



# War in the Persian Gulf - Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (August 1990-March 1991)

*Richard Stewart*

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In the early morning hours of 2 August 1990, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein launched an overwhelming invasion of tiny, oil-rich Kuwait. (Map 1) The United States Army, reveling in the end of the Cold War and on the verge of downsizing, faced a new and unexpected challenge. The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 had changed the strategic equation, not only in Europe but throughout the world. Within a few years, Soviet troops evacuated all of their former satellites in the Warsaw Pact, those satellites reconfigured themselves as independent and democratic states, the Soviet Union itself collapsed into fifteen different countries, and Germany reunited into a single nation. This collapse left the United States as the sole remaining superpower in a new, unsettled world. The United States came to have more responsibilities around the globe and more strategic maneuver room to intervene in foreign crises with less risk of catastrophic confrontation with the Soviet Union. At the same time, client states of the former Soviet Union—from Eastern Bloc Europe to Cuba to the Middle East—found themselves without their traditional patron and without the military and diplomatic restraint that patron-client relationship had provided in the past. One former Soviet client, the Ba'athist Iraq of Saddam Hussein, certainly felt empowered to press its luck...

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