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The Persian Gulf TV War

Chapter 9

Endgame

And so the Bush administration rejected any diplomatic conclusion to the Gulf war, and the AirLand war began hours after the deadline. As the ground war began, the TV networks revealed that during the visit of Colin Powell and Dick Cheney to Saudi Arabia on the weekend of February 9 a decision had been made that 8:00 p.m. February 23 would be the "go date." Consequently, during the time of the Soviet/Iraqi peace negotiations, Bush decided that if he was to carry out the Pentagon's plan, he would have to set an ultimatum for noon Saturday, so as not to postpone the ground offensive. Schwarzkopf therefore had the go-ahead in his hand, and the White House and the Pentagon were just waiting for the deadline to pass in order to begin the AirLand war. Thus, the Soviet and Iraqi peace initiatives were just a sideshow that the war planners sabotaged by delivering an ultimatum that it would be impossible for the Iraqis to accept.

9.1 The Destruction of Iraq

By noon on February 24, twenty-four hours after Bush's deadline and sixteen hours into the ground war, it was obvious that the U.S. strategy was not just to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait, but to annihilate Saddam Hussein's military. This was clear from pronouncements from the Bush administration war team who spoke on the Sunday morning talk shows and from listening carefully to the military experts as well as looking at the maps of U.S. troop movements into southern Iraq aimed at cutting off the Republican Guards. Indeed, the allied offensive made no sense whatsoever as a plan to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait, though it could be seen as a comprehensive plan to cut off and destroy Iraq's military. The French offensive in western Iraq, the U.S. envelopment of the Republican Guard, and the British forces advance toward the Euphrates River in a bid to cut off Iraqi forces in Kuwait from Baghdad, as well as the establishment of a large refueling and supply base in western Iraq, all seemed aimed at cutting off and destroying the Republican Guard rather than facilitating the liberation of Kuwait.

Thus, everything that the Bush administration said about the liberation of Kuwait was camouflage, an ideological veil, for the final phase in the destruction of the Iraqi army. The Bush administration did not seem to care if Kuwait burned or bled and never supported democracy in the country anyway. The "liberation" of Kuwait was a mere excuse for the destruction of the infrastructure of Iraq and the Iraqi military, especially the Republican Guard. The U.S. rejection of Iraq's February 15 offer to leave Kuwait, of the Soviet proposal of February 22, and of Gorbachev's proposal to let the UN mediate between the Soviet and U.S. peace proposals on the eve of the ground war made it clear that the U.S. did not seek a diplomatic settlement, or merely the departure of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, but a decisive military victory and the destruction of the Iraqi military. Those in the Congress and the media pundits, as well as U.S. allies, who believed that the Gulf war was about the liberation of Kuwait were duped and taken in by U.S. rhetoric that stated over and over that they were "only" aiming at the liberation of Kuwait, that they were enforcing UN resolutions, and thus were pursuing limited goals when actually they had a much more ambitious program in mind. It seemed that for the U.S. government only a goal so significant as the

destruction of Iraqi power and the establishment of George Bush and the U.S. military as the superpowers of the world would justify such an enormous undertaking. Merely pushing Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait could hardly justify such an overwhelming marshaling of resources, expense, and the risks involved in carrying through an all-out war.

The goal of destroying Iraq and its military power explains why the bombing campaign was so long, why Iraq's economic and communications infrastructure was destroyed, why much in Iraq was reduced to rubble, and why the ground war was the necessary culmination of the massacre. If the goal had been merely to push the Iraqis out of Kuwait, this could have been easily achieved diplomatically, or much earlier with military force. If the goal had been merely the liberation of Kuwait, all of the coalition's firepower could have been aimed at Kuwait City and Iraqi troop formations within Kuwait. Had the liberation of Kuwait been the goal, the incredible concentration of coalition military power could have also been aimed at liberating oil wells and other economic sites within Kuwait. In fact, the liberation of Kuwait with military force could have been accomplished weeks earlier and presumably have saved Kuwait much property and many lives, and perhaps have avoided the environmental catastrophe from the burning Kuwaiti oil wells. But, no, this was not what the Gulf war was all about and, as we shall see, George Bush and his team were perfectly willing to sacrifice Kuwait to achieve their goals.

Thus, the stakes were much higher than the Bush administration and media let on. Destroying the Iraqi military would be harder to achieve and more risky than simply to liberate Kuwait, which, after twenty-four hours of the ground campaign, was looking relatively easy. The elite of the British, French, and U.S. coalition forces had embarked on a dangerous mission within Iraq itself, in desert country without a water supply, full of dangerous diseases, and possible environmental contamination from the destruction of its nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons facilities. The season of monsoon rains and sandstorms was approaching and the coalition forces could have been overpowered by the unpredictable forces of nature, impervious to the control of the war managers. There were also thousands of Republican Guards and other hostile forces who could harm the coalition troops as they rushed to cut off the Iraqi military from escape to northern Iraq and as they prepared to draw them out to fight and annihilate them. Obviously, the plan was to use U.S.-led coalition troops as a bait to draw out the Republican Guards so that coalition air and ground power could exterminate them. But it remained to be seen whether the Republican Guards were paper tigers, whether they had been destroyed beyond the point where they could mount an effective offensive, inflict heavy casualties on the coalition forces, or even defend themselves.

Neither the escalation of the war goals nor the risks involved in invading and occupying Iraq were discussed in the mainstream media. The coalition propaganda apparatus was well organized, and one observed throughout the day of February 24 a significant mobilization of world public opinion behind Bush's unilateral decision to launch a ground war. The British prime minister, John Major, taped a message affirming the need to enter the ground war phase, and Queen Elizabeth made the first royal speech in favor of war since World War II. As we have seen, the stakes were much higher than the befogged publics were aware, and an all-out propaganda offensive was orchestrated by the White House. France's President Mitterrand chimed in with some banalities about how the ground war was inevitable, and at least some of the Arab allies--the Saudis, Kuwaitis, and the Turks--came out in favor of the ground war. It was striking that the coalition forces all said more or less the same thing, repeating the propaganda line of the White House.

I analyzed earlier how the White House propaganda apparatus mobilized the U.S. government, its domestic friends, and coalition forces to support the propaganda line of the day (Chapter 5). The goal now was to mobilize the entire alliance behind the ground war. The mainstream media, especially television, served this purpose with hardly any voices questioning Bush's escalation of the war. The ground war began and Congress, the media, and much of the public simply accepted and even welcomed it. The only discordant voices which appeared in the mainstream media were the muted Soviet objections to the ground campaign. Although the Soviets were probably extremely angry at Bush's rejection of Gorbachev's peace plan, they bit their tongues, put on a good face, and muttered banalities about the need to maintain good superpower relations.¹ The only criticisms of the ground war came from Iraq's allies--Yemen, Cuba, and Jordan--, positioning any opponent of the ground war as pro-Iraqi. One would see few, if any, media images of antiwar demonstrations or hear any voices of dissent from this position until the end of the war, though there were, in fact, many demonstrations and dissenters in the United States and elsewhere. The media pulled behind the Bush administration and Pentagon and faithfully advanced their war policies until the end, compliant servants of power.

The dominant theme was the propaganda of an easy ground war and quick victory for the allied forces--propaganda that accurately portrayed the outcome. The notion of a quick victory was mobilized by the discourse of the application of sudden and massive air, land, and sea power which would overwhelm the Iraqis. The networks had prepared this concept by talking of the greatest mobilization of military force in history. The rhetoric of the overwhelming military firepower assembled was supported by their early claims about "remarkable successes," "amazingly low casualties," and "meeting little Iraqi resistance." In retrospect, it was fairly certain that this would be the case, as the Iraqi forces within Kuwait were either destroyed or totally demoralized after weeks of bombing. Thus, it was reasonably certain that the U.S. war managers could justifiably assure the public of rapid success in the opening phase of the ground war.

The image of an easy AirLand war victory was bolstered by pictures of a blitzkrieg across the Kuwaiti border and a triumphant march toward Kuwait City with little or no resistance. There were numerous video reports of coalition forces racing across the border uncontested. There were frequent images of Iraqi POW's surrendering, including a striking picture of what looked like hundreds of Iraqi prisoners marching single file across the desert with their hands over their heads. Images of an Iraqi prisoner kissing an Egyptian soldier before collapsing were shown repeatedly, as were pictures of a group of surrendering Iraqis kissing the hands of their U.S. captors and breaking into tears. The administration/media line was that Iraqi troop morale was totally destroyed and that victory would be easy--a discourse that turned out to be true this time.

But, in a sense, the images of the blitzkrieg into Kuwait made it appear too easy and could have raised the question as to whether the entire ground war was a propaganda set-up, a cake walk carefully orchestrated and hyped by the U.S. war managers and their media allies. In retrospect, the media greatly exaggerated what forces the coalition troops would face as they crossed the Kuwaiti border. Repeatedly, TV viewers saw graphics, sketches, and computer simulations that portrayed the sand fortifications (berms), mines, barbed wire, ditches of burning oil, tanks, and well-armed Iraqi troops armed with powerful armor, artillery, and chemical weapons. For months, military "experts" had pontificated about the "battle-hardened Iraqi army" and their "elite Republican Guards." What one saw, by contrast, in the

first video footage of the allied invasion of Kuwait, was an almost empty desert with Iraqi fox holes and primitive bunkers, scattered mines, a few ditches with oil, and some abandoned rusty Iraqi tanks and vehicles.

In interpreting the significance of the initial pictures of great numbers of Iraqi prisoners, reportedly thousands in the first two days, commentators indicated that the frontline Iraqi troops were cannon fodder: conscripts, who were poorly trained, unmotivated, and miserable after months in the harsh desert. They were poorly fed, though they did not appear to be starving, and had been subject to weeks of bombing and torment. It was certain that thousands of these Iraqi conscripts would surrender and it turned out that many of them were Shiite and Kurdish troops hardly eager to fight for the Hussein regime. General Schwarzkopf and his crew must have known this, as they had total air supremacy and could fly over this region at will with their reconnaissance flights. The coalition troops had also already taken thousands of prisoners, or deserters, who had no doubt given them information on the pathetic state of the Iraqi troops in Kuwait. Moreover, Schwarzkopf and his war team must have known that these surrenders would create positive images of a quick allied victory.

Reports had emerged by the third week of the war that more than a quarter of the positions in Iraq's regular army in Kuwait were deserted and that an estimated one-fourth to one-third of the troops in Iraq's regular army in Kuwait had either defected, been taken prisoner, killed, or simply fled their positions (The Los Angeles Times, Feb. 7, 1991). Many of these conscript troops returned to the cities from which they were drafted, or went into hiding. But these reports referred only to the regular Iraqi army in Kuwait and not to the Republican Guards or the Iraqi troops who were currently fighting the U.S.-led invaders in their own country. Would they, too, be such push-overs? And Kuwait City itself? Would the Iraqis abandon it without a fight? What would be the fate of the coalition forces in occupied Iraq and how and when would the liberation of Kuwait be achieved? These were the questions that would be raised and answered during the next days.

9.2 Desert Slaughter

After the early morning news reports of February 24, there was no more significant news the rest of the day. The information cap was so tight that even the evening news programs had little new to report. Obviously, the opening day's incursion into Kuwait went extremely well, but it was not yet clear how the allied troops were faring in southern Iraq. For the next several days, the U.S. military tightly controlled the flow of news from this field of operations, so as to conceal the magnitude of the slaughter of Iraqi forces.

On February 25, Day 40 in the Persian Gulf war, CNN depicted Marlin Fitzwater saying that White House officials were suffering "the anxiety that comes with war." One imagined that the coalition soldiers, spending the night in an unfamiliar and dangerous desert environment were also feeling some anxiety, as were their loved ones on the home front. CNN reported that Kuwaiti troops were celebrating their independence day in Kuwait and hoping for the liberation of their country that day. Saudi radio reported that Arab troops and U.S. Marines were on the edge of Kuwait City. Images showed the relentless U.S.-led coalition advance with troops moving across the border, clearing mines, and inexorably moving toward Kuwait City. There were images of long lines of Iraqi prisoners of war marching through the desert, hungry, in poor physical shape and dejected. Fourteen thousand Iraqi soldiers had reportedly been taken prisoner and no chemical weapons had been used. Allied petroleum and supply lines were

having trouble keeping up with the allied tanks because the advance was so fast. The report once again was upbeat.

In the first live Pentagon report of the day, CNN's Gene Randall recounted that the news blackout was still in force, but a briefing would be coming up in the morning. Randall noted that there was the prospect of heavy fighting ahead, as it had long been thought that the Republican Guards would put up fierce resistance. The Iraqis had fired a Silkwood missile at U.S. ships but missed (later, the British claimed that their antimissile forces destroyed it). In a report a bit later in the morning, Randall noted that the Republican Guard was moving out and that this may be "the defining moment of the war" with a major battle ahead. He indicated that one incident could bring significant casualties and warned against premature euphoria.

CNN's correspondent Greg LaMotte reported from Saudi Arabia that Saddam Hussein had launched three Scud attacks on the desert kingdom, but the Scuds did not seem to be working--they exploded in the air and caused no damage. In a report by Jeremy Thompson from ITN, it was evident how easy it had been for the coalition forces on the way up the road to Kuwait City. The video showed carcasses of Iraqi vehicles littering the way, just fifty miles from Kuwait City. There was an abandoned trench full of oil and Thompson reported that "Saddam's army had fled without even lighting the fires." The allied forces have, he said, charged forward meeting little resistance; British pilots were amazed by the rate of the movement of Iraqi targets, fleeing from the allies. There was little resistance from the Iraqis, and U.S. Apache helicopters played a key role in snuffing out Iraqi equipment and troops, using Hellfire missiles to destroy tanks at night. The passage through the mine fields had been carefully marked by allied engineers and was not proving to be particularly difficult; furthermore, the mine fields were in disrepair.

CNN's Mike Chinoy reported from Saudi Arabia that up to eighty tanks of the elite Republican Guards appeared to be coming out to fight in southern Iraq, according to coalition pilots who had flown over them. This might be the long promised great tank battle, hyped constantly as "the greatest since World War II." But it would also bring the Iraqi tanks out into the open, which was what the U.S.-led coalition wanted: Once the Republican Guard moved out of their bunkers, Chinoy explained, coalition air power could bomb them. The Republican Guard was reportedly moving out and the coalition forces were preparing for the great battle.

Throughout the day, CNN provided continuing reports of allied advances to Kuwait City. So far, however, there was no amphibious landing, though the TV networks dutifully reported that preparations continued on the boats off the coast. Marines were ready and in position if called on. There were repetitive accounts of remarkably large numbers of POWs, and Iraqis continuing to emerge from bunkers waving white flags. Brian Jenkins of CNN reported from the border area that he saw 500 Iraqi POWs who had been brought to his area; Jenkins had hooked up with Saudi forces who were moving into Kuwait and provided, first, live satellite radio reports and, then, live satellite TV reports. The Iraqi POWs, he claimed, were kneeling and didn't look frightened, but resigned and almost happy, now that the fighting was over. Jenkins was twenty miles inside Kuwait and stated that resistance, based on the evidence of burned-out Iraqi vehicles, was not as fierce as might have been expected, though the frontline Iraqis might be third stringers and not Iraq's best.

At 8:00 a.m., on "CBS This Morning", Paula Zahn reported that allied forces were within "striking

distance" of Kuwait City and could take it "within hours." CBS had hooked up correspondent Bob McKeown with coalition Arab forces going into Kuwait who had just experienced an artillery battle. He reported that the coalition convoy was stopped when pockets of Iraqis resisted with artillery fire, but U.S. air power came in to destroy the Iraqis. McKeown described how there was some Iraqi artillery fire when they crossed the border in the early morning, but that it was quickly silenced. He indicated that there were mines and unexploded cluster bombs everywhere; Saudi troops had been clearing the mines, and helicopters were also clearing mines by exploding them from the air. The whole landscape appeared desolate in the satellite TV footage, showing burned out vehicles, bombed roads, and downed power lines. There were paths beside the road formed by Saudi engineers, and McKeown's convoy was staying close to this safe path.

CBS reported that the Republican Guards and allied forces may have been clashing already. CBS's Robert Krulwich speculated that the Republican Guards may have sent out a feinting force to fight so that the rest could escape, but CBS military adviser General Bob Wagner smiled and claimed that they cannot escape, that Iraqi troops are trapped in both Kuwait and southern Iraq; they are "sealed off, blocked off." A major battle was shaping up and Wagner claimed that "it will be a great success for our side." He believed that there was probably already contact between the Republican Guards and coalition forces in southern Iraq and that the battle for Kuwait City had also probably begun, and that these would be the two battles to follow.

On NBC's "Today," the headlines predicted that Kuwait City would be liberated by the end of the day by 30,000 U.S. marines and paratroopers, who along with Kuwaiti and Saudi forces, prepared to invade the city. Although allied forces had met some resistance, they were still moving quickly toward Kuwait City and amphibious feints by marines were continuing along the coast to keep the Iraqis guessing. Conflicting reports, however, continued to circulate about the movements of the Republican Guards. CBS's Jim Stewart reported that 89 Republican Guard tanks were advancing and that perhaps as much as a division of the Republican Guard was moving toward a major confrontation and that this would be the first time that U.S. forces were taking on the best of the Iraqi armies.

Contradictory information emerged shortly thereafter from NBC's Jim Miklasewski who said that the Pentagon now claimed that the Republican Guards had not yet come out to fight, that the earlier reports were false. NBC's Tom Aspell observed from Baghdad that Iraq claimed that the reports about the capture of Failaka Island by coalition forces were also false and that it was occupied by 4,000 well-armed Iraqi troops; later, it would turn out that this was true. CBS predicted that the liberation of Kuwait City would not take place that day and was most likely at least a day away. These slightly different spins on events raised questions as to what was really going on and the suspicion that once again the U.S. military was greatly exaggerating its early successes or covering over setbacks. This time, however, it really was winning big and would end up massacring the Iraqi forces.

The next day the New York Times reported, that "Air Force officers at a higher level said they doubted that the tanks spotted on the move belonged to the [Republican] Guards" (Feb. 26, 1991, p. A7). Despite this denial, most of the network correspondents and anchors continued to chatter throughout the day about the great tank battle occurring between the coalition forces and the Republican Guards. The media pundits had not yet figured out that there would be no great battles in this war, that it was a one-sided slaughter and not a war where opposing troops actually engaged and killed each other in combat.

Stories of Iraqi crimes in Kuwait began early in the morning of February 25 and multiplied throughout the day. Early telecasts repeated the stories of the previous day, and, during the Saudi briefing, Gen. Khalid, Schwarzkopf's Saudi counterpart in girth, ego, and instrumental relation to truth, reported that Iraqis in Kuwait were "doing horrible things": "I hate to say it, but they are killing people by axes, they rape females, cut certain parts of them and hang them in every street" (see 10.1 for critique of these claims). Khalid, whose own people still had courts of Islamic justice that sentence thieves to have their hands cut off and adulterous women to be stoned to death,² summoned up great moral indignation and threatened that Iraqis who commit atrocities will be tried as war criminals. Bush's national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, appeared in news clips saying that the "Iraqis were virtually producing genocide in Kuwait City."

There was some skepticism, however. When told by ABC's Sam Donaldson that a fax from the Free Kuwait group in London was circulating in Saudi Arabia indicating that the coalition forces had captured and liberated Kuwait City, Peter Jennings said that they had received a similar fax that they were dismissing. Reports from inside Kuwait, Jennings pointed out, were "fairly dicey." CBS's Dan Rather also had to warn his correspondent Eric Engberg that the reports of Iraqi atrocities inside Kuwait City were not reliable. Yet these reports continued to circulate through the day. Gen. Neal reported in his U.S. military briefing in Saudi Arabia that Iraq was carrying out systematic terrorism against economic sites in Kuwait and destroying buildings in Kuwait City. Throughout the afternoon of February 25, CNN said that "reasonably reliable sources" indicated that Iraq had orders to destroy 180 buildings in Kuwait City, including the presidential palace (though that was already reported as destroyed), and that Iraqi troops were destroying hospitals, schools, and grocery stores. Obviously, the CNN news readers did not know that they were in an intense propaganda war as well as a ground war.³

Raising suspicions that coalition war aims were being dramatically escalated, speculation began to circulate as to whether the elimination of Saddam Hussein and his regime was now the goal of the war. On the early morning ABC news program, Mike Schneider asked White House correspondent Ann Compton, "if this is going as well as it appears, might they not expand their objectives?" (that is, beyond merely taking Kuwait). Compton replied that the United States had expanded its objectives long ago, they just hadn't announced them publicly. ABC happy-talk host Charlie Gibson also made a point of asking most of his guests if the elimination of Saddam Hussein was not necessary to claim victory, as did NBC "Today" host Bryant Gumbel. Most guests, such as a conservative British member of Parliament who appeared on NBC, claimed that it would be necessary to remove Saddam Hussein in order to declare victory and that this removal was a valid goal.

The military news was generally upbeat. At the U.S. military briefing in Saudi Arabia, Gen. Neal, gaunt and unsmiling, described the battlefield as "dynamic and ever changing." He claimed that during the second day of the ground campaign the allies continued to attack Iraqi forces and continued to encounter only light to moderate resistance, while engaging Iraqi armor and ground forces with "tremendous success" in ongoing fights. Neal claimed the destruction of 270 Iraqi tanks in the past two days with over 18,000 Iraqis surrendering and few U.S. casualties (4 Americans killed and 21 wounded).

As the afternoon of February 25 progressed, the news got better and better. CNN reported on tremendous successes with U.S. forces preparing to engage the Republican Guards. The French claimed to

have totally "neutralized" an entire division of Iraqi troops, and allied troops were reportedly marching on Kuwait City. But then the greatest tragedy of the war for the U.S. forces occurred. A Scud missile hit a residential complex outside of Dhahran where U.S. soldiers were residing, producing a huge explosion and a tremendous fire. In the initial report, Reuters claimed that twelve were killed and many were injured; eventually, the death count rose to twenty-eight.⁴ Mike Chinoy of CNN said that he had talked to a Saudi who witnessed the event and personally claimed to have pulled the bodies of four dead U.S. soldiers out of the rubble and that many were seriously wounded. A Patriot was said to have been fired at the Scud, but it was not yet certain if it hit or not, and obviously an "intercepted" Scud, Chinoy explained, can be very lethal. Later, the U.S. military claimed that the Scud broke up in the air so that no Patriot was fired, and then that the Scud was out of the Patriot's defense perimeter. Finally, after floating these two lies, the U.S. military admitted that the Patriot computer system was down in the missile batteries that were supposed to protect the region of the city in which the Scud landed (New York Times, May 20, 1991, p. A1).

At 5:44 p.m., CNN interrupted its newscast to say that they had just received an AP report of Baghdad radio announcing that Saddam Hussein had ordered his troops out of Kuwait. Jeanne Moos reported on CNN from the UN that the Soviet ambassador had stated that Iraq was ready to withdraw from Kuwait in a short time, with no preconditions and with a stop in the fighting. Moos reported that this made little sense to the U.S. officials who said that they wanted to hear this directly from the Iraqis. Apparently, then, the Baghdad radio report was the way of making public the resolve of the Iraqis to leave Kuwait and to bring the war to a close. Moments thereafter, CNN transmitted an AP report that Tariq Aziz had communicated to the Soviet leadership that Iraq was ready to start an immediate and unconditional withdrawal. The endgame was beginning.

The United States, however, had more in mind than merely driving the Iraqis out of Kuwait and continued to fiercely keep up its military offensive, slaughtering Iraqi troops even when they were fleeing. There was no way that the Bush administration was going to allow Iraq's army to escape and its Republican Guards to be preserved. On the other hand, it was now clear that Saddam Hussein was a survivor after all, who finally saw that even in a ground war he could not really achieve any success against the high-tech coalition forces. After the announcement of the Iraqi retreat from Kuwait was broadcast, CNN, in the interests of promoting rational discourse, cut to a congressman who was promoting a bill to allow the assassination of Saddam Hussein. Rep. Bob McEwen (R-Ohio) denounced the "evil" Iraqi president, attacked Gorbachev and the Soviets, and said that the Soviet peace plan was totally unacceptable. McEwen failed to perceive that Iraq had announced its withdrawal and willingness to follow the key UN resolution concerning unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait; in effect, Iraq was admitting defeat and was surrendering. For McEwen, however, nothing except the statement, "I surrender" would do. McEwen also worried about the specter of the Soviet Union selling military hardware to Saddam in the future. Tobe Gati of the UN Association informed McEwen that in effect Saddam was saying "I surrender" and that this should wrap it up. Moreover, she argued, the goal of the UN resolutions was the liberation of Kuwait and not to go to Baghdad to get Saddam Hussein. McEwen responded that he himself did not hear Saddam say "I surrender" and then added that Saddam should be brought immediately to Arab justice.

And so once more Iraq had the Bush administration in a quandary. If Iraq started pulling out its forces from Kuwait unconditionally, what should be the U.S. response? The initial White House (non)reaction to the announcement of the Iraqi withdrawal was typical; Marlin Fitzwater said, "We know

nothing about it. We've just heard the press reports." But the White House, Pentagon, State Department, and U.S. UN delegation immediately began planning their spin on the latest surprise move of Saddam Hussein.

At 6:00 p.m., CNN White House correspondent Frank Sesno reported that he had been told by a Bush administration official that large numbers of Iraqi tanks, troops, and equipment were withdrawing from Kuwait, that the United States was trying to "engage" the retreating Iraqi troops, but that bad weather was "preventing a full engagement" of the sort "that we usually enjoy." When asked why the U.S. military was still attacking the fleeing Iraqis, a "senior official" joked that "we are trying to destroy them. This will spur them along." Sesno claimed that President Bush wanted a "public avowal" of "total capitulation" from Iraq in order to end the war. Operation Desert Storm had obviously metamorphosed into Operation Desert Slaughter.

From within Kuwait, Charles Jaco interviewed some marine grunts preparing for the battle for Kuwait City; they were pleased to hear the news but a couple of them said that there could be no victory without "taking out" Saddam Hussein. A Kuwaiti told Jaco that "Saddam Hussein has never told the truth" so we don't know if we can believe him. But, the Kuwaiti acknowledged that Hussein understood power, and that he probably understood that his soldiers were about to get destroyed, so it would be reasonable to conclude that he would actually accept the UN conditions to save his own skin and that of his retreating troops. CNN then reported that orders were given to the Iraqi armed forces to return to the positions where they had been stationed before August 1, 1990 and confirmed again that Iraqi troops were fleeing the country. But this would not be enough for George Bush and his war team.

CNN's Charles Bierbauer reported from the White House that Marlin Fitzwater was complaining that there was nothing that the Bush administration could respond to, "no authoritative contact," and so "the war goes on." Baghdad radio, he suggested, was not to be trusted. Bush was playing racquetball at the time, and Brent Scowcroft stated that they had heard nothing to stop them from prosecuting the war as planned. A senior White House official had told Bierbauer that allied troops were already in Iraq planning to engage the Republican Guard troops and that the destruction of the Republican Guard was a "de facto objective," admitting that once the ground war began, there was an "escalation in goals." The official also admitted to Bierbauer that toppling Saddam Hussein, though not a written objective, was "another de facto objective."

And so, off the record, the White House was now admitting that its true goals were the destruction of the Republican Guard and Saddam Hussein--though this could have been merely a ploy to temporarily placate public opinion which was overwhelmingly in favor of removing Hussein as the ultimate goal of the war. Wolf Blitzer of CNN reported from the Pentagon that there was no official response to the Iraqi withdrawal and that the war was continuing well ahead of schedule. The Pentagon claimed that the Iraqis have not been able to organize any significant counteroffensive. The Pentagon asserted that 300 Iraqi tanks had been destroyed since the beginning of the AirLand war and that over 25,000 POWs had been taken. It also acknowledged concern that the retreating Iraqi troops might be marching to engage the coalition troops in Iraq who were poised to destroy the Republican Guards. Later, it was revealed, however, that the Iraqi retreat was a complete rout and posed no military threat to the multinational forces whatsoever, suggesting that the U.S. military was using this hypothetical to legitimate the slaughter of the retreating Iraqi troops.

The Kuwaiti ambassador, a member of the al-Sabah family, Kuwait's ruling oligarchy, came on CNN to state that he did not "see anything in that message." The Iraqi withdrawal was "too little, too late." This cliché, no doubt written by the U.S. propaganda managers or his own PR firm Hill and Knowlton, became the order of day and was repeated by Kuwaiti, Saudi, and other parrots of the U.S. military machine throughout the night. The only reason that the Iraqis were making such overtures, according to the Kuwaiti ambassador, was that they were trying to "sow confusion." The Kuwaiti implied that the Iraqis were trying to bring back the Soviet initiative, which all coalition forces had rejected. From a tactical point of view, he said, they were trying to escape before they were surrounded, and so the war should go on to destroy the Iraqis. Getting indignant, he exclaimed that too many lives have been lost, so we should not get excited about this peace proposal. We should instead, he advised, keep the war going, because, in effect, Saddam "has to surrender to the allied forces in Kuwait." The Kuwaiti then went through his litany of atrocities and claimed that he had himself seen security reports of fires and murder in the city. Once the city was liberated, it would be revealed that the Kuwaiti propaganda apparatus greatly exaggerated the damage and violence committed by the Iraqis during the last days of the occupation (see 10.1). Admittedly, the Iraqis had greatly harmed Kuwait and committed many criminal acts against its people, as George Bush and his military had been doing and would continue to do in the theater of war.

9.3 The War According to Schwarzkopf

By February 25, it was clear that the Iraqis were leaving Kuwait en masse and that the war for all practical purposes was over. The U.S. military, however, said that the Iraqi army was in a "fighting retreat" and was thus a legitimate military target as they continued systematically to slaughter them. On the evening of February 25, some hours after the Iraqis announced their retreat, the TV networks showed Bush's war team arriving at the White House for a meeting; soon after Marlin Fitzwater stated: "We will continue to prosecute the war," thus robbing Iraqi mothers and wives of many more sons and husbands. Fitzwater did say that "unarmed soldiers in retreat" would be spared, but "retreating combat units" would be dealt with as combat units and handled accordingly (that is, exterminated). As it turned out, the U.S. military massacred everything in sight, including some British troops mistaken for Iraqis, U.S. troops wiped out by "friendly fire," scores of Kuwaitis and others who had been taken as hostages by the fleeing Iraqis, and Palestinians and others who chose to flee with the Iraqis (see 10.2).

During the evening on the CNN talk shows, the two CNN military advisers, James Blackwell and Perry Smith, urged on the coalition forces to more slaughter of Iraqis, as did former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and an apologist for the massacre, Michael Mandelbaum of Johns Hopkins University. Over the next couple of days as the Pentagon continued to annihilate fleeing Iraqis and as the Iraqis, with Soviet support, continued to affirm adherence to the UN resolutions, there were debates about whether the coalition forces could legitimately fire on a retreating army. The "official" position seemed to be that until a cease fire was declared, the massacre of fleeing Iraqis was perfectly legitimate, though some reporters and media commentators had some doubts about its legality and morality. Interestingly, in a CBS report of February 25, CBS Pentagon correspondent David Martin pointed out that the Pentagon had said repeatedly that they would "not shoot retreating Iraqi soldiers in the back," although that was what they did. On my satellite dish that night, I picked up the feed of a reporter who had been told by a "Pentagon official": "We can shoot them in the ass as well as we can shoot them in the head." For the next few days, the U.S. forces would indeed shoot and kill fleeing Iraqis from the head to the toes, annihilating many of them with fuel air explosives, carpet bombing, and missiles, as well as burying alive hundreds more in

trenches (see 9.4 and 10.2).

During February 26, Saddam Hussein himself made a public commitment to withdraw from Kuwait and to meet the UN resolution. This was, of course, not enough for George Bush, who pressed for unconditional surrender and ordered his forces to continue attacking Iraqi troops, which were now in total disarray. By February 27, it was announced that the U.S.-led coalition forces had blocked off Iraqi escape routes and were engaged in two major battles with Iraqi forces. These were hyped in the same terms as the opening day of the ground war as "ferocious," with "tremendous fighting," "the fiercest tank battles since World War II," but like the earlier "battles" of the ground fighting, it was really a Desert Slaughter, with the coalition forces systematically annihilating the outgunned and demoralized Iraqis. And yet during the two days since the Iraqis began fleeing from Kuwait, there had been little hard information, not much new video, and obviously the military was not revealing what they were doing because they were engaged in one of the greatest massacres in history, the details of which would only trickle out in the days to come (see 9.4 and 10.2). It would be up to General Norman Schwarzkopf to provide a triumphant version of this brutal episode in U.S. military history, and Stompin' Norman was once again up to the task.

Wednesday evening, Saudi time, on February 27, Schwarzkopf began a briefing to describe the course of the war. Pleased as punch with himself and his punchy allied forces, he stomped in with his charts to brief the world concerning the marvelous success of the allied military operation. Schwarzkopf began with a highly dubious statement, claiming that "what we started out against was a couple of hundred thousand Iraqis that were in the Kuwait theater of operations." As I indicated in Chapter 1, commercial satellite photos and independent analyses of these photos suggested that there were far fewer Iraqi troops in Kuwait than the United States claimed. By saying at this late date that the Iraqis had a "couple of hundred thousand" troops, Schwarzkopf doubled the number of estimated Iraqi troops that were claimed to be in Saudi Arabia on August 7 when the U.S. troops officially began arriving (see 1.1).

Schwarzkopf then stated that in the middle of November the decision was made to increase the U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia "because by that time huge numbers of Iraqi forces had flowed in the area.. and therefore, we increased the forces and built up more forces." This claim also is highly dubious, as if the buildup was a defensive move. Instead, if the commercial satellite photos were accurate, it could be that Iraq increased their forces in the Gulf as a response to the U.S. troop buildup; this point can and should be verified by independent analyses and sources. There was good reason to believe that at the time of the initial U.S. troop deployment, Iraq saw clearly that it faced a massive military force as well as an international economic embargo and that it would be suicidal to act in an offensive manner. There is also good reason to believe that the U.S. had decided to go to war and destroy Iraq and that the additional forces were sent over for this purpose. Senator Sam Nunn (D.Ga.) and others began to speak at this time of the U.S. forces switching from a defensive to an offensive posture, and a congressional debate ensued as to whether a Persian Gulf war was a good idea, with Bush and the Pentagon winning the debate. Thus, it appears that a decision was made that double the number of troops were needed, in order to quickly and decisively defeat Iraq.

In his briefing, General Schwarzkopf stated that he aligned his forces against Iraqi forces stationed in Kuwait and built up a strong naval presence. He bragged how he made it a key point to call attention to the naval forces in order to utilize a threat of a naval amphibious operation to draw the Iraqis to fortify the shore, and later described the feigned amphibious landing as a ploy to draw Iraqi troops to the coastal

region. Schwarzkopf may or may not have been telling the truth here. Perhaps a failure to adequately clear the coastal region of mines prevented the amphibious troops from participating; interviews with the potential amphibious forces revealed that they were deeply disappointed that they were not able to participate in the AirLand war. There is good reason to believe that they were actually intended to participate and that their inability to sweep the mine fields in a timely fashion prevented their deployment. Obviously, all the major military forces would have liked to participate in the AirLand war and the lack of participation of the amphibious forces could have been due more to operational difficulties than to a conscious ploy by Schwarzkopf to deceive Iraqi defensive positions.⁵

Trying to make it appear that a fair fight was in the making, Schwarzkopf then claimed:

Basically, the problem we were faced with was this: When you looked at the troop numbers, they really outnumbered us about 3 to 2. And when you consider the number of combat service support people we had, that's logisticians and that sort of thing, our armed forces, as far as fighting troops, we were really outnumbered 2 to 1. In addition to that, they had 4,700 tanks versus our 3,500 when the buildup was complete, and they had a great many more artillery than we do.

I think any student of military strategy would tell you that in order to attack a position, you should have a ratio of approximately 3 to 1 in favor of the attacker. And in order to attack a position that is heavily dug in and barricaded, such as the one we had here, you should have a ratio of 5 to 1 in the way of troops in the favor of the attacker.... We were outnumbered at a minimum 3 to 2 as far as troops were concerned, we were outnumbered as far as tanks were concerned, and we had to come up with some way to make up the difference.

Once again, Schwarzkopf's figures were highly dubious. BBC reporter John Simpson argued that although the U.S. was claiming that the number of Iraqi troops in the theater of war was over 540,000: "After the war was over it became known that, when the Iraqi army was at full strength in early January, there were fewer than half that number: approximately 260,000. Once the bombing began, the desertions began in earnest. Tens of thousands simply headed home. In the front line among the conscripted men the desertion rate was sometimes more than 30 percent" (1991, p. 332). Thus Simpson concluded that by the time the ground offensive began, the Iraqi strength might have fallen below 200,000 compared to 525,000 coalition forces, giving the coalition forces a 2 to 2 1/2 to one advantage.⁶ Moreover, the quality of the Iraqi forces was vastly inferior. They had little or no intelligence capacity; much of their equipment was obsolete or non-functional; their troops were poorly trained and motivated; and there were even reports after the war that senior Iraqi officers taken prisoner had indicated that the Iraqi army had no battle plan because their officers believed that Iraq would pull out of Kuwait and there would be no war (Newsday, March 26, 1991, p. 5).

Thus, Schwarzkopf's presentation of seemingly superior Iraqi military forces confronting underdog allied forces was highly misleading. His numbers also ignored the decisive fact that U.S. air superiority made it possible to demolish almost any Iraqi military target and thus to easily decimate and demoralize

the Iraqi forces, as actually happened. Schwarzkopf next explained that the air campaign was to isolate the Kuwaiti theater of operations by taking out bridges and supply lines that ran between the northern and southern part of Iraq. "That was to prevent reinforcements and supplies coming down into the southern part of Iraq and the Kuwaiti theater of operations. It was necessary to reduce these forces down to a strength that made them weaker, particularly along the frontline barrier that we had to go through." This analysis was also propaganda, which legitimated the vicious destruction of Iraq's economic and social as well as its military infrastructure. Schwarzkopf justified the destruction of Iraq's infrastructure on military terms, claiming that the destruction of Iraq's roads, bridges, communications facilities, power plants, and industrial infrastructure would make it impossible for Iraq to supply its troops in Kuwait. Critics of the U.S. bombing argued that the massive destruction of Iraq's infrastructure was not justified militarily and in fact constituted an excessive and criminal overkill, waging war against the Iraqi people and not just their military.⁷

In any case, it was clear that if Schwarzkopf merely wanted to get the Iraqis out of Kuwait, he could simply have used his massive air power to bombard the front-line Iraqi troops in Kuwait until they were destroyed or ready to surrender, and then invade Kuwait with ground forces to finish off the job. But instead Schwarzkopf's goal, which his comments here conceal, was the destruction of the Iraqi military and its power in the region. He would later admit this himself in the question-and-answer session; when asked if the war was now over in the light of the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, General Schwarzkopf responded:

I would say that there's a lot more purpose to this war than just to get the Iraqis out of Kuwait. The purpose of this war was to enforce the resolutions of the United Nations. There are some 12 different resolutions of the United Nations, not all of which have been accepted by Iraq to date, as I understand it... What else needs to be done? If I am to render the mission which I've been given, we need to put the Republican Guard out of business.

Here the blunt Schwarzkopf admitted that his mission was not merely the UN mission of getting the Iraqis out of Kuwait, but to destroy the Iraqi military, especially the Republican Guard, and he would proceed to attempt to do precisely that. When describing his campaign to sweep into Iraq to envelop and destroy the Iraqi military, Schwarzkopf once again employed hyperbole. After they eradicated the Iraqi Air Force, Schwarzkopf explained, the coalition forces had eliminated his ability to see what the forces were doing. Once "we took out his eyes," the coalition forces were able to send a massive movement of troops to the far west, beyond where Iraqi troops were deployed, for an invasion of southern Iraq. Schwarzkopf bragged that this was "absolutely an extraordinary move, I must tell you. I can't recall any time in the annals of military history when this number of forces have moved over this distance to put themselves in a position to be able to attack." Employing a dubious football metaphor, Schwarzkopf then compared his move to a "Hail Mary" play in which the quarterback throws the ball downfield as far as possible and all the receivers race toward the end zone as fast as they can in the hope that someone can catch it in the scramble. This is, to say the least, a highly bizarre metaphor, though no one pointed this out. One employs the "Hail Mary" play in football as a desperate last ditch attempt to pull victory from defeat. There was no chance of defeat in this case, so Schwarzkopf's metaphor was completely misleading. Furthermore, the "Hail Mary" play is a fundamentally irrational attempt to gain a last minute victory.

Schwarzkopf's technowar, by contrast, was a methodically planned and incremental highly-rationalized destruction of Iraqi troops and equipment.

Schwarzkopf next described how the AirLand war began with an assault on the barrier at the Kuwaiti/Saudi border, which Saddam Hussein described, according to Schwarzkopf, "as an absolutely impenetrable tank barrier that no one would ever get through." At 4:00 AM, on February 24, some marines launched attacks through the barrier system and were accompanied by some army brigades on their flank, with Saudi forces advancing on the easternmost front. Meanwhile a French armored division launched an overland attack on the west to take the al-Salman airfield, deep into southern Iraq. And by 8:00 AM, the 101st Airborne launched an air assault deep into southern Iraq to establish a supply base within Iraq to service the occupying allied forces.

Schwarzkopf then went through each of these moves, describing the brilliance and heroism in hyperbolic terms, leaving out some of the gorier details that would later surface (see 9.4). As one saw on television, there were really no Iraqi forces in any condition to resist and the invasion was simply a cake walk in military lingo (see 8.5). Thus it is hard to imagine what was so brilliant or heroic about the invasion of Kuwait in the face of visual evidence that showed forlorn Iraqis in pitiful fox holes, surrendering by the hundreds. When a reporter raised this question, Schwarzkopf exploded with anger, asking the poor fellow if he'd "ever been in a mine field?" Schwarzkopf then recounted a Vietnam experience in which he told of being stuck in a mine field under attack and watched a young soldier get blown up by a mine. In the video footage, one did see plenty of mines in the desert but the coalition forces had sufficient equipment to clear these mines. There were few casualties from Iraqi mines, so Schwarzkopf's bluster merely exaggerated the invasion of Kuwait as far more dangerous and difficult than it really was. Indeed, television had shown reports of the various ways in which mine fields had been cleared, ranging from B-52 cluster bombing, fuel air bombs, and Miclic mine-sweeping machines to other devices. Praising the Saudis, apparently for political purposes, Schwarzkopf claimed:

First of all, the Saudis over here on the east coast [he said pointing to a map] did a terrific job. They went up against a very, very tough barrier system. They breached the barrier very, very effectively. They moved out aggressively and continued their attack up the coast.

TV images, by contrast, showed no barrier system whatsoever but some isolated foxholes, deserted trench positions, some mines that hadn't been exploded, and some barbed wire. The TV reports indicated that the Saudis penetrated about eight miles across the border before they drew any artillery fire from the Iraqis. Allied planes then quickly took out the artillery and the Saudis moved on. So again, Schwarzkopf's version of the Gulf war was pure bombast and propaganda. He then lavished praise on the U.S. Marines:

I can't say enough about the two Marine divisions. If I use words like brilliant, it would really be an underdescription of the absolutely superb job that they did in breaching the so-called impenetrable barrier. It was a classic, absolutely classic, military breaching of a very, very tough minefield, barbed wire, fire-trenches-type barrier. They went through the first barrier like it was water. They went across into the second barrier

line, even though they were under artillery fire at the time. They continued to open up that breach. And then they brought both divisions streaming through that breach. Absolutely superb operation, a textbook [case], and I think it'll be studied for many, many years to come as the way to do it.

Once again, Schwarzkopf was elevating a cake walk into a brilliant military achievement, and the media and TV audience fell for his bluster. The first barrier, as was widely reported, had no Iraqi troops defending it and when the marines encountered fire in the second barrier, coalition air forces eliminated the Iraqi artillery readily and quickly. Some of Schwarzkopf's own troops described the invasion as less dangerous and difficult than many of their training missions. Had there been more defensive power on the Iraqi side, obviously there would have been more casualties of the invading forces. The low casualties clearly attested to the fact that the Iraqis were already licked and all the coalition forces needed to do was to walk across the border, collect dazed and grateful Iraqi soldiers as POWs, and kill anyone who put up a fight. All during the day of the "brilliant" battle narrated by Schwarzkopf, pitiful Iraqis in isolated foxholes in the desert surrendered to anyone, whether military or journalists.

Moreover, the Iraqis obviously had no capability to counter the allied flanking operation. Numbers released by the Saudi government indicated that by February 23, Iraqi front units were 50 percent below capacity and second units were reduced to 50-70 percent and cut off from all reinforcements. Schwarzkopf also admitted that as soon as the allied troops crossed the border "we started getting a large number of surrenders," a point dramatically illustrated by the TV images of capitulating Iraqis. Previously, in a couple of border forays, Iraqi troops had given up almost immediately without a fight and with almost no casualties for the allied forces who engaged in operations behind enemy lines just before the AirLand war. The United States also, as Schwarzkopf now admitted, put special forces deep into enemy territory to reconnoiter and to carry out special tasks like helping establish the U.S. logistics base or to hunt for Scud missiles.

Over and over, the Pentagon praised the high level of its intelligence capabilities and I believe that therefore it knew perfectly well that it was going to achieve an extremely easy victory in the AirLand war. Schwarzkopf told reporters a few days before the ground war began that "[t]he Iraqi army was overrated and on the verge of collapse" (quoted on ABC, Feb. 25, 1991). But in his briefing, Schwarzkopf dissembled the ease with which the rout of the Iraqis took place, with few allied casualties and a slaughter of Iraqi troops. Continuing his fable, Schwarzkopf narrated how on the morning of February 24th, the coalition started to move its forces into the most heavily defended area, starting with the marines, who rapidly went north, and the Saudi forces on the east coast who were "also moving rapidly to the north and making very, very good progress." More Egyptian, Syrian, and Saudi forces went across the border into Kuwait at this time making "a headlong assault into a very, very tough barrier system, a very, very tough mission for these folks here." Whenever, Schwarzkopf multiplied his adjectives or adverbs, or used nouns like "brilliant," he was invariably hyping his operation and covering over the ease with which the coalition forces destroyed the hapless Iraqis.

Schwarzkopf then described in more detail the French, British, and U.S. invasion of southern Iraq, noting that the French penetrated deep into the west of southern Iraq and the 101st Airborne Division went as far as the Euphrates valley.

[W]e were 150 miles away from Baghdad and there was nobody between us and Baghdad. If it had been our intention to take Iraq, if it had been our intention to destroy the country, if it had been our intention to overrun the country, we could have done it unopposed for all intents and purposes from this position at that time. But that was not our intention. We had never said it was our intention. Our intention was purely to eject the Iraqis out of Kuwait and to destroy the military power that had come in here.

It is not clear what the consequences would have been of a an allied incursion into Baghdad, but it is interesting that in this set of remarks Schwarzkopf revealed the true intention and limitations of the entire "plan" when he indicated that the goal was "to destroy the [Iraqi] military power" and not to march to Baghdad to overthrow Saddam Hussein. On one hand, Schwarzkopf admitted in his briefing that the goal of the U.S. administration was not merely the liberation of Kuwait but the destruction of the Iraqi military. On the other hand, he made it clear here that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was not part of the U.S. agenda, that they were prepared to allow Hussein to survive. Indeed, in the eventual cease-fire negotiations and weeks following the cessation of military hostilities, the United States allowed Hussein to reestablish power in the face of powerful opposition throughout his country, to the disgust of many who had previously wholeheartedly supported the Bush administration's war policies.

Moreover, it is significant that Schwarzkopf did not describe the details of the destruction of the Iraqi military, much of which was going on as he was speaking and which we shall analyze in as much detail as sources allow in later sections. In fact, it is interesting that Schwarzkopf gave his briefing before the slaughter of the Iraqi army was completed and before any details had been revealed. Thus, there was little questioning concerning whether there was overkill, excess, and a downright massacre in his attempted destruction of the Iraqi army. Instead of going into the details and extent of the slaughter, he quickly pointed to areas of movement of the Saudi and U.S. marine progress on the eastern front, which had already taken over Kuwait City after the Iraqis had fled. He then pointed on his map to the forces in southern Iraq who were fighting the Republican Guard and to the 24th Infantry Division, who "made an unbelievable move all the way across into the Tigris and Euphrates valley, and proceeded in blocking this avenue of egress out of, which was the only avenue of egress left because we continued to make sure that the bridges stayed down. So there was no way out."

This turned out to be only partially true. The U.S. forces had blocked major avenues of retreat from Kuwait into Iraq and would thus be able to wipe out without impunity much of the retreating Iraqi forces in what pilots described as "a turkey shoot." After the war, it was claimed on March 1 that the United States had destroyed thirty-one out of thirty-two Iraqi divisions and had destroyed completely the Republican Guard. Later these figures would be contested when thousands of Guards appeared to put down Shiite and Kurdish rebellions in March and April. Thus, many more Iraqi troops and tanks escaped than Schwarzkopf admitted, so there obviously was a "way out" for these troops, who later helped Saddam Hussein suppress rebellion against his regime (10.4).⁸ Thus, Schwarzkopf consistently exaggerated the extent of his destruction of the Iraqi military apparatus, while at the same time trying to cover over the slaughter of Iraqi troops: "To date, we have destroyed over 29 [Iraqi divisions]—destroyed or rendered inoperable; I don't like to say 'destroyed' because that gives you the vision of absolutely killing

everyone, and that's not what we are doing, but we have rendered completely ineffective over 29 Iraqi divisions, and the gates are closed."

"Peace is not without its cost," Schwarzkopf admitted, and then detailed some of the U.S. casualties—a total of seventy-nine killed in action. Schwarzkopf claimed that while the loss of one single life was intolerable, casualties of that order of magnitude were "almost miraculous." When asked what happened to the rest of the reported 200,000 Iraqi troops in the border area, Schwarzkopf answered:

There were a very, very large number of dead in these units, a very, very large number of dead. We even found them when we went into the units ourselves and found them in the trench lines. There were very heavy desertions. At one point, we had reports of desertion rates of more than 30 percent of the units that were along the front here. As you know, we had quite a large number of POWs that came across, and so I think it's a combination of desertions, it's a combination of people that were killed, there's a combination of the people that we captured and there's a combination of some other people who are just flat still running.

The most interesting points here involves the heavy desertions of Iraqi troops, "perhaps 30 percent" along the front, and the miraculously low number of allied casualties. This statement seems to verify that the forces were totally unbalanced and that the whole ground war involved the exaggeration of Iraqi forces to exaggerate and conceal the desert slaughter.

During the question part of the briefing, the reporters, by now putty in Schwarzkopf's hands or intimidated by his bravado, asked their tame questions, giving Schwarzkopf the opportunity to insult Saddam Hussein as a military strategist, extol the brilliance of his plan, and assure the reporters that chemical weapons hadn't been used. Schwarzkopf also made himself an agent once again of the propaganda war, claiming that there were rumors of 40,000 Kuwaiti hostages, which "pales to insignificance in the face of the Iraqi atrocities of the last week," though he refused to give any details. He asserted that people who could commit atrocities like the Iraqis "weren't members of the same human race as the rest of us," again involving himself in racist hyperbole. As it turned out, the stories of Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait City during the last days of the occupation were greatly exaggerated, part of the propaganda war, though the fleeing Iraqi troops did take many Kuwaiti hostages, many of whom were perhaps slaughtered by Schwarzkopf's own forces, which seemed to be killing everything in sight—an event that the Kuwaiti government and media never explored and that I shall discuss in the next chapter (10.2).

During his briefing, Schwarzkopf attempted to shape the historical record and journalistic account of the war much as he shaped the battlefield: to use brute power to impose his will upon the terrain. In retrospect, it is striking the extent to which the Bush administration and Pentagon followed the politics of lying in their discourses during the Gulf war. U.S. Throughout the war, lying was as aggressive, systematic, and outrageous as in Vietnam and I have documented a series of these lies in this book. Of course, Pentagon lying was merely following the example of the Bush administration which lied about: (1) the reason for sending U.S. troops to the Gulf in the first place (i.e., to protect Saudi Arabia from Iraqi invasion whereas there is no evidence that Iraq intended this; see 1.1); (2) the claim that it was seeking diplomatic settlements when obviously it desired war (see 1.2); and (3) its orchestration of the propaganda

campaigns condemning Iraqi environmental terrorism (much of which coalition forces were responsible for), Iraqi mistreatment of POWs (all of which returned safe and sound), and denials of causing Iraqi civilian casualties, despite much evidence to the contrary (see Chapters 4-7).

U.S. hypocrisy and lying to cover over the fruits of its bombing missions could be contrasted with the British, who openly admitted the failure of a precision bomb after the worst civilian atrocities caused by their bombing. Some days after the Amiraia bombing, the British attempted to bomb a bridge in the city of Fallujja and a precision bomb went astray and hit a market place in the vicinity of the bridge. Rather than deny their complicity in these civilian deaths, the British admitted that their bomb went astray, even showing the videotape of a bomb veering away from its target and exploding off-camera on the other side of the river. Unlike the U.S. military briefers, the British were capable of admitting a mistake and apologizing

9.4 Days of Shame

Meanwhile, the diplomatic charade continued and Bush refused to negotiate a settlement as the ground war entered its fourth day. The Iraqis had proclaimed their willingness to abide by the UN resolution to withdraw from Kuwait and actually begin withdrawal on February 25; every day thereafter the Iraqis repeated their willingness to abide by the UN resolutions, but every day, the Bush administration rejected Iraqi and UN pleas for a cease-fire. Instead, as the U.S. military briefer Gen. Neal put it on February 26, coalition forces would continue to "attack and attack and attack," using "every means available to destroy" fleeing or resisting Iraqis.

The mainstream media consistently legitimated the U.S. high-tech massacre of the fleeing Iraqis during this time. On February 25, "CBS This Morning" host Harry Smith announced to Dan Rather that the Iraqis were "turning tail and heading for their homeland," but were leaving with their weapons. Rather commented that their destruction was justified because they were taking their weapons with them and that the United States was currently encircling the Republican Guards in order to destroy them. "The idea," Rather explained, was not to leave "Saddam Hussein's power base intact" and that Bush was saying that "we're not letting you come this far and when we have a hammerlock on you say 'OK, you can go home.'" On ABC, Tony Cordesman argued that, according to the "normal customs of war," the United States "has been generous" in allowing Iraqis to "put down their guns and withdraw" and that the Soviet effort to push for a cease-fire in the United Nations was "totally unacceptable." "The absolute custom and law of war," Cordesman said, "is that the state involved must sue for a ceasefire or a surrender itself." On NBC, Faith Daniels reported that the judgment in Washington was that "this [that is, the Iraqi retreat] is a ruse, they're not sincere, they are just regrouping." When asked if the U.S.-led coalition forces should go to Baghdad to take out Saddam Hussein, NBC military consultant James Dunnigan insisted that the problem in the Middle East was the "socialist Baath party" and that this cancer would have to be ripped out (of Iraq and Syria!) before the region would be safe from subversion.

Meanwhile, as the media pundits tried to justify the high-tech massacre of the fleeing Iraqis, General Schwarzkopf's troops appeared to be under orders to destroy everything in sight. Newsday revealed on September 12, 1991, that "[t]he U.S. Army division that broke through Saddam Hussein's defensive frontline used plows mounted on tanks and combat earthmovers to bury thousands of Iraqi soldiers--some alive and firing their weapons--in more than 70 miles of trenches, according to U.S. Army

officials" (p. A1). In a grisly story based on eye-witness accounts, Patrick Sloyan described how the U.S. division "The Big Red One" destroyed trenches and bunkers being defended by more than 8,000 Iraqi soldiers with a combination of airpower, artillery, tanks, and vehicles with plows that buried alive hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hapless Iraqi conscripts, placed in the harsh deserts without adequate training or weapons. The U.S. soldiers interviewed indicated how defenseless the Iraqis were, with one stating: "What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with people's arms and things sticking out of them." There were no U.S. casualties in the slaughter, though Pfc. Joe Queen remarked: "A lot of guys were scared. But I enjoyed it."

At the height of the ground war, the U.S.-led forces were, according to official figures, killing 100 tanks per day and countless Iraqi soldiers. Not only did the U.S. use new high-tech precision weapons but they used new "area-impact munitions" to annihilate the Iraqi army.⁹ In addition to napalm which explodes and hideously burns human flesh, the U.S. used new fuel-air explosive bombs, "daisy cutters," and multiple launch rocket systems to obliterate the Iraqis. Fuel-air explosives utilize high-energy fuels such as butane which are dispersed from canisters to produce aerosol clouds which then explode rather than just burn. The resulting blasts are several times greater than conventional weapons and have a devastating effect on bunkers, silos, and people; they are sometimes referred to as "the poor man's nuclear weapons." "Daisycutters" are 15,000 pound bombs which contain explosives that can produce blasts almost in the nuclear weapon range. Cluster bombs and missiles can spread 247 bomblets over more than an acre, generating nearly 500,000 high-velocity shrapnel fragments. Cruise missiles could also deliver a version of cluster bombs and B-52s could drop a tremendous amount of munitions on an area the size of four football fields. Finally, multiple-launch rocket systems carry two pods of six missiles that can deliver nearly 8,000 bomblets over 60 acres in one salvo.

British arms expert Paul Rogers (1991) pointed out that during the closing stages of the war, the U.S. and British armies fired a thousand salvos, or 12,000 missiles from their systems. These attacks were extremely lethal and a British reporter describing shelling of Iraqi positions during the ground war claimed: "It was this as much as the weeks of pounding from the air by the American B-52 bombers and fighter-bombers that shattered the nerve of the Iraqis. An Iraqi company commander captured after the first day's action said the rockets had killed all but seven of his command of 250 in less than 10 minutes. A captured artillery brigadier said fewer than 20 of his heavy guns had been knocked out in the weeks of air raids, but the artillery bombardment had put paid to the rest, all but six, in an hour" (in MacArthur 1991, p. 221).

On April 8, the New York Times published an article on a battle that the United States had fought on February 27, the day of Schwarzkopf's briefing and the day before the cessation of military activity. According to Michael Gordon, "When the 40 minute battle was over, American tanks and aircraft had destroyed 60 T-72 tanks, 9 Iraqi T-55 tanks and 38 armored personnel carriers" (p. A6). It was impossible to know how many Iraqi casualties there were because, in the words of Col. Montgomery Meigs, the tanks "exploded and burned fiercely" so that "there were not a whole lot of bodies." The Times article described the massacre as "a showcase for the superiority of American-made weapons and tactics over Iraq's Soviet-designed arms and static defense." It was "a one-sided victory...an impressive tableau of destruction." Many U.S. soldiers were horrified by the slaughter, however. According to Gordon, "Young American soldiers, accustomed to destroying wooden tank targets at test ranges said they were astounded to see the Iraqi tanks turn into fireballs." Sgt. Larry Porter noted, "We have all had a chance to call our

wives and most of the guys could not talk about it to them. I don't think my wife needs to know what took place out here. I do not want her to know that side of me."

During the same period U.S. forces killed ten British troops, and CNN reported on September 17, 1991, that on February 27 an undisclosed number of U.S. troops were killed by "friendly fire." But probably the most appalling episode in the shameful Persian Gulf war was the systematic destruction of the Iraqi army as its individual soldiers desperately fled from Kuwait and southern Iraq (see 10.2). General Schwarzkopf mentioned a couple of brief details of the slaughter on February 27 when he claimed that there "was no way out" and "the gates are closed," though none of the reporters followed up on it, thus failing to gain insight into what was probably the most significant military action going on during the ground war: the attempt to systematically destroy the Iraqi army.

As usual, the Bush administration and Pentagon created specious rationalizations for the continued brutality and, as usual, their defenders in the media went along with their actions and statements. In the debate concerning whether the U.S.-led massacre of the retreating Iraqis--who were pleading for a cease fire and who had indeed left Kuwait-- was "legitimate," the New York Times published on February 27, 1991, an article by John X. Crossman, Jr., headlined: "Experts Back U.S. on Rules of War. They Assert Allies Have Clear Right to Attack Retreating Iraqis Carrying Arms." With historical examples going back to the Middle Ages and through the Civil War, the 1907 Hague Convention, and the Geneva Convention of 1949, the Times's rationalization of the slaughter indicated that it was clearly within the rules of war to massacre retreating Iraqis (p. A8). But against such rationalizations stands the fact that the Iraqi army was already decisively defeated and clearly had no will to fight.¹⁰ The Iraqis had clearly appealed for a cease-fire through their official state radio, their UN representative, their head of state, and the Soviet Union, which tried to negotiate a cease-fire in the United Nations, but which was blocked by the Bush administration. Instead, Bush's plan was apparently to annihilate the Iraqi army, to inflict the maximum amount of destruction on the Iraqis to establish U.S. military power as fearsome and relentless, and thus to punish the Iraqis for refusing to bend to the will of the neoimperialist superpower. Bush made his point and thousands of Iraqis died as a result.

Seeking to replace Henry Kissinger and Jeane Kirkpatrick as intellectual of choice to justify the unjustifiable, Thomas Friedman, a former CIA intern and James Baker's occasional tennis partner, wrote a front-page New York Times story titled "The Rout Bush Wants. A Disorderly, Humiliating Iraqi Surrender Will End Hussein's Power, Officials Believe" (Feb. 27, p. A1). The slaughter was justified by Friedman on the (dubious) grounds that only "unconditional surrender" and the devastation of the Iraqi army would end Saddam Hussein's power and eliminate Iraq as a military threat. This will help, Friedman wrote, pleasantly conveying the official Bush administration line, "speed the withdrawal of most of the 537,000 American troops in the gulf, and to make sure that they will not have to come back to fight again some day." Friedman, of course, neglected the fact that the massacre was intended to ratify the U.S. superpower status in the region and he failed to discuss the messy facts concerning the bloody slaughter of the retreating Iraqis. Instead, he provided a rationalization for Bush administration policy. Such were the ways that "journalists" and "scholars" compromised and sold themselves to the victorious forces, helping to hide the brutality of the war.

To get some sense of the magnitude of the massacre that Friedman was politely justifying, one merely had to turn to the lead news story in the same day's edition of the New York Times:

All night long, American warplanes pummeled Iraqi tanks, armored personnel carriers and trucks on the road leading north from Kuwait City as they sought to reach Basra, pilots said. The movement created a column 25 to 30 miles long, three or four abreast in place, and except for a few surface-to-air missiles, they were defenseless against the F-15, F-11 and F-16 fighter bombers that came at them, wave after wave, along with Navy planes.

In the wind and driving rain, "it was close to Armageddon," an Air Force officer said. (Feb. 27, p. A1)

And that's it. Armageddon for the Iraqis but no details, no follow ups, and certainly no outrage. Indeed, the only critical view of the Desert Slaughter on network television during the Days of Shame was the pained anger of an Arab, Hisham Sharabi, on the February 27 "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour." Instead, television focused on the glories of the liberation of Kuwait and the atrocities of the Iraqis in Kuwait. No one bothered to focus on the atrocities of the U.S. slaughter of the Iraqis. In the February 28 New York Times, there was a mention in the lead story that Bush's speech to end the war was an attempt to balance the U.S. position "that Iraq could not get off too easily, with mounting international pressures to stop the assaults on an obviously defeated army." There was no discussion of the international pressures by civilized nations in regard to the U.S.'s barbaric behavior nor were there any details on the slaughter of the Iraqis, except for a brief mention of it at the end of a story glorifying the U.S. taking of central Iraq:

Once the barriers were up, the troops zeroed in on a "killing zone" and blasted anything that tried to drive through, including a truck filled with sacks of flour. But most of the traffic was soldiers in civilian cars, heading away from Kuwait, many carrying televisions, boxes of women's clothes and other looted goods. On Tuesday night, the explosives arrived and bridges and other parts of the road were blown up. (New York Times, Feb. 28, p. A7)

The Persian Gulf TV war thus ended up being a massacre of the Iraqi military in a total mismatch through which the most powerful high-tech military machine ever assembled slaughtered a Third World army. Those U.S. authorities who were privy to military intelligence, knew full well that the Iraqi army was incapable of fighting back. A Newsday dispatch from Susan Sachs indicated that the Pentagon consistently and intentionally overestimated Iraqi capabilities (March 3, 1991). Lt. Gen. Walter Boomer told Sachs that they had "known for weeks that the [Iraqi] lines weren't that formidable...But we wanted to let Iraqis think we still thought they were big." This is nonsense as obviously the military wanted the public to think that the Iraqis were "big" to enhance the Pentagon's victory. Sachs indicated that one "senior commander agreed that the information about Iraqi defenses...was highly exaggerated. 'There was a great disinformation campaign surrounding the war,' he said, with some satisfaction."

Throughout the war, the Bush administration and Pentagon consistently exaggerated the power, the evil, and the magnitude of the Iraqi military which was obviously out of its league militarily. The Iraqi army was hyped up as the "fourth most powerful in the world" and its "battle-hardened troops," "elite

Republican Guard," and massive array of weapons were constantly extolled in the media. Even the highly touted Republican Guard were overblown in the media discourse. As Simpson explained, "The Republican Guard, which journalists and politicians insisted on describing as 'elite', was increased by several divisions during the period of the crisis, largely by means of taking men from regular units and giving them red berets. Anyone who could march in step was considered eligible. The officers of the Republican Guard were usually better trained, but that generally meant that they too had to be taken from other units. The mass dilution meant that the Republican Guards' standards, which in the war against Iran had been above average, were little different from those of the rest of the Iraqi army" (1991, p. 334).

In fact, many U.S. soldiers indicated to journalists their surprise that the Iraqi army collapsed so quickly and one imagines that the front-line soldiers honestly did not know that they were facing such badly outpowered and demoralized forces. A British soldier told reporter Robert Fox that, "It was more like an exercise with enemy in it than anything I had expected. A bit like a stroll in the park" (in MacArthur 1991, p. 225). One U.S. soldier said that their practice exercises were more difficult and dangerous than the actual fighting, constantly described by Dan Rather and the media puff patrol as "fierce," or "ferocious." The Pentagon hyped the "formidable Iraqi enemy," primarily, I believe, for its own bureaucratic purposes. By having in place the image of a strong Iraqi opponent they could thus puff up and promote their great victory, they could produce the image of a "brilliant" campaign, and would thus boost their own careers and prestige.

In so doing, they inflicted needless suffering on the families of allied troops and the public deeply concerned about the well-being of the U.S. forces in the Gulf. Indeed, both the military and media should be severely criticized for their exaggeration of the dangers faced, thus terrorizing unnecessarily the public worried about the fate of the troops, as well as needlessly terrorizing the troops themselves.

9.5 The Perfect War

The United States and George Bush emerged from the Gulf massacre as leaders of a Neoimperialist World Order. At a speech at an American Legion convention on February 27, Dick Cheney praised the leadership of George Bush, saying that the "bottom line is that this whole effort has been put together and held together by the leadership of the United States" and that the man who provided the leadership for the U.S. and the whole world in "rolling back the aggression of Saddam Hussein" was George Bush. "This was one of the most successful achievements, not only from a military but also from a diplomatic and a political standpoint, that this country has ever seen." If the systematic destruction of a small country and systematic lying, manipulating, and killing is one of the greatest achievements of a country, then that country is in bad shape. But neither imperialism nor neo-imperialism have ever been ashamed to cover over crimes and aggression with the most bald-faced lies and blatant hypocrisy.

I am using the highly charged term "neoimperialist" quite deliberately. Susan Sontag once wrote that during the Vietnam war, it became possible, even mandatory, to use the word "imperialism" in light of the massive U.S. assault on Vietnam, thousands of miles away from the United States. From a more technical standpoint of political theory, however, neither Vietnam nor the Persian Gulf war were classical imperialist wars. Classical imperialism involved a stage of capitalism in which the capitalist superpowers occupied foreign countries to directly exploit their labor power, resources, and markets. Classical imperialism usually involved the imposition of a government administered by the imperialist

country, supported by a military force from the occupying power, often bolstered by "native" forces and sometimes administrators. Neoimperialism, by contrast, involves the control of markets, politics, and sociocultural developments through a combination of military, political, and cultural power. Neoimperialism corresponds to the stage of capitalism in which transnational corporations and superpower nation states attempt to dominate the economic and political destinies of nations throughout the world by a combination of military threats, covert actions, political diplomacy, and cultural hegemony.

Indeed, one of the hidden agendas of the Persian Gulf adventure from the beginning was to establish the United States decisively as the world's number-one superpower based on the application of crushing military power as an instrument of imposing political will and domination on smaller countries who would not conform to the interests of the hegemonic neoimperialist powers. To effectively carry through this object lesson, the United States had to demonstrate an ability to assemble, organize, and carry through an impressive demonstration of military power. To make this lesson dramatically, Iraq had to be destroyed and this was the goal of the war from the beginning. Successful accomplishment would establish the U.S. as the most powerful military force in the world and would demonstrate the threat of the use of military power to establish U.S. political hegemony.

Indeed, for Bush and his ilk, the most important result of the victory in the Persian Gulf war was that it would once and for all allow the United States to overcome the "Vietnam syndrome." During a "power walk" in Maine on Sunday, February 17, about a week before the ground war and on the day that his church service was interrupted by an antiwar protester, Bush explicitly claimed that the coming U.S. victory in the Gulf war would overcome the Vietnam syndrome. In one of his first speeches after the war, he exulted: "By God, we've kicked this Vietnam syndrome forever!" By "Vietnam syndrome," Bush meant the unwillingness to commit U.S. military power for political objectives on account of fear of failure, thus repeating the Vietnam debacle. In fact, however, if one sees the Vietnam syndrome as a disease, as the proclivity to use U.S. military power to solve political problems, then the Gulf massacre was a classic expression of the Vietnam syndrome, of a militarist compulsion to use U.S. military power to resolve political conflicts.

Iraq was the victim, therefore, of a neoimperialist attempt to control its destiny. Iraq refused to submit to the will of the Western neoimperialist superpower and its allies, who responded violently and with determined resolution to pound Iraq into submission. The Persian Gulf massacre made clear to upstart Third World countries that if they refuse to play by the rules established by the capitalist superpowers, they will be crushed by military force. The Gulf technowar also demonstrated the efficacy of U.S. high-tech weapons systems and military power. Indeed, the deserts of the Middle East were a perfect testing ground for new high-tech weapons and military strategies that could restore U.S. military prestige and establish the superiority of U.S. military technology and personnel.

Bill Gibson, whose work has greatly influenced the present one, called his book on Vietnam, The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam. In conversations with him I argued against this title on the grounds that the Vietnam war was messy, convoluted, out of control, and ultimately a resounding defeat for the technowar managers; Gibson, of course, intended his title ironically and used it to expose the hubris of the war managers who thought that Vietnam would be the perfect war to test their new weapons systems and counterinsurgency doctrines and techniques. They failed in this earlier venture and needed a smashing victory to reestablish their "credibility" and prestige. The Persian Gulf war, by contrast, was the perfect

war: it had the perfect enemy in the Iraqi president who was the perfect villain whom the propaganda apparatus could demonize. Iraq possessed a Third World army that appeared threatening in view of the magnitude of men, tanks, artillery, and weapons, but which, in fact, was a pushover, guaranteeing a sure win. In addition, the U.S. orchestrated a media propaganda war with spin control for every eventuality and had at its disposal a compliant media not only willing to transmit its every lie, piece of disinformation, and propaganda, but positively affirming and celebrating the war machine's every move.

The Gulf War was celebrated by some commentators as a successful attempt to reinvigorate the American psyche, to overcome doubts and confusions, and to ally national anxieties. The Wall Street Journal commented that success in the Gulf war "should create a new, upbeat temperament in a populace that has been in the dumps since the 1960s" (cited in The Progressive, March 1991, p. 10). There can be no doubt that people in the U.S. were angry and confused, looking for someone or something to blame for their worries and troubles. Saddam Hussein and Iraq were the perfect scapegoat and the Bush administration exploited this to the maximum. As The Progressive put it, "War offers an ideal scapegoat and escape. Saddam Hussein can be pressed into service as the new Willie Horton, a focal point for the politics of resentment that is built on cheap sloganeering" (March 1991, p. 10). In this interpretation, the war served as a handy substitute for the collapse of the Soviet empire, providing a new target for domestic fears and hatred.

The Persian Gulf war was thus the perfect war to test Pentagon weapons and strategies; to deplete their overstocked supply of weapons and to create the need for new ones; to reestablish the prestige of the military against future budget cuts; to militarize the culture and create new military myths and ideology; to advance the careers of officers who could pose as heroes; and to promote the fortunes of George Bush and his war team. But this was not the perfect war for the people and culture of Iraq, the environment of the Persian Gulf, or any of the people who had to pay, and will have to pay, with their lives and livelihoods. The war was hardly perfect or beneficial for the casualties of the war on all sides: the foreign workers and other refugees thrown out of Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, many of whom are now condemned to a life of misery and perhaps horrible death; and Arabs who had to experience yet another humiliation in their history of defeat by Western powers.

Other victims of the war include those in the U.S. who will have to live in a culture of militarism with declining social programs, a declining standard of living, and increased public squalor for all. Indeed, although the troops of the Persian Gulf were celebrated as national heroes who returned to hyped up parades and victory celebrations, costing millions of dollars, they too were victims of George Bush's Gulf war. Many had to spend months in the burning and then freezing Saudi Arabian deserts, subject to incredible discomfort and horrendous fears. Many reservists had to leave jobs and families, incurring tremendous financial and emotional burdens, while being exposed to injury and death. Their families at home experienced severe hardship with fathers or mothers gone, leaving the other spouse and children at home, suffering many emotional traumas, which were sometimes documented in the media. Many marriages broke up from the strain and divorce rates for Gulf war troops were over 50 percent in many areas of heavy military concentration.¹¹

In addition, the troops in the desert were exploited in one of the largest medical experiments in history, in which they served as guinea pigs for untested drugs against chemical warfare agents.¹² According to Laurie Tormey Hasbrook (see Note 12), several soldiers died from these experiments and

many are now sick from various diseases which they contracted in the Gulf region. Joel Bleifuss discussed the administration of untested drugs on the Gulf military guinea pigs, reporting that the "Health Alert" section in the latest Military Families Support Network (MFSN) indicates that at least a dozen military wives who got pregnant after their husbands returned from the Gulf have had miscarriages. When one of the soldiers asked whether his wife's miscarriage could be related to the experimental drugs he took, he was told that the military was 'not allowed to discuss the drugs'" (In These Times, Dec. 18, 1991, p. 4). Bleifuss also notes that the MFSN reports that Gulf war veterans are already starting to turn up in shelters for the homeless. The New York Times reported on November 13 (p. A11) that the military has stopped accepting blood donations from Persian Gulf war veterans because of a rare parasite brought home from the region caused by bites from sand flies.

Thus George Bush's war took a heavy toll on the domestic population as well as the people of Iraq and other populations in the area. It was not, in the final analysis, a perfect war at all, but just another filthy war expressive of a world without logos and without the ability to resolve conflicts without violence. Like all wars, it was therefore barbaric, primitive, and vicious without, as I shall argue in the next chapter, any redeeming features at all.

Notes

1. The Soviet media, however, expressed outrage over the U.S. refusal to work with the Soviets to negotiate a diplomatic solution. The Soviet news agency Tass commented on February 24 that "this unique chance [offered by the Soviet peace plan] was allowed to slip away and the tragedy began fraught with great bloodshed." The commentary stated that the coalition forces wanted above all "to destroy fully Iraq's military-industrial potential and state structures to ensure a privileged position for the United States and its allies in the postwar arrangements." The milder official Soviet reaction the same day stated: "The instinct to rely on the military solution prevailed, despite the fact that Iraq's agreement to withdraw its forces from Kuwait in keeping with the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 660 has created a basically new situation, clearing the way to transferring the Gulf conflict to the footing of a political settlement." The Soviet military and hardliners were even more outraged, and this rage contributed to the abortive coup attempt against Gorbachev some months later. Thus, Bush's refusal to negotiate a settlement risked the survival of Gorbachev's regime and could have destroyed perestroika and produced a new cold war. Bush thus appears as a gambler every bit as reckless as Saddam Hussein, but luckier.

2. The Associated Press reported on June 15, 1991 that the Saudi executioner was once again a busy man after the departure of Westerners. The report indicated that public executions had resumed in Saudi Arabia after a ten-month break during the time that Western reporters and troops were in the country. "The executions were stopped in order to avoid upsetting Western public opinion," the director of Middle East Watch, Andrew Whitley noted. "That to our minds, is a cynical manipulation of the legal process."

3. Interestingly, a caller from San Diego on the CNN "Larry King Live" show made the point that the Kuwaitis had hired a public relations firm and that these reports were carefully orchestrated propaganda. King cut her off and the issue was not discussed.

4. Dan Rather of CBS described the Scud attack as a "terrorist counterattack" and CBS correspondent Harry Smith described it as "Saddam Hussein's act of terrorism." It is not clear why Iraq's firing of a missile at Saudi Arabia during war was "terrorism" while the U.S. bombing of Iraq and slaughter of the fleeing Iraqi troops was good, clean war.

5. It could also have been the case that the United States noted that Iraqi defenses were too strong on the Kuwaiti shore and that an amphibious operation would have sustained intolerably high casualties. After the war, the TV networks showed models of impressive Iraqi fortifications along the shoreline, which could have produced many coalition casualties.

6. A Finnish military expert, Pekka Visuri, also independently estimated that there was "at most only about half of the 500,000 Iraqi troops purported by American officials or Western media" (Luostarinen 1991, p. 11). In addition, U.S. News and World Report estimated in Triumph Without Victory that Iraq probably only had 300,000 troops in the fields, and perhaps as few as 200,000 (1992, p. 405). Schwartzkopf was thus constantly guilty of transmitting "shamelessly doctored" statistics (Pierre Sprey) during the Gulf war and the shameless mainstream media let him get away with it to the shame of the nation.

7. Joshua Epstein claimed on ABC in February that the U.S.-led coalition's destruction of Iraq's economic infrastructure was totally unnecessary to the military campaign. Ramsey Clark would later carry out a War Crimes Tribunal claiming that Bush and his war team violated international law in their bombing of Iraq's civilian infrastructure and murder of civilians; see Clark et al. 1992. A November 1991 report by Middle East Watch claimed that both sides in the Gulf war committed "serious violations of the laws of war" and that "many hundreds of civilians needlessly lost their lives because U.S.-led coalition commanders failed to abide by the laws of armed conflict." Repeated U.S. violations included: daytime attacks on military targets in urban areas; excessive collateral damage; and systematic attacks on food, agricultural, and water-treatment facilities "appear to have violated laws against hitting targets that have no apparent military value." Similarly, attacks on Iraq's electrical system "may also have resulted in excessive civilian costs compared to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated....[T]he lack of electricity in Iraq has exacerbated food shortages, crippled the country's sewage-treatment and water-purification systems, badly hurt the medical apparatus, and impaired much of its ability to produce its own food." Finally, U.S. forces "appear to have repeatedly and indiscriminately attacked civilian vehicles on Iraqi highways and bedouin tents in Western Iraq, where they were seeking out Scud missile sites" (Middle East Watch 1991).

8. Defense Intelligence Agency and CIA estimates "suggest that about 1,430 of Iraq's armored personnel carriers got away, where originally it was believed that no more than 500 did. Similarly about 700 of Iraq's estimated 4,550 tanks in southern Iraq escaped, against an earlier estimate of between 500 and 600" (Cohen and Gatti 1991, pp. 296-297).

9. The following discussion is indebted to Paul Rogers, "The Myth of the Clean War," Covert Action Information Bulletin, No. 37 (Summer 1991), pp. 26-30 and to the transcription of an interview with Rogers on WBAI radio, September 16, 1991, transcribed in the PeaceNet bulletin

board, misc.activism.progressive, Febr. 8, 1992. See also Paul Walker, "The Myth of Surgical Bombing in Iraq," in Clark et al. 1992, pp. 83-89.

10. The counterargument against the morality and legality of the slaughter is found throughout Clark et al. 1992 and Middle East Watch 1991.

11. See the article in the New York Times, May 5, 1991, and USA Today, January 16, 1992 which documented the high rates of divorce, spouse abuse, and post-war traumatic syndrome among the returning veterans of the Gulf war.

12. See the Los Angeles Times, Jan. 1, 1991, which had a brief notice "Unapproved Drugs Cleared for Troops." The Military Families Support Network newsletter Newsire, Vol. 2, Nr. 1 (February 1992) documented the parasitic diseases found among Gulf vets, the administration of untested or not fully approved drugs, and other health and readjustment problems. Laurie Tormey Hasbrook, in a talk at the November 1991 Midwest Radical Scholars and Activist conference, claimed that this was the largest experimental use of untested drugs in history. Hasbrook had been interviewing a group of Gulf war veterans who had served months in the Gulf and who had then entered Kuwait but did not directly participate in ground war fighting. One member of the group had committed suicide, another had a nervous breakdown and as many as 50% were suffering traumas from their experiences, though many were not seeking psychological help as they feared this would harm their military careers.