failing to perceive that it was George Bush who started the bombing that triggered the war. She and another woman took the view that they just wanted to get the war over now so that their families could come home. As the military families got control of their emotions in the days to come, they dutifully reproduced whatever line the Pentagon fed them. But that night emotions were raw and one segment on CBS even showed a military wife attacking Bush for starting the war.<sup>8</sup>

CNN's Pentagon correspondent Wolf Blitzer indicated that the initial reports from the Central Command (Centcom) in Saudi Arabia were very positive. There were no reports that any U.S. planes were destroyed and the Pentagon was confident that the assault was going just fine. Blitzer was interrupted by a report from Charles Jaco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, who explained that the earlier air-raid sirens were a false alarm by the Saudi civil defense and that the electricity had then been cut off, explaining why the TV satellite feeds had gone dead. The Saudi military claimed, according to Jaco, that the U.S. and allied assault was massive and that no missiles had been sighted coming toward Saudi Arabia. Thus it appeared that Iraq had not yet responded militarily to the U.S.-led attack.

Returning to his upbeat assessment, Wolf Blitzer reported that the U.S. assault was moving along very smoothly. Initial targets in Iraq and Kuwait, he explained, were anything that could endanger U.S. aircraft. The United States had sent in its Wild Weasel and Raven aircraft to zap all communications in and around Iraq, making it difficult for the Iraqis to hit U.S. aircraft. So far everything had proceeded exactly according to the "game plan" that had been crafted "very, very carefully" over the last few months. As the days went by, we would hear much about this plan, one of the key features of technowar.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the evening, Blitzer was the most gullible conduit for Pentagon propaganda, as he eagerly conveyed every rumor and piece of disinformation as the revealed Word of Truth. During the opening night at least, CBS periodically warned against accepting all reports from the Pentagon at face value, but Blitzer simply reported whatever he was fed, and emerged by the end of the evening as the most compliant and naive Pentagon disinformation tool among the military reporters. A former reporter for the Jerusalem Post, Blitzer identified with the Pentagon completely and never raised the slightest doubt that what he told his audience was factual information, never pointing out how the Pentagon was attempting to manage a positive consensus for the war and military.

To provide the proper Pentagon spin on the evening's events, former Reagan Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger noted on CNN that the U.S. military had achieved "tactical surprise," as in Libya. Weinberger believed that the first wave of attacks was intended to draw radar and anti-aircraft fire, and that "defense suppression" was the primary goal. He speculated (or did the Pentagon brief the military "experts," telling them what to report?) that the second wave of planes

hit their targets, and that the targets had been specifically chosen. Weinberger was the first to put out the official Pentagon propaganda line that the U.S. military sought to avoid civilian damage and that it carefully selected targets and appropriate weapons to avoid harming civilians. Throughout the war, CNN and the other networks saturated their war coverage with guests and commentators who were former military or political officials who almost invariably put a pro-Pentagon, pro-Bush administration, prowar spin on events in their commentary. Thus, most TV commentators were really conduits for the Pentagon-Bush administration point of view and served to reinforce the view of events that the U.S. government promoted.

Weinberger he believed that the bombing of Baghdad would continue well into the morning hours and, confirming his analysis, CNN broke in live to let their reporters describe another wave of attacks on Iraq. From their hotel in Baghdad, Shaw and Holliman described skies lit up with antiaircraft fire, and the audience heard firing in the background. Helping U.S. defense analysts, they described a blast to the east side of their location and, out to the west, bright lights on the horizon. Throughout the evening, "the boys from Baghdad" provided explicit descriptions of where the bombs were landing, which would help inform the Pentagon and anger the Iraqis; CNN military analyst James Blackwell described the "boys" as "good scouts." John Holliman crawled to the window to let the audience hear the sounds of the bombing of Baghdad and the antiaircraft fire. Peter Arnett described three enormous explosions that shook the hotel, and he claimed that the bombing was continuing in "wave after wave." Providing helpful information for the Pentagon planners, he stated that the Iraqis had new antiaircraft defenses that were more impressive than before. Holliman, who presumably heard Weinberger claim that the United States was not aiming at civilians targets, helpfully repeated that civilian targets were not being hit. Yet it is difficult to know how he could have known this from his hotel room.

The first mention that there might have been some opposition to the war that night came when Charles Kuralt of CBS stated that President Bush was not leading a united country into war. Kuralt, CBS's avuncular "human interest" reporter, pointed out that 46 percent of the people in the latest New York Times poll urged President Bush not to begin the war. Accompanying video pictures showed a demonstration outside of the White House and arrests of demonstrators there. Kuralt predicted that the next day there would be protests all over the country and that the U.S. was a divided nation. Dan Rather kicked in saying that he didn't know when a country was ever fully united during a war going all the way back to prebiblical times, although perhaps World War II was the exception. Continuing in the pro-U.S. ideological mode that he would frequently employ, Rather said that "for a democratic people like ourselves, divisions are out in the open" (though CBS and the other media would do much to hide these divisions in the days to come and would, in fact, help mobilize public opinion in favor of the war). Kuralt noted that many relatives of the troops thought that the best thing to do would be to bring them home, perhaps revealing himself to be the covert peacenik in the CBS camp.

CBS's veteran war correspondent and venerable anchor, Walter Cronkite, was brought out of retirement to provide some "perspective" on the war. Cronkite made a plea for supporters of the war to tolerate dissent, arguing that those against the war were "also patriots" with deep convictions that should be respected. This point was well taken, but it quickly became apparent that Cronkite was out of place. Responding to early Iraqi reports that there was "wave after wave" of U.S. aircraft over Baghdad, Cronkite chuckled and with that famous gleam in his eye noted: "That's just typical

Iraqi, Arabic overstatement. We don't attack in 'waves and waves.'" Cronkite explained that U.S. planes fly solo, or in pairs, on their bombing missions to avoid heavy anti-aircraft fire or being attacked by enemy planes. But he didn't seem to get the message that this was not the kind of war that he was used to covering; rather it was a high-tech slaughter, a massacre, with U.S. planes flying in groups with impunity above Iraqi anti-aircraft systems, meeting no resistance from Iraq's hopelessly out-gunned air force and inadequate air defense systems.

CBS's Pentagon correspondent David Martin noted that reporters in the Pentagon had just been given a copy of a brief speech that General Schwarzkopf gave to the troops in Saudi Arabia. The general announced that he had launched Operation Desert Storm around 3:00 a.m. local time. It was "an offensive campaign that will enforce the United Nations resolutions that Iraq must cease its rape and pillage of its weaker neighbor and must withdraw its forces from Kuwait." Assuming a false unity and homogeneity, Schwarzkopf claimed: "The President, the Congress, the American people and, indeed, the world stand united in their support for your actions." In fact, almost half of Congress voted against Bush's war resolution, more than half of the American people were against the military option on the eve of war, and the world was likewise deeply divided on the issue of U.S. Gulf war policy. Throughout the war, Schwarzkopf purveyed lie after lie, seasoned with propaganda, and the compliant media rarely criticized a word that he uttered. It was as if Schwarzkopf believed that all he had to do was to proclaim something and it was true, and, pitifully, the media rarely contradicted him.

Schwarzkopf went on to tell his troops that they were "the most powerful force our country ... has ever assembled in a single theater." Schwarzkopf typically spoke the language of raw power, and the war as a whole would legitimate his brutal discourse. Trying further to boost his troops morale, Schwarzkopf intoned: "You have trained hard for this battle and you are ready. During my visits with you, I have seen in your eyes a fire of determination to get this job done quickly so that we can all return to the shores of our great nation." The general combined here an autocratic order to get ready and do your job with the pragmatic suggestion that the troops will not be able to leave until they defeat the Iraqis. He ordered his forces to be the "lightning and thunder of Desert Storm" and proclaimed: "Our cause is just!"--a debatable proposition at best. Binding together God, the troops, families, and homeland, Schwarzkopf concluded: "May God be with you, your loved ones at home, and our country." All the networks obligingly read Schwarzkopf's text, and his positive media coverage elevated the general to the status of a popular hero by the end of the war.<sup>10</sup>

At 9:00 p.m., President Bush was ready to give his speech in the Oval Office, and Dan Rather told the CBS audience that no decision that a president has to make is any harder than the decision to go to war. President Bush made it, Rather explained, in response to Iraq's invasion, occupation, and "rape" of Kuwait, and at this hour the full scope of U.S. air power was being directed at Iraq and Iraqi forces in Kuwait with the goal of driving them out of Kuwait. Rather utilized the privileged metaphor of "rape" that Schwarzkopf had also employed and that Bush was constantly using, thus positioning Iraqis as rapists deserving punishment--a metaphor also privileged during the crisis in the Gulf (see 2.1). The CBS anchor described the August Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as a "blitzkrieg" which coded the Iraqis as fascists and the "massive air strikes" against them as just retribution. Positioning himself as an omniscient Voice of Truth, Rather informed his audience: "The plan is for the air war to go as long as necessary and then to go to a ground war." In

effect, Rather was playing president, giving the essence of Bush's speech, making it simple for the simple minded to get Bush's message that the Iraqis were getting their due for their "blitzkrieg" and "rape" of Kuwait.

The relentless TV apparatus caught the last numbers of the countdown and on cue President George Bush began his speech, his thin lips pursed into a slight smile, and his face attempting to look determined and resolute. "Just two hours ago, allied air forces began an attack on military targets in Iraq and Kuwait. These attacks continue as I speak. Ground forces are not engaged." Employing emotional and loaded rhetoric, Bush noted: "This conflict started August 2nd when the dictator of Iraq invaded a small and helpless neighbor." Kuwait was "crushed...[and] brutalized... [in] a cruel war.... Tonight the battle has been joined." The implication was that Iraq already started the war and that Bush was merely "joining" it, a rather dubious assertion when, clearly, Bush had started the war himself with his bombing of Baghdad, joining Hussein's aggression with his own.

Framing his speech in the Big Lie which he had employed for months and continued to employ, Bush insisted that the military action was only taken after "months of constant and virtually endless diplomatic activity." He claimed that Arab leaders had pursued "an Arab solution--only to conclude that Saddam Hussein was unwilling to leave Kuwait." This claim was a double lie as Bush did everything possible to block all diplomatic solutions (see 1.2) and many Arab leaders still wanted to pursue a diplomatic solution, hoping, with the exception of a couple of the U.S. Arab allies, to avoid war altogether. Bush alluded to Secretary of State James Baker's "historic meeting in Geneva" where he was "totally rebuffed"--blaming the failure of diplomacy only on the Iraqis, even though the U.S. had never seriously pursued diplomatic negotiations. Bush never personally contacted Saddam Hussein and the U.S. turned down every single peace feeler and offer from the Iraqis, month after month. Hypocritically blaming the war on Saddam, Bush intoned that "[w]hile the world prayed for peace, Saddam prepared for war." Yet Bush had also relentlessly prepared for war and was now unleashing the results of this preparation against the Iraqis. The lies and hypocrisy that radiated through Bush's speech would mark his discourse throughout the war and would never be even slightly criticized by the spineless media commentators.

"Now the 28 countries with forces in the Gulf area," Bush continued, expanding his lie, "have exhausted all reasonable efforts to reach a peaceful solution, [and] have no choice but to drive Saddam Hussein from Kuwait by force. We will not fail." And so George Bush officially declared war against Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Revealing his true goals, he disclosed that "[w]e are determined to knock out Saddam Hussein's nuclear bomb potential. We will also destroy his chemical weapons facilities. Much of Saddam's artillery and tanks will be destroyed." Thus, Bush admitted that he was targeting Iraq's vast military arsenal and that the destruction of the Iraqi military was the goal of the effort. Later, many in the Bush administration and Pentagon would insist that they were merely attempting to drive Iraq out of Kuwait and to enforce the UN mandates. However, at the end of the war General Schwarzkopf confessed that the destruction of Saddam Hussein's military was the real goal of the operation (see 9.3).

Bush acknowledged General Schwarzkopf's report that the assault was going according to plan and that Saddam Hussein would be driven out of Kuwait and its "legitimate government" restored, following the UN resolutions. Bush announced that "Kuwait will once again be free," returning to the "family of free nations." Such rhetoric suggested that Kuwait was once "free"

despite the dissolving of its parliament and autocratic control of its public life by the al Sabah family. Bush insisted that he had to act now because the sanctions "showed no signs of accomplishing their objective." "While the world waited," Bush stated, employing the Hill and Knowlton/Free Kuwait propaganda line, "Saddam Hussein systematically raped, pillaged, and plundered" Kuwait, submitting its people to "unspeakable atrocities, and among those maimed and murdered, innocent children." In addition, Hussein continued to add to his chemical weapons arsenal and attempted to add nuclear weapons. As Saddam "dug in and moved massive forces into Kuwait," Bush argued, harm was being done to the economies of the Third World, the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe, and our own economy. Here Bush blamed the economic problems of rising oil prices solely on Iraq, whereas, arguably, his own failure to negotiate a diplomatic solution so as to return oil markets to normal was responsible for the world's economic woes.

After blaming the war solely on Saddam Hussein, Bush insisted that he had "no argument with the people of Iraq" and indeed prayed for their safety, hypocritically trying to atone for the fact that he had given the orders that would cause the deaths of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of Iraqis. In a phrase that he would later repeat and that would come to haunt him after the war, Bush indicated that he hoped the Iraqi people would dispose of their "dictator" and "rejoin the family of peace-loving nations"--suggesting to the Iraqi people that they ought to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Playing a patriotic note, Bush quoted Thomas Paine's famous line: "These are the times that try men's souls." The implication was that just as all true Americans joined the revolution against the British, so too would all good Americans unite behind George Bush and his bloody fight against the Iraqis.

Bush concluded by quoting four soldiers who articulated their reasons to fight, implying that the country should follow the lead of these wise warriors, support the troops, and pull behind the president and his policies. The next day it was reported that there had been a giant TV audience for Bush's speech, that 78.8 percent of the people in homes with televisions watched Bush's speech. Only in 1963, during the live telecast of President John Kennedy's funeral, was there a higher viewing level. Because people all over the world watched the speech, the event probably had the largest viewership in the history of television. TV thus emerged from the Gulf war as the producer of a global village which, when significant events occur, presents similar words and images to people all over the world.

Furthermore, it was clear during the Gulf war that television provides the president with a powerful tool with which to govern. Throughout the war, almost every single videotaped word of George Bush was broadcast live or immediately rushed to the air. Clips from his speeches and comments were broadcast repeatedly, so he had an unparalleled opportunity to shape the image and discourse of the war to the interests of his policies. White House correspondents dutifully reported whatever they were fed by the Bush administration, without any skepticism or criticism, and commentary after Bush's war declaration was invariably positive, serving to highlight Bush's main points and to amplify his positions.

After his speech, for instance, CBS's Leslie Stahl praised Bush for "conveying the air of calm determination." Bush's tennis and jogging partner, ABC's Brit Hume gushed: "Tonight President Bush had a vision, a long view of the world....as one who has heard virtually every word that he has spoken on this issue from August 2nd forward, it struck me that he did save his most organized and

most persuasive case for the night when he needed it most." This comment was blatant nonsense, for it was totally unclear what Bush's "vision" was, or even what he meant by his "New World Order." Assuming the pose of knowledgeable insider, NBC's Pentagon correspondent Fred Francis reported that the air attacks would continue for at least ten days before ground troops would be deployed. Francis explained that Iraqi radar had been knocked out, guaranteeing U.S. air superiority. Apparently, the critical faculties of the television commentators were also knocked out, providing the Pentagon with air superiority on the television channels as well.

CNN commentators indulged in similar banalities regarding Bush's war policies,<sup>11</sup> but the television apotheosis of Bush was mercifully interrupted with a report from CNN's State Department correspondent Ralph Begleiter, who reported that Saudi planes participated, along with British and American planes, and that the attacks were countrywide, hitting targets throughout Iraq. Providing some background, Begleiter claimed that Prince Bander of Saudi Arabia met with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker that morning, and Baker asked for the "green light" to start the war. Bander called King Fahd and got permission, thus providing the prearranged protocol that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia had agreed on to begin hostilities. Israel was also informed of the coming attack on Iraq.

Pentagon press spokesperson Pete Williams came on around 10:00 p.m. EST to introduce Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, who would make some brief remarks and would take a few questions. Cheney noted that he, at the direction of the president, had signed the order the previous day to execute the battle plan and that proper notice had been given to Congress. The focus of the operation, Cheney insisted, was to hit military targets, to minimize U.S. casualties, and to do everything possible to avoid injury to civilians in Kuwait and Iraq; obviously, the Pentagon's line was that they were conscientiously trying to avoid harming civilians, though in the light of the extensive damage to civilians and nonmilitary targets, this propaganda line would turn out to be sheer hypocrisy. The ultimate goal of the war, Cheney implied, was the destruction of Saddam Hussein's offensive military capabilities that enabled him to seize control of Kuwait and now to threaten U.S. and allied forces in the Gulf. Reverting to the party line, he claimed: "Our goal.. is to liberate Kuwait and enforce the resolutions of the UN Security Council." Cheney's own text, however, made it clear that there were two goals: to liberate Kuwait and to destroy Saddam Hussein's military; as we shall see, in the future, the Bush administration and Pentagon would not be as forthcoming concerning its goals as it was that night.

Cheney insisted on the need to limit the flow of information, and then claimed: "We had hoped to settle this peacefully" and that the decision to utilize forces was "agonizing." But, he added, assuming a more threatening posture, his nostrils flaring, "no one should doubt our ability and our resolve to carry out our mission and to achieve our objective." Repeating Schwarzkopf's declaration of confidence in the troops, Cheney bragged that the U.S. force consisted of the finest troops "ever sent in harm's way" and that they will carry out the president's orders as quickly and efficiently as possible "and at the lowest cost possible." The "lowest possible cost" was a code word for maximum destruction of Iraqis, though this would not be clear until later.

General Powell noted that so far there had been no Iraqi air resistance and both Powell and Cheney told reporters and the public that preliminary reports have been "very, very encouraging." The operation appeared to have gone "very, very well" and although there had been a number of

reports of Scud missile attacks, they had all been false. General Powell insisted that they had not been targeting Saddam Hussein, but were going after command and control of Iraqi armed forces and other military targets, such as air defense sites. Cheney claimed that they had attained a "fairly high degree of tactical surprise" and that they had already hit Iraqi chemical and nuclear facilities, though they could not assess the degree of damage at this point.

These military briefings, which would be a daily staple of the television war, were intended to produce an image of control and to manage the flow of information. Throughout the war, the TV frame would oscillate from control to out of control, from U.S. control and management of the war to uncontrollable chaos, produced by the unpredictable Iraqis. Just after the briefing, Dan Rather interrupted the summary of the briefing to provide a live report from David Green of CBS, who was on the phone in Khafji, in northern Saudi Arabia. He had witnessed an attack on a Saudi Arabia oil refinery and told Rather that the Saudi military left the town when the Iraqi artillery opened fire on the refinery, which they had hit about five times.

This report was the sole "scoop" of the night and the only piece of negative news to emerge. Interestingly, it had been uncovered by a CBS reporter who, breaking the rules of the pool system (2.2), had gone up to Khafji on his own to try to get some news from the front. Dan Rather complained that the Saudi Arabia troops who were supposed to be the "tripwire" in case of an Iraqi invasion had pulled out about an hour ago, leaving the town of Khafji, which was north on the road to Dhahran. Green then reported that another artillery round had just gone into the oil refinery, about three miles from him. Rather commented that the Iraqis had good artillery, Argentinean artillery, with good range, that was better than U.S. artillery. CBS's Bob Simon came on from Saudi Arabia and noted that it was predicted that the Iraqis would target U.S. lives, Arab oil, and Israel and that it appeared that "the beginning of that prophecy is coming true." But the primary mood of the evening, especially on the other networks, was upbeat, even euphoric.

### 3.2 Euphoria

Indeed, there was no negativity or uncertainty on CNN, where the reporting on the first day's results was steadily upbeat, thanks to Wolf Blitzer, CNN's Pentagon reporter, who took every Pentagon rumor and piece of disinformation and quickly relayed them to the public. Around 11:00 p.m., Blitzer came on to report a growing sense in the Pentagon that Iraqi Scud missile bases H2 and H3, in western Iraq, had been destroyed by U.S. fighter aircraft in the initial assault, thus saving Israel from possible Scud attacks. According to Blitzer, the United States informed Israel one hour before the start of the war that Israel should not participate. The Israelis agreed, and there was a growing sense that Iraqi threats to bomb them had not been realized, as there were no reports of any Iraqi retaliation (a bit premature as it would turn out).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the initial attack on Iraq was "a blowout." It was the "most massive, concentrated U.S., or any, air strike in history," certainly the most highly coordinated, using the most sophisticated high-tech weaponry. Furthermore, there was no Iraqi resistance and the Iraqis appeared to have been caught by surprise on the ground. As Dick Cheney and Colin Powell had said, Blitzer explained, there was "tactical surprise." Although the Iraqis had always boasted that they could deal with such an assault, Blitzer concluded triumphantly that they obviously did not know what the United States had in store for them.

Shortly thereafter, Blitzer came on the air again with additional euphoric news, reporting that

"high Pentagon officials" now claimed that the entire Iraqi air force was destroyed in the bombing assault and that the elite Republican Guard units, on the Iraq/Kuwaiti border, were "decimated" as well. Blitzer also remarked that he was told that with the decimation of much of the Republican Guard, "there is clearly a hope that the balance of Iraqi troops in Kuwait will surrender, bringing the war to an end." Thus, Blitzer was systematically purveying the view that the war was as good as over the first night.

Blitzer was joined a bit later in the evening by CNN's military expert James Blackwell, who presumably was to comment on Blitzer's euphoric revelations. Blackwell, a former military officer who was currently an analyst at a Washington military think tank, marveled at Blitzer's "remarkable descriptive terms." The total destruction of anyone's air force was quite impressive, Blackwell noted, as was the destruction of all of the Scud missile sites. But, he believed, perhaps the most impressive report was the decimation of the Republican Guard forces, "the center of gravity" of the Iraqi military. If all of this happened, Blackwell concluded, this war will be over soon. But Blackwell noted, "that's a mighty big if." Bringing some realism to the naive Blitzer, Blackwell pointed out that bomb damage assessment was needed before such conclusions could be drawn. Refusing to come down to earth, Blitzer asked Blackwell if the reports reflected U.S. overconfidence or if the United States and others overestimated Iraq's military capability? Blackwell believed that the U.S. had underestimated their own capability. Such a massive assault had never been done before, so they probably and prudently used "military conservatism."<sup>13</sup>

Blitzer insisted that his information was "from well-placed Pentagon officials," who had told him that U.S. air assaults over Iraq had now stopped. The pause, Blackwell explained, was to assess battlefield damage. Indeed, he warned, they may need to hit targets again because sometimes the targets are not completely destroyed. But if the destruction described by Blitzer had happened, Blackwell noted, it surpassed anything estimated in advance. If a big chunk of the Republican Guards was destroyed as well as most of the tanks that were dug in, Saddam Hussein had lost the ability to utilize his forces in Kuwait and had lost the ability to threaten his neighbors. The key to U.S. success, Blackwell claimed, was coordination, battle field management, information processing, assessment, and the skills of the fighters.

Blitzer again recapped his information from "well-placed officials in the Pentagon" who told him that U.S., British, and Saudi forces undertook a massive and highly successful air strike with no losses. Blitzer's euphoria was based on pure disinformation and signaled that the Persian Gulf war would be a media propaganda war with the TV networks serving for the most part as propaganda agents for the Pentagon and Bush administration.<sup>14</sup> Agence France Presse also published a report asserting that the U.S. Defense Department claimed that four hours after the first attack the allied forces had "almost totally" wiped out the Iraqi air force and the elite Republican Guards. The Pentagon was also claiming that in the first wave of bombing, 18,000 tons of explosives were dropped, which makes it "the heaviest bombing in history" (Luostarinen 1991, p. 10). The Finnish military expert Pekka Visuri, however, estimated later that the tonnage numbers were exaggerated tenfold and that the Pentagon reports were disinformation--as they indeed turned out to be. Luostarinen speculated that the purpose of the disinformation campaign

was to convince oil markets, the world stock exchanges, Israel and Western opinion of the success of the attack. The tactic worked

because on 18 January the news agencies were reporting, 'Oil prices underwent the greatest drop in history on Thursday... As the markets opened in Europe, the first news of the allied's successful attacks had spread around the world and this calmed the traders... The stock exchanges everywhere responded to the Gulf War with substantial rise in prices' (1991, p. 11).

Oded Balaban, however, speculated that perhaps the Pentagon officials who leaked disinformation were opponents of Bush's policy; they wanted to bring an end to the war and their message was that "the war has in fact finished" (pers. com., Jan. 13, 1992). Or it could be that the disinformation was leaked to intimidate, confuse, and demoralize the Iraqis by exaggerating their losses. On another level, the disinformation reports of a first-night "blowout" produced a picture of a technowar totally controlled by the U.S. military. Luostarinen points out that the very beginning of a war is especially important for the propagandists and that the Pentagon was especially eager to manipulate international news agencies and CNN the very first night of the war to shape the public's initial image of the action (1991, p. 11). Indeed, throughout the war the mainstream media were used by officials with specific agendas and many so-called "journalists" were nothing more than conduits for Pentagon and Bush administration propaganda.

David Martin, CBS's Pentagon reporter, by contrast, was somewhat more restrained. Martin reported around 11:00 p.m. EST that the briefing by Powell and Cheney had been short on specifics. The initial casualty reports were very positive, and apparently there were no reports on missing or destroyed airplanes, which was "to say the least, very encouraging" Apparently, no Iraqi airplanes succeeded in getting off the ground; there was no air-to-air combat. Iraqi response was limited to artillery shelling at Khafji and shooting surface-to-air missiles over Baghdad without radar guidance, and they apparently all missed. As to how successful the air attacks were, Martin insisted that the situation was "still up for grabs," which is why Cheney and Powell didn't make any assessments. They were waiting to view videotapes from the gun-cameras and to get satellite photo evidence. Martin, too, however, intimated that the United States had obviously hit the Scud missile sites very hard and perhaps all of the Scud missile sites were destroyed.

Soon after, Dan Rather of CBS summarized the evening's news by stating that there were no reports of any U.S. aircraft lost or even of any Iraqi airplanes getting off the ground. In the first hours of the war, the Iraqis had seemingly refused to fight, Rather noted, either because the allied attack was so overwhelming and they were caught off guard, or, perhaps, they were holding back. However, in the early stages of war, Rather warned, one has only a tiny amount of information. Not only is little known, but much of the information is not accurate. Throughout the evening, Rather would constantly warn about accepting early assessments at face value and insisted on being careful in assessing official government claims.<sup>15</sup> In a discussion with Rather, Walter Cronkite made light of the claims that the Iraqi Scud missile bases, Republican Guard, and air force were all "decimated," saying that if the term "decimated" was to be taken literally, this may have meant that the coalition planes had only destroyed one of every ten of the Iraqi "assets," which is a long way from the opening-night victory that was being claimed by some in the Pentagon and media. In fact, by the next day it was clear that Blitzer's euphoria was totally misguided and eventually it would take forty days of bombing to demolish what Blitzer and some Pentagon "sources" claimed was destroyed in the first night of the war.

ABC also tended to buy into the first-night euphoria, though with some qualifications. At 11:30 p.m., hosting ABC's "Nightline," Peter Jennings reported that the sun was up in Baghdad and the Iraqis were emerging to see what the U.S. and multinational forces had done to their country in the last several hours. ABC correspondent Forrest Sawyer in Saudi Arabia also tended to display the euphoria. He described the U.S. assault on Iraq as "a brilliantly coordinated attack" that has "struck apparently, the Scud missiles in western Iraq, which they were very concerned about striking Israel, seem to have been knocked out at this point." The strategy was called the "suppression of enemy defense tactics." The goal was to "knock out the eyes and ears" of the enemy by destroying Iraqi command-and-control facilities. The attack also tested Iraqi radar, jamming it and knocking it out. The initial assault was "a spectacular run for the allied forces" with no U.S. casualties " and with no reports of Iraqi planes challenging U.S. air forces. Furthermore, "there are at least some people who feel that a lot of that air force may have been knocked out on the ground."

ABC Pentagon correspondent Bob Zelnick later provided a very revealing analysis of what the United States was attempting to achieve in the Gulf war. Ted Koppel noted to Zelnick that the U.S. had been trying to convince Saddam Hussein that he truly does not understand the destructive capability of American weapons systems. Zelnick then described some of these systems. The Cruise missiles are weapons, he explained, that could be fired off in Boston Harbor and put through the goalpost of RFK stadium in Washington, D.C. These weapons had an enormously destructive capability because of their accuracy. This was a totally different situation than in Vietnam where "a bunch of guys wearing black pajamas, winding down the Ho Chi Minh trail with 30 days' supply of food in a sock or something, and ammunition that could ambush and pick off Marines or Army men at the time and place of their choosing." This was the "worst- case basis," since then the Pentagon has "been looking for something which could really demonstrate the fact that technology does count, that these things do matter, that the money that we've spent on these sophisticated systems is not in vain."

This analysis suggested that the United States desired a war to demonstrate their new high-tech weapons and that the Gulf war provided the perfect terrain for such a demonstration. The air force and those using the weapons, Zelnick said, were looking for a situation that demonstrated that their bombing was highly accurate and effective. In World War II, he said, bombs could hit targets within a radius of three thousand feet. Today, by contrast, the circle is five to ten feet; this makes the bombs thousands of times more destructive as they are that much more accurate. Zelnick's analysis also suggested that the Vietnam war was, in part, an attempt to test new weapons systems (Gibson 1986), and the flawed outcome of the war put in question high-tech weapons systems and the honor and prestige of the military. In order to regain this prestige, and the budget to keep developing their weapons systems, the military needed to demonstrate that their weapons worked and that a high-tech military was needed to defend the national interest and to regain the prestige lost in the jungles of Vietnam.

Later that night, while providing headlines of the day's events, CBS's Dan Rather reported on the seeming success of the first night's bombing raids but cautioned that this information consisted of "censored reports" from "official sources." This was one of the few qualifications that network correspondents made in describing their information from Pentagon and Bush

administration sources. Indeed, throughout the war, the media received their information from "official sources," which gave out a highly propagandistic and biased flow of information. Moreover, reports from U.S. government sources were literally censored, as the military required that all reporters on their pool assignments submit their words and images for government approval. The network correspondents in Washington were also getting censored information handed out by the government and for the most part were reproducing it without skepticism or qualifications, à la Wolf Blitzer. As we shall see, the official sources continued to lie throughout the war and the mainstream media tended to reproduce these spoon-fed words and images without the qualifications and skepticism that Rather and some of his colleagues exhibited the first night.

After twelve midnight, the networks began getting the pool footage that the Pentagon censors released via satellite; the networks, greedy for pictures, immediately played these images. Pool video was taken by crews in the pools (see 2.2) and subjected to U.S. government censorship, though it was rarely labeled as such. One segment, shown around 1:00 a.m. the first night, found a CNN reporter in Saudi Arabia describing the "sweet, beautiful sight" of bombers taking off. CBS demystified these highly aestheticized images when Bob Simon noted that the pictures were specifically chosen to produce the image of a neat, methodical, sleek, clean war, "beautiful planes taking off in the darkness for Iraq." These were precisely the images that the Pentagon wanted the public to have of this war, Simon noted, and it would be some time before we had any idea what they did when they got to Iraq.<sup>16</sup> Simon himself would soon risk his life to try to get uncensored pictures of the war with a CBS camera crew, which some days later was captured by Iraqis in Kuwait and held captive until the end of the war.

The general tenor of the reporting was upbeat the first night, with many predictions of a quick victory. Fred Francis of NBC reported that officials in the Pentagon were saying, "seven to ten days and it's over" while Tom Brokaw hoped for a "short and sweet war." To demonstrate the lunatic euphoria that was sweeping the nation, CBS treated its late-night audience to the genuinely fascinating spectacle of Representative Bob Dornan (R.-Calif.) telling Dan Rather that he had flown every "army asset" except the latest Stealth and that he believed that "by before sunset tomorrow," the war would be over. We had so dominated the skies and we used our "assets" so properly that the war will be over in less than two days, Dornan predicted. Moreover, we may never use our ground troops, Dornan asserted, suggesting that the war could be won by air power alone. The major difference from Vietnam, in Dornan's view, was that this time we used our assets properly to "destroy everything." Saddam is now down in his bunker like Hitler, Dornan snarled, adding, "This man is not a head of state"; he is in a separate category of criminal mass murderer like Idi Amin and Pol Pot and Stalin and Hitler. "And that's what's not getting across to those people out in the streets.... It's going to be over soon and a lot of people are going to have to make some apologies."

Rather tried to refocus the discussion in a less extreme direction, but Dornan wouldn't be controlled and exclaimed that he hoped that the media would go in and tell the story of how Saddam Hussein had "raped this small country and gutted his own country, killing 500,000 of his own people." Lacking any charity, Dornan wished that Saddam "dies in a rat hole.. [and that he] took the first bomb right here," Dornan hissed as he gestured wildly at his nose.

Positive images of public support began emerging late in the evening. On ABC, Ted Koppel revealed the results of an ABC News/Washington Post poll, taken in the immediate hours after the

war in the Gulf began, which showed "overwhelmingly strong support for the President's actions. Asked if they approve of the United States going to war with Iraq, 76 percent yes, they approved, while 22 percent said they disapproved. And asked if they thought the U.S. would win the war against Iraq, Americans by an 89 to one percent margin said they thought that the United States would be victorious." Thus Koppel concluded that "the President has what he needs: strong domestic support." To prove this, ABC then showed clips of support from the House and Senate with Tom Foley (D-Wa), Al D'Amato (R-NY), Alan Simpson (D-Wy), Donald Riegle (D-Mich), among others, indicating their support of the war. ABC correspondent Jim Wooten on Capital Hill reported that there were dissidents in Congress, "but they are few and far between." Ron Dellums (D-Calif) was "outraged" by the war, but "by and large, both sides" were "supportive of the President and backing the troops." NBC's John Chancellor spoke of the "American people's great support" for the bombing, which was "quite justified." In the days to come, the media indeed helped mobilize an impressive consensus of support for the Bush-Pentagon TV war.

### 3.3 Disinformation, Media Management, and Technowar

For the first forty-two hours of the Gulf War, all of the three major networks jettisoned their regular programming and broadcast continuous live coverage of the war, for the most part without commercial breaks. With so much time to fill, the networks scurried around for military and political "experts" to comment on the war and depended on their correspondents to provide instant perspective on complex events with inadequate information. In addition, the network prime-time news anchors spent long hours before the camera during the early days of the war, trying, with mixed success, to manage the confusing welter of information and disinformation and to provide what they euphemistically described as "perspective" and "context," the latter being precisely what TV rarely provides (see 2.4).

The news segments anchored by the TV morning show hosts were particularly painful. The "Big Three" network morning shows are characteristically happy talk programs, intended to make their audiences feel good and mobilize their energies for the day's work. The hosts are happy talkers, pleasant looking folks without any particular credentials or qualifications in journalism. Hence, once CBS's Dan Rather surrendered his role as anchor in the early morning hours of January 17, he was replaced by happy talkers Paula Zahn and Harry Smith of "CBS This Morning." A confused and slightly dazed Smith recounted that just as he tried to catch a little sleep, a spontaneous antiwar demonstration broke out in front of his apartment in New York City. Co-host and longtime CBS early morning pundit Charles Osgood gave some deliciously bourgeois perspectives on the war breaking out from his apolitical dinner guests, who were shocked that war would erupt and upset their dinner; in addition, his seven-year-old daughter wanted immediately to know who was winning and when the war would be over, as if it were a TV movie. Paula Zahn was inappropriately perky, providing peppy summaries of sound bites from the evening's CBS coverage with a rather too pleasant smile; her happy-talk demeanor had become a behavioral constant and she didn't seem aware of the gravity of the events she was reporting.

During the early hours of January 17, the CBS morning team repeated the same headlines endlessly, brought in correspondents who had no real new information to report, and gamely tried to make it through the long hours until more competent commentators and correspondents could be brought on board. They also reproduced instantly any rumor or report that would come down the

wire service, including much disinformation. The most interesting (dis)information of the first day of the war concerned some rumors, probably floated by the Kuwaitis, that the liberation of Kuwait City was beginning. CBS reported that French sources claimed that all Iraqi command posts in Kuwait had been destroyed, but Kuwait City was not hit. Shortly thereafter, reproducing some Kuwaiti disinformation, Steve Crofts said that the BBC had reported that Kuwait radio claimed that ground troops were moving toward Kuwait City and that Iraqi troops were surrendering; this report was played repeatedly through the night by CNN. In fact, the U.S. plan was to totally destroy the Iraqi military and infrastructure and they did not begin the liberation of Kuwait until forty days of merciless bombing of Iraq and Iraqi positions within Kuwait had occurred. Kuwaiti disinformation was already being disseminated and the networks were buying into it, as they would continue to do throughout the war.

In the early morning of January 17, ABC's Peter Jennings reported that over fifty Iraqi tanks had driven across the border and surrendered to the Saudis, and this too would turn out to be false. Throughout the day, Kuwaiti resistance sources insisted that there had been many Iraqi defections, although Saudi General Khalid bin Sultan denied the report. By contrast, Dan Rather was skeptical, noting in response to Bob Simon's report that Iraqi soldiers were knocking on doors and defecting in Kuwait, that sometimes these reports were false. "In our very best hour," Rather cautioned, "we can only get a smidgeon, a sliver of information" and "in the early stages most of the information turns out not to be correct," because we are operating under "military censorship."

There was little caution at CNN, however, which aired a call from Kuwait City from an "Ali Salem," who described the situation in the city, reporting bombings near an Iraqi military hospital, other bombing raids on Iraqi targets in Kuwait City, attacks by Kuwaitis against some Iraqi soldiers, and Iraqis defecting. "Mr. Salem's" English was perfect and he was totally calm, articulate, and well rehearsed, as if he were possibly a Kuwaiti propaganda plant. Both CNN and ABC featured these highly suspicious phone calls from Kuwait City throughout the war, which raised the question of whether they were dupes once again of Kuwaiti propaganda (see the further discussion in 10.1).

Obviously, the Kuwaiti propaganda mill was churning, and the gullible and compliant networks picked up every rumor and piece of disinformation, instantly turning it into "news." Throughout the war, almost everything that Kuwaiti "sources" disseminated was pure disinformation and pure propaganda. Yet the network anchors and correspondents continually gave credence to these reports and circulated them, making the networks dupes of a foreign government and propaganda agents for the Kuwaitis.

CBS also fed rumors of an impending ground war throughout the day of January 17. Their Saudi Arabia correspondent Scott Pelley took a two hundred mile tour to see how the ground units were doing. He saw these forces massing toward the Saudi/Kuwaiti border at sunset and observed an almost endless convoy of fuel trucks going toward Kuwait, signaling imminent movement there. Paula Zahn announced that the ground war to liberate Kuwait was about to begin immediately, that the U.S. commanders were putting soldiers and materiel in place for the ground offensive. Later in the afternoon, Jim Stewart, CBS's Pentagon correspondent, reported that U.S. forces were now very close to the Kuwaiti border and were moving forward in attack position, though they needed to bring up more big armored tanks. In regard to the claims that the ground war was about to begin, CBS military adviser General George Crist warned that the U.S.-led coalition needed to hit the Iraqi

ground troops with artillery and bombs for more than two nights and then assess the damage before a ground campaign could begin.

Obviously, the U.S. military was assembling its troops for a ground war, but it needed several more weeks to put everything in place. Thus, perhaps the military was suggesting to the media that ground war was imminent to throw the Iraqis off guard or to create the impression that the war was going to be over soon with a fast and easy victory. Or perhaps the media were drawing false conclusions on their own. Many members of Congress, the media, and the public were worried about getting stuck in another Vietnam quagmire and the euphoric reports of an easy victory were probably a Pentagon disinformation move to relieve such worries.

Reports of casualties did not drift in until late in the morning after the opening night bombing. The French were the first to report that four of their planes were hit and slightly damaged, but none went down; later, they said one pilot was slightly injured. The British reported that all of their planes had returned safely, though wire services claimed that one U.K. plane was shot down. Moreover, Baghdad radio claimed that Iraqi anti-aircraft units shot down fourteen allied planes, and the government ordered people to take POWs; they also claimed that the U.S. had bombed civilian neighborhoods. Harry Smith explained that "we absolutely have to expect that the Iraqis will use their radio for propaganda, yet we feel the obligation to report what we hear." Smith did not seem aware that the Pentagon, Bush administration, and Kuwaitis were using U.S. media for propaganda and would continue to do so throughout the war, thanks to willing accomplices like Harry Smith.

The other interesting material from the first day of war concerned the pool footage that gave the world the first pictures of the faces and words of the U.S. flight crews who were involved in the bombing of Baghdad. One of the first clips involved pool footage from a pilot who—sounding like John Holliman on CNN—reported that the bombing of Baghdad looked like Fourth of July fireworks, with the sky "lighting up like a Christmas tree." These reports tended to aestheticize war, turning the high-tech war into an aesthetic spectacle. It also elevated the pilots who carried out the successful bombing runs into mythical heroes, without questioning the effects of their bombing on the Iraqi people. The younger warriors were especially excited; one exclaimed: "We launched out and we were pumped. We had a lot of good adrenalin going." Another said that they had the "same adrenalin that a young hunter has after his first hunt or a young athlete has after his first game." It was "good to have one under my belt, that's behind us now."

Another pilot related how they initially watched the groundfire come up and "we said, 'hey it's neat,' but it's aimed at me... You're just so high, on adrenalin, but you can't get overconfident." He described the anti-aircraft fire as "exactly like the movies," and noted that the anti-aircraft fire and the air bursts below were "exciting." Also interpreting their experience in the aesthetic mode, a young flyboy told of the "flickering lights when triple-a [i.e., anti-aircraft artillery] comes up," which then "looks like Christmas lights" when the bombs explode. "It's awesome," he concluded. This coding of the air war as an exciting war movie points to the complicity between technowar culture and Hollywood movies. Indeed Hollywood films like Top Gun, the top grossing film of 1986, produced extremely positive images of air warrior heroes, while films like Iron Eagle I and II created Arab enemies who were destroyed by U.S. airpower. Films like Star Wars used Hollywood special effects to produce libidinal pleasure at the destruction of evil enemies, charges of pleasure that these airmen evidently felt up on returning from their initial bombing runs.<sup>17</sup>

A pool picture aired later on January 17 showed the support personnel chanting "woof! woof! woof!" as the U.S. planes came back triumphantly, and one pilot said: "It was an ugly high." Another cocky airman returned swaggering and bragging: "Been a very fortunate fellow. Led a really swell life. The Lord blessed me with a good woman and made me an American fighting pilot. God bless America." Assuming the Pentagon propaganda mode, another pilot justified the Gulf war by stating: "We've waited as long as we can. We hope that the American public supports the President.... We want to do a good job and get it over as soon as possible."

The first officially sanctioned military information came during the military briefings, which would become a daily feature of the Gulf war. At the first briefing at Riyadh, the United States announced that so far they had carried out over 750 "sorties" (i.e., air assaults over the Iraqi/Kuwaiti "theater of war"). The briefing described the astonishing array of weapons used--Cruise missiles, F-18s, B52s, F-111s, Apache helicopters, and so on--which were deployed in two waves of strikes that hit 159 Iraqi targets. The military affirmed that there was no ground combat. The possibility that Iraq had dispersed its air fleet to sixty air bases around the country, with hardened shelters, was discussed, putting in question the previous night's claim that the entire Iraqi air force was destroyed.<sup>18</sup> Although the U.S. military still asserted that they had destroyed all the fixed Scud-missile launchers, they admitted that Iraq might still have mobile missile launchers, which made doubtful the claim that Iraq's Scud missile capacity had been destroyed.

CBS's military correspondent Jim Stewart said that the fact that Apache helicopters, which are primarily short-range "tank killers," were used suggested that there had been a probing of Iraqi troops inside of Kuwait. Yet Stewart did not raise the question of whether or not the Iraqi Republican Guard troops were "decimated," as was claimed the previous evening. Stewart repeated the report that Iraq had moved its chemical weapons into Kuwait and noted that "some people think that this precipitated the attack"--an obvious piece of disinformation, as Bush and the Pentagon had plenty of other reasons for beginning the Persian Gulf war, reasons that were never discussed by the mainstream media. In fact, chemical weapons were never used during the war nor were they found in the Kuwaiti theater of operations after the war.

At around 8:00 a.m. EST Dick Cheney and Colin Powell arrived for another briefing. Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams announced that Cheney would open with some brief remarks and a couple of questions but had to leave shortly for a White House meeting. Cheney confirmed that to date the operation was going very well but emphasized the importance of being cautious in comments on the war. He especially cautioned "our friends in the press corps" to avoid euphoria and to be aware that "we are in the early stages of an operation that will run for a considerable period of time." There would be casualties and everyone should "be careful about claiming victory or making assumptions about the ultimate cost of this operation in terms of casualties."

This message would be the message of the day from the Bush administration and Pentagon. The administration followed the strategy of the Reagan administration (see Kellner 1990) by putting out one message per day that would be circulated to the media through all government agencies and spokespeople, ranging from top officials to middle- and low-level bureaucrats, who were supposed to give out the same message to the press when they encountered them. The previous night the message was that things were going extremely well, but the Bush administration then concluded that

there was an excess of euphoria, which could raise unrealistic expectations for a quick and clean victory. Thus, the White House and Pentagon throughout the day tried to dampen this euphoria and to get people to accept the necessity of a longer and more painful war than the initial commentary suggested. Indeed, the goal was to destroy the Iraqi military and industrial capacity and this would take many days of bombing that the public would have to tolerate.

Yet Cheney and Powell's report was generally upbeat. Cheney noted that the allies had fired over 100 Tomahawk Cruise missiles and flown over 1,000 sorties, with only one U.S. and one U.K. aircraft lost. The military was assessing the bomb damage, Cheney said and then decisions would be made about restriking certain targets. Such retargeting he explained, was a normal part of the operation which would continue until Saddam Hussein was out of Kuwait and the UN resolutions were implemented. In a question-and-answer session, Cheney and Powell confirmed that there had been no Iraqi Scud launches and that, so far, all activities were part of an "air phase," though ground forces may be introduced as part of the plan. The early stage of the air portion of the campaign could run "for some period of time" and the allies would maintain the campaign as long as necessary to carry out their objectives. The United States rejected the notion of a bombing pause to commence negotiations, and the only Iraqi action so far had been hitting an oil refinery with artillery that had been quickly "silenced." The Pentagon was pleased that they had achieved "tactical surprise," but did not rule out the possibility of Iraqi action on the ground or in the air. They claimed that 80 percent of their sorties were "effective," which meant that percentage of planes went to their target, dropped bombs and fired missiles, and returned. The U.S. assessment of damage to Iraqi command-and-control and other units indicated that the coalition had been effective in attacking air fields and Scud missile sites, though Powell admitted that there might have been mobile missile sites that they missed. The targets also included the Iraqi elite Republican Guards forces, though there was no bomb damage assessment of strikes on this target (putting in question CNN's Blitzer's claim the previous night that the Republican Guard had been "decimated"). Finally, Powell pointed out that a tremendous number of planes from the U.S., U.K., Saudi and Kuwaiti air forces were used, as were Cruise missiles that were deployed against a variety of targets needing precise hits.

Powell claimed that their success was made possible by an "extremely detailed, well thought out plan," through which Generals Charles Horner and Schwarzkopf coordinated the multinational forces under a single commander. Powell stressed that they would carry out a "comprehensive campaign with air, land, and sea components [that] would unfold over a period of time." In the following days Powell, Cheney, Schwarzkopf, and others repeatedly referred to their "plan," which was obviously the linchpin of a complex technowar. Exposing the technocratic mentality undergirding the project, Powell explained that they plan "to use all of the tools in the toolbox that we've brought."

Technowar thus involves a coordinated plan, tools, and their application. The technowar in the Gulf was integrated and comprehensive, under a single commander. The failure of U.S. military operations undertaken to rescue the hostages in Teheran in 1980 and many problems with the Grenada invasion, as well as other U.S. operations in the previous decade, were attributed to lack of successful coordination between the services. This time the military was resolved to have a more integrated leadership. The emphasis on a "single commander" was also intended to signal that General Schwarzkopf was in charge, making clear that this was a U.S.-led operation.

Technowar was developed in Vietnam as a strategy for deploying new high-tech weapons systems and bringing managerial science to the practice of warfare (see Gibson 1986). It thus combines science, technology, and comprehensive planning to control the battlefield and to destroy the enemy. It was impossible, however, to control the battlefield in the jungle terrain of Vietnam, against well-organized and armed peasants and soldiers, and the U.S. military suffered a humiliating defeat by a Third War guerilla army. Consequently, the military was desperately in need of a war that would give it the opportunity to demonstrate that its expensive weapons systems work, that would legitimate the expense involved, and that would justify production of more high-tech weapons systems. The Gulf war, we shall see, was the perfect war for this endeavor (see 9.5).

At bottom, however, technowar involves the use of high-tech weapons and coordinated planning to maximize the killing of the enemy and minimize casualties on one's own side. The technowar in the Persian Gulf also involved a sophisticated program of media management to organize consensus in favor of the war. The result was the most carefully managed flow of information and brilliantly packaged disinformation in the history of modern warfare. The initial strategy of the war managers was to present an image of a war that was clean, precise, and effective. At the briefing described above, General Powell insisted that they had been very sensitive to collateral damage in the Baghdad area and joked that the best source of how careful they had been were the CNN reporters who reported precise hits with no visible destruction of surrounding areas. He claimed that the military was very sensitive to civilian damage and to religious and cultural sites in the area, stressing repeatedly that they were employing precision bombing, a theme that would become the leitmotif of technowar in the days to come. The images of precision, coordination, effectiveness, and cleanness of the war were replayed day after day, until images of the suffering and devastation put in question this technocratic ideology (this topic will be elaborated in Chapters 4-7).

The network commentary after Powell's speech reflected U.S. chauvinism and military pride in the technowar. CBS military correspondent George Crist, a former Marine general, said that at least five nations were in the air, flying thousands of sorties "and its all being put together under one commander, the American leader, General Schwarzkopf." Crist then praised the "incredible command and control apparatus," which was keeping everything together. Turning somber, Crist categorically stated that "there will be a ground portion of this" campaign. He noted that the "talk of an air portion" presupposed a ground portion, and, indeed, Powell had stressed that the plan involved a single operation containing an air campaign, a ground campaign, and an amphibious one. Later this coordinated campaign would be referred to as AirLand war (see Chapters 8-9).

### 3.4 Surrender

And so the Bush administration and the Pentagon wanted to present an image of total control and a positive, optimistic view of the military campaign. However, as noted, they were concerned to puncture premature euphoria and to prepare the nation for the fighting and dying ahead. The other message of the day was that Saddam Hussein should not expect any mercy or deals. The Bush administration and Pentagon had already made clear that there would be no bombing pause that could lead to a diplomatic solution. Around 1:50 p.m. on January 17, CBS's White House correspondent Leslie Stahl came on after a Marlin Fitzwater briefing to the press with the news that the United States had called on Saddam Hussein to surrender; Fitzwater, however, refused to define "surrender." This ultimatum heated up the rhetoric and would make a diplomatic settlement all the

more difficult, as obviously Saddam Hussein was not going to surrender. Stahl reported that Senator Bob Dole also used the word "surrender" in talking to reporters about the meeting with Bush and the Congress. Indeed, the White House soon released the footage from this meeting where a haggard and testy George Bush said that he "didn't want to get into semantics," but insisted that "we are going to prevail" and that "he'll have to get out of Kuwait" and there will be "no concessions, no conditions." He blustered that "we're using force and we are not going to stop until he moves out of Kuwait," resulting in "full compliance with the UN resolutions."

ABC's White House correspondent Brit Hume explained that the demand to surrender was to preclude a maneuver by Saddam Hussein to call for a cease-fire or partially withdraw from Kuwait, which "in the eyes of the administration would be the worst thing possible."<sup>19</sup> The call for caution and lower expectations came, Hume explained, because public support would have a lot to do with what the public expects; if the public expects a quick victory and then the war drags on, the war would lose support. On the January 17 "CBS Evening News," Leslie Stahl interpreted Bush's call on Saddam Hussein to surrender as a message designed to prohibit Iraq from making a "partial move" that might call for diplomatic initiatives. Moreover, ABC reported that day that the talk around the UN was that the United States wanted "capitulation" from Iraq--that nothing less would do.

In effect, then, the Bush administration sent out a tough message that it would accept no solution to the crisis except Iraqi defeat and surrender, making clear that Bush intended to carry out his threat to destroy the Iraqi military capacity. None of the network pundits that I observed picked up on the significance of Bush's call to surrender or criticized his intransigence and total refusal to even contemplate a diplomatic solution, a posture that he would assume throughout the war when various peace initiatives were floated. The cumulative White House message of the day, therefore, was that the country should prepare itself for an extended and bloody war that would not end until Iraq was soundly defeated.

### Notes

1. The Libyan bombing, approved by Ronald Reagan in 1986, had been planned to take place during the prime-time news, and one suspects that George Bush and his advisers followed their Republican predecessors in paying as much attention to media strategy as to the political and military dimensions of the event.

2. Throughout this book, I shall use eastern standard time (EST) as the temporal measure because the major U.S. TV networks originate in this time zone and frequently put the eastern standard time on the video that I have analyzed.

3. CNN had negotiated with the Iraqis to allow them to use a "four-wire" telephone "on a military communications network which ran in hardened gulleys to the Jordanian border" (Simpson 1991, p. 282). Thus, when regular telephone service and electricity went out, CNN had its own communications system that it used to transmit live broadcasts from Iraq. Later, CNN was able to negotiate bringing in a satellite TV transmitter and generator and provided live TV pictures from Baghdad, to the anger of their media competitors and those who argued

that CNN was transmitting Iraqi propaganda. Officials from ABC even claimed that CNN was allowing the Iraqis to use the satellite phone for political purposes, a charge that CNN strenuously denied (New York Times, January 21, 1991, p. B1). It was reported that Iraq monitored CNN twenty-four hours a day and that Saddam Hussein was an avid CNN viewer.

4. According to the Nielsen ratings service, CNN's overnight rating from twenty-five major cities jumped 271 percent Tuesday evening, the night before the war broke out, compared with the same night a week before (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 17, 1991, p. A6). The CNN audience the first night of the Gulf war was by far its largest in history. During the prime-time hours, CNN had a 19.1 rating among households with cable television. This was fairly astonishing because of the three major networks ABC had a 19.5 audience share in the overnight ratings, NBC had a 15.1 share, and CBS had an 11.3 share. Each rating point represents 931,000 homes, and CNN usually averages less than one rating point nationally during the prime-time hours (New York Times, Jan. 18, 1991, p. A13). CNN's moment of glory had arrived; for a lively but uncritical version of the CNN story, see Whittemore 1990, and for background on how the war played out in the CNN studios in Atlanta, see Smith 1991.

5. Curiously, ABC also employed the same "Showdown in the Gulf" slogan the opening night, but would soon change its logo to "The Gulf War." CBS would continue to utilize Western motifs, especially hyping the drama of the High Noon showdown on the eve of the ground war (see 8.2), while ABC played it more like a war movie. NBC logged the event as "America at War" and played up the nationalist elements and the triumphs of U.S. military technology, which its parent companies GE and RCA happened to produce.

6. Cordesman was a former Pentagon employee and aide to right-wing Senator John McCain (R-Ariz), both of whom are strong supporters of the U.S. military. Proving decisively that he was an apologist for the military-industrial complex, the day after the Gulf war was over, Cordesman published an Op-Ed piece in the New York Times arguing against any cuts for defense spending (Feb. 28, 1991).

7. The term "spin control" appeared during the Reagan years and referred to how the White House put its own "spin" on events, making negative events appear positive and positive events brilliant. More and more, the mainstream media seemed vulnerable to manipulation by White House spin control. Indeed, the format of the White House correspondents largely reporting and amplifying administration positions render the television networks little more than public relations organizations for their political masters.

8. One would rarely see military families attacking the Bush administration or the war thereafter. The Pentagon made it clear that such remarks would ruin the careers of those whose family members spoke out, and the U.S. military took to coaching military families who appeared on talk shows, even writing their scripts, as was painfully obvious in some cases as nervous spouses turned to read prepared statements. Just before the war broke out, a touring group of military spouses appeared at an antiwar rally in Austin, Texas, that I

attended and told how their civil rights were being violated by the military, which was attempting to repressively control antiwar speech. The same thing happened to soldiers in the Gulf who were not allowed to articulate antiwar sentiments or to criticize the Bush administration or military (see 2.2). Thus members of the military and their families lost their freedom of speech during the Gulf war and those members of the military who resisted the war—the true heroes of this sordid episode--were subject to harsh treatment and trials (see 10.5).

9. The term "technowar" is taken from William Gibson's (1986) book The Perfect War. Technowar in Vietnam, which described the organization of military strategy according to a highly rationalized mode of warfare. The Gulf war constituted a higher stage of technowar in which computerized plans deployed high-tech weapons for daily U.S. military action. My analysis is deeply influenced by Gibson's superb study, the best single book to be written on the mode of warfare employed in Vietnam, but I shall suggest later that the Gulf war, and not Vietnam, was the "perfect war" to test and demonstrate the efficacy of high-tech electronic warfare (9.5). Indeed, Vietnam turned out in retrospect to have been a flawed laboratory to test the Pentagon's new weapon systems. Yet, as with Gibson's analysis of the Vietnam war, the Gulf war, too, was motivated by the administration's desire to try out new weapons systems and to utilize U.S. military power to maintain U.S. economic and political hegemony.

10. Schwarzkopf ripped off General Bernard Montgomery's call to battle in World War II in these remarks; see Cohen and Gatti 1991, pp. 260ff. During the Vietnam war, Schwarzkopf had been responsible for the deaths of many of his troops because of his zealous and often incompetent pursuit of enemy death counts; see Anderson and van Atta 1991, pp. 28ff, and Cohen and Gatti 1991, pp. 106ff. During the Grenada invasion, Schwarzkopf was part of a team that bungled incredibly a simple operation against a powerless and defenseless "enemy"; see Chapter 5, Note 1.

11. Richard Nixon complained vociferously about "instant analysis" after his speeches in which the network correspondents often made critical comments. By the time Bush had become president, the norm was merely to summarize what the leader had said in a totally uncritical and usually positive and supportive tone. Hence, TV commentary moved from critical discourse to becoming public relations instruments of the White House.

12. Interestingly, shortly before on ABC, Peter Jennings reported that: "an Israeli diplomatic source ... told ABC News just a short while ago that all the Iraqi Scud missile sites that are within range of Israel have been destroyed or put out of action in some form. That all known -- this is quoting the Israelis now -- that all known Iraqi atomic and chemical weapon plants have been destroyed," Obviously, certain Israeli "sources" had an agenda in leaking this disinformation to the U.S. media and I analyze this issue in the next chapter.

13. Blackwell later wrote (1991, pp. 133-134) that Blitzer "was fairly new to his beat" and that "some of his sources betrayed him." Accordingly to Blackwell, Blitzer had found a "highly placed source" who told him that the Iraqi Air Force and Republican Guards had been

"decimated" and that all Scud launcher sites had been destroyed during the first night's bombing, with all of the sites capable of launching Scuds at Israel obliterated. Blackwell claimed that he pleaded with Blitzer not to use the term "decimated," yet, as we see from their CNN exchange, Blackwell did not sharply contradict Blitzer, so his later disclaimer at Blitzer's expense is disingenuous and dishonest.

14. On a Feb. 2 CNN special on the media and the war, Blitzer claimed mendaciously that the first night of the war he had qualified his reports by claiming that "these are initial, sketchy reports" and that he had claimed that "large chunks" of the Republican Guards were being decimated. Although he may have said this sometime in the evening, I have on tape three times when he said, without this qualification, that Pentagon officials were claiming that the Scud missile sites were knocked out, that the Republican Guard was decimated, and that the Iraqi Air Force was destroyed, all totally specious claims.

15. CBS generally got the worst reviews and ratings for the first day's coverage, however. The Washington Post TV critic Tom Shales complained that CBS was "sketchier" than other networks and "just didn't have enough reportage" (Jan. 17, p. C6). This is simply false, for, in fact, no network had much solid information the first night of the war. In retrospect, CBS presented the most accurate and reliable reportage, as well as breaking one of the few scoops in the night in reporting the bombing of the Khafji oil refinery. The January 28 Time magazine story on TV coverage of the war generally praised the networks' performance, with the exception of CBS: "Only CBS, led by the unnerving and overly cautious Rather (with his constant admonitions: 'Let me underline for you what we don't know...'), seemed creaky and slow on its feet" (p. 20). Yet Rather should be praised rather than condemned for his caution, and CNN should be criticized for its Pentagon disinformation. Interestingly, the Time analysis does not mention the most significant event of the first night: the extent to which several networks, especially Blitzer and CNN, transmitted the Pentagon propaganda concerning its opening night knockout of the Iraqi forces; nor does Smith (1991) mention the Blitzer episode in his history of CNN at war.

16. Bernard Shaw of CNN also criticized his enthusiastic and inexperienced colleague John Holliman, who raved about the "beautiful red and orange" bombs exploding and "beautiful tracer fire" aimed at the U.S. planes. Shaw, however, admonished him, "You keep using that word 'beautiful'--it's not beautiful to me."

17. On how Hollywood films transcode militarist ideology, see Kellner and Ryan (1988) and on how Top Gun and a series of Middle East action/adventure films helped prepare the audience for the Persian Gulf war and the apotheosis of military culture, see Kellner (forthcoming).

18. Later in the day, Pentagon sources would intimate that 50 to 80 percent of the Iraqi Air Force was destroyed, and a French source would claim that 50 percent was taken out. Later, it would be revealed that only a small percentage of the Iraqi Air Force was destroyed during the opening night bombing, highlighting the lies and disinformation that the U.S.-led

coalition spoon-fed reporters.

19. Throughout the war, any Iraqi or other peace initiatives were "the worst thing possible" and the Bush administration "nightmare scenario" was the possibility of an Iraqi unilateral withdrawal from Kuwait. The mainstream media never commented on peace initiatives as "the worst thing possible" and ending a war as a "nightmare scenario." Such language, however, revealed the Bush administration's lust for all-out war and a decisive military victory that would destroy and humiliate Iraq.