

**«OPERATION “DESERT SABRE”» («OPERATION “DESERT SWORD”»)) (24-28TH
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Umurbaev Rustam Shakirjanovich

Graduate of Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies Tashkent

E-mail: urustam316@gmail.com

Tel.: [+998946995982](tel:+998946995982)

Abstract. This paper though the long-running war between Iran and Iraq had ended in a United Nations-brokered ceasefire in August 1988, by mid 1990 the two states had yet to begin negotiating a permanent peace treaty. When their foreign ministers met in Geneva that July, prospects for peace seemed bright. Two weeks later, however, Saddam Hussein delivered a speech in which he accused neighboring Kuwait of siphoning crude oil from their common border, claiming that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were conspiring to keep oil prices low in an effort to pander to Western oil-buying nations.

Key words: military, countries provided, assessments, including, emphasized, effectiveness.

Introduction

The logistical support of operation «Desert Shield» (aimed at both the deterrence of further Iraqi aggression and the defense of Saudi Arabia) and operation «Desert Storm» (aimed at ejecting Iraqi military forces from Kuwait) included these same materiel and service requirements. However, the logistical support requirements and planning were in many ways unique. Long before the crisis, Saudi Arabia had started a program to modernize its armed forces, principally under the U.S. security assistance program. They had constructed a coastal logistics infrastructure of sea- and airports, military bases and a rudimentary inland road system, thus making unnecessary the massive construction effort so often required in a new theater of operations.

The host nation, Saudi Arabia, and other coalition countries provided transportation, water, food, fuel, and support personnel, further reducing the demands on U.S. military resources. Time also worked in favor of the allies as limited strategic lift assets were pressed into service. The lack of inland infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, particularly supply bases and extensive roadways, required a measured pace of unit personnel deployments by airlift to coincide with the arrival of unit equipment and supplies by sealift. Still, the logistics challenges were massive in scale and magnified by the complex force structure deploying to the region. Only the United States had the wherewithal to organize the strategic move of personnel and materiel over vast distances to Southwest Asia, and the theater management capabilities and organizations to receive, control and distribute the materiel necessary to support the operation.

Material and Methods

In addition to Hussein's incendiary speech, Iraq had begun amassing troops on Kuwait's border. Alarmed by these actions, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt initiated negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait, but Hussein broke off the negotiations after only two hours, and on August 2, 1990 ordered the invasion of Kuwait. Hussein's assumption that his fellow Arab states would stand by him proved to be a miscalculation. Alarmed by these actions, two-thirds of the 21 members of the Arab League condemned Iraq's act of aggression, and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, along with Kuwait's government-in-exile, turned to the United States and other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for support.

U.S. President George H.W. Bush immediately condemned the invasion, as did the governments of Britain and the Soviet Union. On November 29, 1990, the UN Security Council authorized the use of «all necessary means» of force against Iraq if it did not withdraw from Kuwait by the following

January 15. Hussein defied the Security Council, and early on the morning of January 17, 1991 the Persian «Gulf War» began with a massive U.S.-led air offensive known as «Operation “Desert Storm”». The U.S. was accompanied by troops sent by NATO allies as well as Egypt and several other Arab nations. The coalition effort benefited from the latest military technology, including Stealth bombers, Cruise missiles, so-called «Smart» bombs with laser-guidance systems and infrared night-bombing equipment. The Iraqi air force was either destroyed early on or opted out of combat under the relentless attack.

Results

Operation «Desert Storm» was a highly successful and decisive military operation. The air campaign, which incurred minimal casualties while effecting the collapse of the Iraqis’ ability to resist, helped liberate Kuwait and elicit Iraqi compliance with resolutions. However, our analysis of the air campaign against strategic targets revealed several air power issues that require attention before the next campaign. First, the effectiveness of air power in «Desert Storm» was inhibited by the aircraft sensors’ inherent limitations in identifying and acquiring targets and by failure to gather intelligence on the existence or location of certain critical targets and its inability to collect and disseminate timely battle damage assessments. Pilots noted that infrared, electro-optical, and laser systems were all seriously degraded by clouds, rain, fog, smoke, and even high humidity, and the pilots reported being unable to discern whether a presumed target was a tank or a truck and whether it had already been destroyed. The failure of intelligence to identify certain targets precluded any opportunity for the coalition to fully accomplish some of its objectives. And the reduced accuracies from medium and high altitudes and absence of timely BDA led to higher costs, reduced effectiveness, and increased risks from making unnecessary restrikes.

Second, U.S. commanders were able to favor medium- to high-altitude strike tactics that maximized aircraft and pilot survivability, rather than weapon system effectiveness. This was because of early and complete air superiority, a limited enemy response, and terrain and climate conditions generally conducive to air strikes. Low-altitude munitions deliveries had been emphasized in prewar training, but they were abandoned early. The subsequent deliveries from medium and high altitudes resulted in the use of sensors and weapon systems at distances from targets that were not optimal for their identification, acquisition, or accuracy. Medium- and high-altitude tactics also increased the exposure of aircraft sensors to man-made and natural impediments to visibility.

A primary goal of our work was to cross-validate the best available data on aircraft and weapon system performance, both qualitative and quantitative, to test for consistency, accuracy, and reliability. The data we analyzed in this report are the best information collected during the war. They were compiled for and used by the commanders who managed the air campaign. These data also provided the basis for postwar DOD and manufacturer assessments of aircraft and weapon system performance during «Desert Storm». We balanced the limitations of the data, to the extent possible, against qualitative analyses of the systems. For example, we compared claims made for system performance and contributions to what was supportable given all the available data, both quantitative and qualitative.

Discussion

We collected and analyzed data from a broad range of sources, including the major DOD databases that document the strike histories of the war and cumulative damage to targets; numerous after-action and lessons-learned reports from military units that participated in the war; intelligence reports; analyses performed by DOD contractors; historical accounts of the war from the media and other published literature; interviews with participants, including more than «Desert Storm» pilots, key this analysis of the campaign, aircraft, munitions use, and effectiveness benefited from our use of the most comprehensive strike, BDA data produced from the Persian «Gulf War», a previously untried methodology to match inputs and outputs on targets; additional qualitative and quantitative

data obtained from «Desert Storm» veterans, after-action reports to corroborate information in the primary databases, and our utilization of the results of other «Desert Storm» analyses, such as the «Gulf War» Air Power Survey.

This study is the first to match available «Desert Storm» strike and BDA data by target and to attempt to assess the effectiveness of multiple weapon systems across target categories. Despite the data limitations discussed below, our methodology provided systematic information on how weapon systems were employed, what level and types of weapons were required to achieve success, and the relative cost-effectiveness of multiple platforms. The reliability and validity of these findings are strengthened by our use of interviews, after-action reports, and other «Desert Storm» analyses to better.

Conclusion

We sought to work around data limitations through qualitative analysis of systems, based on diverse sources. Claims made for system performance were assessed in light of the most rigorous evaluation that could be made with the available data. We have explicitly noted data insufficiencies and uncertainties. Overall, data gaps and inconsistencies made an across-the-board cost-effectiveness evaluation difficult. However, there were sufficient data either to assess all the major claims made by DOD for the performance of the major systems studied or to indicate where the data are lacking to support certain claims. DOD and associated agencies have undertaken initiatives since the war to address many, but not all, of the limitations of the air campaign that we identified in our summary and conclusions. We have not analyzed each of these initiatives in this report; however, we briefly describe those that apply to one or more of our conclusions below.

Acknowledgement

Our analyses of campaign inputs (from the Missions database) and outcomes (from the phase III reports) against ground targets have limitations of both scope and reliability imposed by constraints in the primary «Desert Storm» databases. Systematically correlating munition inputs against targets to outcomes was made highly problematic by the fact that the phase III BDA reports did not provide a comprehensive compilation of BDA for all strategic targets and could not differentiate the effects of one system from another on the same target.

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