

August Marks Twentieth Anniversary of Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait

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This August marks the twentieth anniversary of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

An official U.S. Army account of the Gulf War can be found in the Center of Military History's 2005 book, "American Military History, Volume II: The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917–2003." The book explains:

In the early morning hours of August 2, 1990, three armored divisions of Saddam Hussein's elite Iraqi *Republican Guard* crossed the Kuwaiti border and sped toward the city of Kuwait. Within days most Kuwaitis had surrendered or fled to Saudi Arabia. The *Republican Guard* divisions had closed to the Saudi border, and Iraqi follow-on forces had fanned out to secure the oil fields and commercial wealth of the small, yet prosperous country.

Iraq had long coveted oil-rich Kuwait, declaring it land stolen from Iraq by the British during the colonial era. This ambition became aggravated during the prolonged Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), during which Saddam Hussein accrued enormous debts. The wealth of Kuwait could fix this problem.



The MARS station at Fort Monmouth, K2USA, operated around the clock with fifty-one volunteers during Operation Desert Storm. Volunteers included Fort Monmouth's commander, Maj. Gen. (later Lt. Gen.) Alfred J. Mallette shown here. Operators relayed messages between service men abroad and their loved ones at home and provided a world-wide radio communications capability in times of emergency. The predecessor to MARS started at Fort Monmouth in 1925.

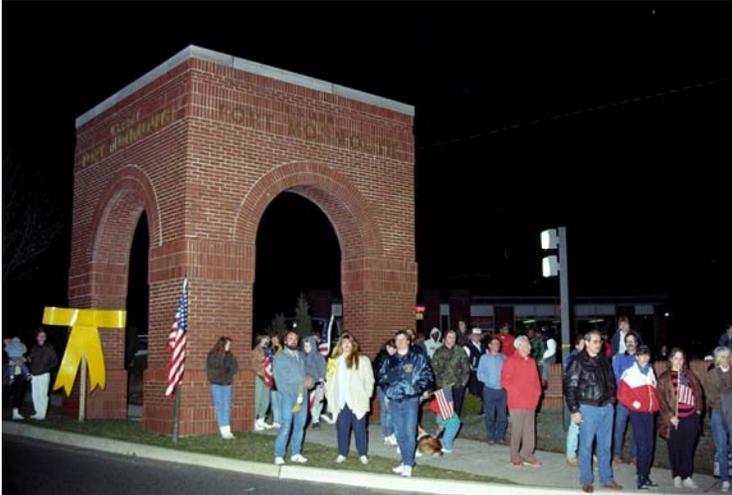
For the American government and President George H. W. Bush, the first priority following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait quickly became the defense of Saudi Arabia. Disruption of Kuwaiti oil supplies was damaging enough to the global economy; disruption of Saudi oil supplies could be disastrous. On August 6 Saudi King Fahd bin Abdul Azziz approved American intervention to assist in the defense of his kingdom, and on August 8 a brigade of the 82d Airborne Division hit the ground in Saudi Arabia. The mission of defending Saudi Arabia was code-named Operation Desert Shield.

By early November the objective had changed, however. Frustrated in efforts to achieve a diplomatic solution to the crisis, a worldwide coalition reinforced by UN mandates determined not to allow Saddam Hussein to enjoy the fruits of his aggression. President Bush committed the United States to the liberation of Kuwait as well as to the defense of Saudi Arabia. This objective would require offensive action. Thus, Desert

Shield became Desert Storm.

Operation Desert Storm began at 3 a.m. Baghdad time on January 17, 1991, with massive air strikes and missile bombardment throughout Iraq.

By February 26, Hussein had announced Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. The next day, coalition forces entered Kuwait City. On February 28, U.S. President George Bush declared a cease-fire. The Americans had suffered 148 battle deaths and their allies another 99, versus something upward of 20,000 for the Iraqis. Another 50,000 Iraqis were wounded or captured.



The Fort Monmouth community awaits the return of Desert Storm Troopers from Saudi Arabia, March 1991. The command's employees had worked tirelessly to equip soldiers with everything from radios and jammers to night vision and intelligence systems. On the eve of the Ground War, CECOM had fifty-nine military, 103 civilian, and 122 contractor personnel in or on their way to the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations.

CECOM's Role

According to Dr. Richard Bingham, Command Historian of the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) during the Gulf War, CECOM in 1990 exercised life cycle management of more than 9,000 end items. These included:

- Communication systems -- radios, telephones, switches, and satellite terminals with which commanders directed their troops and reported their actions.
- Cryptological products that denied the enemy access to U.S. information transmissions.
- Intercept systems that gave U.S. forces access to information the enemy transmitted.
- Countermeasures equipment that jammed enemy communication and denied them the ability to jam those of U.S. forces.
- Survival equipment -- pilot radios that gave U.S. forces the ability to find and rescue downed aircrew; aircraft survivability equipment that gave aircrew the ability to detect and defeat enemy fire; identification systems that helped U.S. forces distinguish friend from foe.
- Avionics, to include airborne radios and navigation equipment.
- Positioning devices that gave friendly forces the ability to pinpoint locations precisely and navigate in the featureless terrain of the Arabian desert.
- Surveillance and target acquisition systems -- the radars and sensors with which U.S. forces observed enemy movements and identified targets.

- Vision aids -- the image intensification and infrared imaging devices that gave U.S. forces the ability to see the enemy and Allies at night and through the haze, smoke, and dust of the battlefields in Iraq and Kuwait.
- Tactical computers and software that gave U.S. forces mastery of the data used in maneuver control, fire control, air defense, intelligence and electronic warfare, and combat service support.

Bingham wrote in his 1994 monograph, “CECOM and the War for Kuwait, August 1990 - March 1991,” that “The roles these systems played in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm attest to the significance of the technologies CECOM and predecessor organizations introduced to the battlefield in recent decades and the importance of CECOM support for these technologies during preparations for and pursuit of the Gulf War.”

According to Bingham, the U.S. and its Allies won the war for Kuwait “not because they amassed a superior force with superior fire power, but because we were able to control our force much better than the enemy controlled his; because we were able to know what the enemy was doing while denying him knowledge of what we were doing; because we were able to see and target enemy forces before they could see us. These were the abilities that CECOM-managed commodities gave the Army.”

For more information, request Bingham’s “CECOM and the War for Kuwait, August 1990 - March 1991,” from the Historical Office at melissa.ziobro@us.army.mil.



Personnel from the Office of the Provost Marshal gathered to send greetings to colleagues in Saudi Arabia, November 5, 1990. By the end of operations, the command had processed close to 180,000 requisitions, shipped six million pieces of equipment (including four million batteries), and procured a total of 10.8 million pieces of equipment worth \$326 million.