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WHORM Category Name: Opinions - Statements - Questionnaires - Articles

Document Number: 290728SS
Alpha File Name:

Questions for President Bush for U.S. News & World Report book on the Persian Gulf crisis and the war with Iraq

From Ken Walsh, White House Correspondent and Senior Editor

1. Mr. President, some of your closest advisers have described your initial reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, as almost visceral. These aides said that you knew, almost instinctively, that the aggression by Iraq could not go unchallenged by the United States. Was this primarily because of the threat Saddam Hussein posed to the world economy, having gained control over nearly one-fifth of the world's known oil supply. Or was there a larger issue, that this "naked act of aggression," as you described it, was a very specific challenge to the role of the United States as the only super-power in the post Cold War world?
2. Some have suggested that one would have to look as far back as FDR to find an American President as qualified as George Bush to assemble and maintain a coalition of nations such as that constructed in August of 1991. Could you outline the reasons for your administration's emphasis on the importance of a coalition from the very first hours after the invasion of Kuwait? Did this have its origins in the simple logistical considerations involved in imposing and enforcing the United Nations sanctions against Iraq, or were there broader, more philosophical underpinnings for your insistence on an alliance of nations joined with the United States in its confrontation with Iraq?
3. More than most American Presidents, your foreign policy has been characterized by an intensely personal style and approach. Many of the world leaders who stood at the side of the United States during the early days of the Gulf conflict, and President Mubarak and Prime Minister Thatcher come to mind immediately, were people you had known for years. They were, in many instances, personal friends. With Saddam Hussein, however, you were confronted with a highly isolated leader, a person whom even the Soviets did not understand clearly. To what extent was this a source of frustration to you? If there was a lack of understanding about Saddam Hussein and his motivations in refusing to withdraw his forces from Kuwait, how did it affect the administration's conduct as the test of wills dragged into the fall?
4. On October 11, General Robert Johnston, General Schwarzkopf's chief of staff at Central Command headquarters in Riyadh, briefed you and other members of the National Security Council on a plan to use the force you had already authorized for deployment to Saudi Arabia in an offensive operation against the Iraqi forces in Kuwait. Secretary Cheney and General Powell have explained to us the source of the confusion about this briefing. Others among your advisers indicated that the plan briefed by General Johnston was never one that was considered for implementation. Is it correct to infer, as

some have suggested, however, that by early October you had become increasingly convinced that the conflict with Iraq would very likely have to be resolved by force? If this is not correct, was there some other date, some other occurrence, that persuaded you that the conflict with Iraq would not be resolved peacefully?

5. The Bush Administration's policy was widely applauded early on, and in most quarters, throughout the crisis for the clarity of its objectives. In deploying forces to defend the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and imposing stringent sanctions to persuade Saddam Hussein to order his forces to withdraw from Kuwait, senior Pentagon officials said that they felt comfortable with both their missions and the timetables you allowed them to achieve their objectives. Others among your advisers, however, reportedly argued that despite the admirable clarity of the administration's stated objectives in the Gulf, they failed to address the larger problem from which the Gulf crisis arose. If Saddam Hussein had withdrawn his army from Kuwait prior to the January 15 deadline established by the United Nations Security Council, he would have repaired to Baghdad with his entire army intact, and with all of his programs for the development and construction of weapons of mass destruction. Is this a correct interpretation of the Bush Administration's Gulf policy prior to the commencement of war on January 16? Some have suggested because of the inherently fragile nature of the coalition that the United States could not have articulated a policy that targeted Saddam Hussein's military capabilities specifically. Was the coalition, in effect, a constraint on the United States in terms of its ability to articulate and exercise a somewhat different policy in the Gulf?

6. Both during and after the conflict with Iraq, there was considerable talk that George Bush had "personalized" the conflict with Iraq. Given the atrocities committed by Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait and Iraq's abysmal human-rights record under Saddam Hussein, the references to Saddam as Hitler hardly seemed overdrawn to most Americans, surveys showed. How does one square your own statements about Saddam Hussein and the concern that you had personalized the conflict with Iraq, with the Bush Administration's stated objectives in the Gulf? On several occasions, you stated that the quarrel of the United States was not with the people of Iraq, but with their leader? If that was so, how was the administration's policy toward Iraq intended to discredit if not disable Saddam Hussein and his government?

7. To a man, the senior commanders of Operation Desert Storm expressed gratitude toward you personally for having provided the political leadership during the Gulf conflict while allowing them to do their jobs to prepare for and ultimately win the war. At a critical moment, however, on the fourth day of the ground campaign, Iraqi forces agreed to a cease-fire, and some senior commanders said that the timing was dictated by Washington. These commanders said that at the hour they were ordered to cease offensive operations, the battlefield situation was very unclear. Indeed, there is no ample evidence to show that no cordon sanitaire had been established; the

24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) engaged in a tank battle with the Hammuarabi Division of the Republican Guard nearly 48 hours after the cease-fire went into effect. Our research has also shown that well over half of the tanks and armored personnel carriers of the eight Iraqi Republican Guard divisions survived the war intact and was removed successfully back behind Iraqi borders. The very heart of Iraq's military capability, then, was not destroyed as a result of the war.

At the same time, however, as early as the second day of the ground campaign, Arab members of the coalition were making statements publicly that the war against Iraq had proceeded far enough. In the United States, after news coverage of the so-called "Highway of Death" aerial bombardment of vehicles fleeing north from Kuwait City, there was criticism of an American "turkey shoot." Could you help us understand what pressures were being brought to bear on the United States to cease hostilities precisely 100 hours after the commencement of the ground campaign and whether, as some senior Pentagon officials argue, you believe that decision was made correctly?

8. Several of your advisers have been at pains to point out that in differentiating between Saddam Hussein and the people of Iraq, you never specifically encouraged the Kurds in the north of Iraq and the Shiites in the south to rise up against their government. Rather, these aides say, your appeal was to the Iraqi military to remove Saddam Hussein. Absent such a move on the part of the military, was there something more that the United States should have done to prevent the now-documented massacres of Kurds and Shiites, many of the latter by the Republican Guard divisions that escaped from the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations?

9. People who have studied the politics of the Persian Gulf, and of Iraq specifically, say that it is difficult to understand how the Bush administration could have failed to anticipate the uprisings of the Kurds and, less predictably, the Shiites once the war against Iraq had begun. Do you feel that the aftermath of the conflict with Iraq has been less than satisfactory? Do you feel that more might have been done prior to the conflict to ensure a somewhat different outcome? Given the extraordinary success you and Secretary of State James Baker achieved in building and maintaining the coalition, and given the enormously successful military performance of the United States and its allies, many have suggested that the results are disappointing. Is this your own view of the war and its aftermath?

10. Could you please summarize what you consider the main effects of the war? It is clear, of course, that the United States accomplished its main objective in forcing Iraq out of Kuwait. Beyond that, could you outline other impacts that you consider most important--such as on the United Nations, on other nations in the region, on prospects for the Mideast peace process, on relations between the superpowers, on America's pride in its military and in itself?

DG



290728SS

PR013-08

September 25, 1991

Marlin:

Please read these over- I would welcome any edits. I want to be sure these answers help. maybe you should share with brent or bob for their edits.

gb

A handwritten signature, possibly "gb", written in dark ink.

cc: Brent Scowcroft

PHOTOCOPY
GB HANDWRITING

FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Per Natalie
- actions
completed
11/6/91

DATE: 9/26/91

NOTE FOR: MARLIN FITZWATER

The President has reviewed the attached, and it is
forwarded to you for your:

Information

Action

Thank you.

PHILLIP D. BRADY
Assistant to the President
and Staff Secretary
(x2702)

cc: General Scowcroft

Answers from President Bush for U.S. News and World Report book on the Persian Gulf crisis and the war with Iraq, for Ken Walsh:

1) I did feel early on that the aggression by Iraq could not--must not--go unchallenged. The overriding reason for this was the fact that bold and naked aggression could not be permitted to stand. I worried that Saddam's intentions went far beyond taking over Kuwait and, of course, with that, with an attack on Saudi Arabia, he would have gained control ^{over} a tremendous amount of the world's oil supply. But the bottom line was that aggression could not stand. If he was permitted to get away with that, heaven knows where the world would have gone and what forces would have been unleashed.

2) The coalition became essential from the very first days. Unilateral U.S. response to Saddam's invasion could well have gotten us crosswise with the Soviet Union, with other Arab countries, and even with Europe. It was essential that other countries join in, and that the United Nations be involved. Some of that related to what we ourselves could do, on what I could get Congress to go along with; but the aggression was so clear, and contravenes so directly the U.N. purpose, the U.N.'s stated objective, that we all felt we could and must get the United Nations to pass a resolution and, in so doing, not only could we bring together the coalition that would commit forces, but major powers such as China would be committed. So, the bottom line is, there were "philosophical underpinnings" for our insistence on U.N. action and on forming the coalition that would bear the military burden.

3) Saddam Hussein was an enormous frustration to me. I still feel that he miscalculated in two ways: one, he didn't think we would use force, and, two, I think he for some odd reason felt that, if we did use force, he could emerge victorious even if it was through some kind of a stalemate or a long standoff in the desert. I do not think we made any miscalculations based on Saddam's miscalculations. I don't think we made any miscalculations based on Saddam's obdurateness. As the confrontation dragged on, before the use of military force, more and more people around the world felt that Saddam had lost it-- that he was out of contact with reality. And the longer it went on and other countries saw us trying to use diplomacy, the support that Saddam might have had just plain evaporated. He was left with only a handful of apologists.

4) I became convinced early on that, if diplomacy failed, we would indeed have to use force. I kept hoping that the use of force could be avoided. I cannot pinpoint all of this to a certain date, but I was determined from the very beginning that aggression would not stand and, as the military planning went forward, I was more and more convinced that we could use force and be successful. Various plans changed from time to time, and they were improved as the situation became more clearer and clearer to our military. Many felt that Saddam would finally come to his senses and see that he could not prevail, and that he would pull out of Kuwait unilaterally, just to comply with the resolutions of the U.N., but he never did that. He miscalculated, and he underestimated our determination.

5) Our policy was to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. First, we went the sanctions route. Then we, of course, had more resolutions at the United Nations, culminating in the resolution authorizing the use of force to get him out. There was no goal of destroying or targeting Saddam Hussein personally. The coalition was not a constraint on anything fundamental for the United States, although there were certain things we couldn't do. Some now suggest we should have marched into Baghdad (incidentally, some of them were those who were against using force in the first place) but, that was never an objective that I entertained, and it was never given any serious discussion by any of our top level advisors. All of us saw very clearly the problems that would be involved with that.

6) Yes, I felt and properly stated that Saddam was like Hitler. There were some critics of this--quite a few, if one goes back and reviews the clippings; but, nevertheless, that's the way I felt about it. Having said that, and stated that, it was clear to me that the goal was the removal of Iraq from Kuwait. What we tried to do was make clear to the people of Iraq, and even to the Iraq military, that the dispute we had was not with them, but with their leader who ordered the invasion. I think the position we took did help mobilize world opinion against Saddam. We won't know for years, perhaps, what effect this policy had inside Iraq. I still believe that if the Iraqi people or military get rid of Saddam Hussein, the people would be dancing in the streets, just as they did in Romania when Ceausescu fell. And so, singling out Saddam Hussein as the culprit was the way to signal to

the people of Iraq that, if they took matters into their own hands, they could expect a better deal from the United States. It also was intended to make very clear to the Arab world that we were not against Muslims generally or/certainly against Muslim peoples. ^{most} (or Muslim)

7) I am not familiar with what your question alleges about our "some senior commanders." I do know that I was very careful in being sure that the military supported the cessation of fighting. It was stated to me clearly by General Powell, who indeed talked on the phone to General Schwarzkopf from my office, that the time had come to stop the fighting. The goal was to kick Saddam Hussein out (of Kuwait), and ^(ed) the goal, in the opinion of our top fighters, had been achieved. There were no pressures brought upon the President of the United States to stop hostilities before our top command recommended that hostilities be stopped.

8) I don't believe, given our objectives as stated, and given the U.N. resolutions, that we should have done anything different. (could)

9) I feel that we were correct in stopping the war when we achieved the internationally stated objective of ending Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait. The battle between the Kurds and the Baath Party have been going on for a long, long time. To solve that problem forever was not part of the United Nations goals, nor was it the goal of the United States. We ~~deplore~~ ^{deplore} the killings, of course. But to tie the Kurd[?](ish) or Shiite problem into the handling of the aggression of Iraq is simply a bit revisionistic. What is disappointing is that

Saddam Hussein remains and is still brutal and powerful. But that in no way diminishes the highly successful role of undoing the aggression against Kuwait.

10) The credibility of the United States has gone up all around the world. There is absolutely no question of this in my mind. Much of it stems from our leadership role in the coalition in reversing aggression. Some of it comes from later events, such as standing against the coup in the Soviet Union. I am convinced that our actions in the Gulf have given us opportunity to be a catalyst for peace in the entire Middle East.

EF

29072855
PR013.08 7202

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 15, 1991

MEMORANDUM FOR MARLIN FITZWATER

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *B*

SUBJECT: Request for Review of President's Response to U.S. News and World Report on Persian Gulf Crisis

The President attached a copy of his draft response to questions from U.S. News and World Report on the Gulf War. As you can see, editing was kept to a minimum.

Tab A Edited Version of President's Draft Response

7200

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

APNSA Has Seen

DATE: 9/26/91

NOTE FOR: MARLIN FITZWATER

The President has reviewed the attached, and it is forwarded to you for your:

Information

Action

Thank you.

PHILLIP D. BRADY
Assistant to the President
and Staff Secretary
(x2702)

cc: General Scowcroft ✓

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
ORM OPTICAL DISK NETWORK

ID# 29072855

_____ Hardcopy pages are in poor condition (too light or too dark).

✓
_____ Remainder of case not scanned.

_____ Oversize attachment not scanned.

_____ Report not scanned.

_____ Enclosure(s) not scanned.

_____ Proclamation not scanned.

_____ Incoming letters(s) not scanned.

_____ Proposal not scanned.

_____ Statement not scanned.

_____ Duplicate letters attached - not scanned.

_____ Only table of contents scanned.

_____ No incoming letter attached.

_____ Only tracking sheet scanned.

_____ Photo(s) not scanned.

_____ Bill not scanned.

Comments:



September 25, 1991

Marlin:

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gb

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2) The coalition became essential from the very first days. Unilateral U.S. response to Saddam's invasion could well have gotten us crosswise with the Soviet Union, with other Arab countries, and even with Europe. It was essential that other countries join in, and that the United Nations be involved. Some of that related to what we ourselves could do, on what I could get Congress to go along with; but the aggression was so clear, and contravenes so directly the U.N. purpose, the U.N.'s stated objective, that we all felt we could and must get the United Nations to pass a resolution and, in so doing, not only could we bring together the coalition that would commit forces, but major powers such as China would be committed. So, the bottom line is, there were "philosophical underpinnings" for our insistence on U.N. action and on forming the coalition that would bear the military burden. *All of this complemented the military requirements for a coalition response.*

3) Saddam Hussein was an enormous frustration to me. I still feel that he miscalculated in two ways: one, he didn't think we would use force, and, two, I think he for some odd reason felt that, if we did use force, he could emerge victorious even if it was through some kind of a stalemate or a long standoff in the desert. I do not think we made any miscalculations based on Saddam's miscalculations. I don't think we made any miscalculations based on Saddam's obdurateness. As the confrontation dragged on, before the use of military force, more and more people around the world felt that Saddam had lost it-- that he was out of contact with reality. And the longer it went on and other countries saw us trying to use diplomacy, the support that Saddam might have had just plain evaporated. He was left with only a handful of apologists.

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2. Some have suggested that one would have to look as far back as FDR to find an American President as qualified as George Bush to assemble and maintain a coalition of nations such as that constructed in August of 1991. Could you outline the reasons for your administration's emphasis on the importance of a coalition from the very first hours after the invasion of Kuwait? Did this have its origins in the simple logistical considerations involved in imposing and enforcing the United Nations sanctions against Iraq, or were there broader, more philosophical underpinnings for your insistence on an alliance of nations joined with the United States in its confrontation with Iraq?

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7. To a man, the senior commanders of Operation Desert Storm expressed gratitude toward you personally for having provided the political leadership during the Gulf conflict while allowing them to do their jobs to prepare for and ultimately win the war. At a critical moment, however, on the fourth day of the ground campaign, Iraqi forces agreed to a cease-fire, and some senior commanders said that the timing was dictated by Washington. These commanders said that at the hour they were ordered to cease offensive operations, the battlefield situation was very unclear. Indeed, there is no ample evidence to show that no cordon sanitaire had been established; the

24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) engaged in a tank battle with the Hammurabi Division of the Republican Guard nearly 48 hours after the cease-fire went into effect. Our research has also shown that well over half of the tanks and armored personnel carriers of the eight Iraqi Republican Guard divisions survived the war intact and was removed successfully back behind Iraqi borders. The very heart of Iraq's military capability, then, was not destroyed as a result of the war.

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9. People who have studied the politics of the Persian Gulf, and of Iraq specifically, say that it is difficult to understand how the Bush administration could have failed to anticipate the uprisings of the Kurds and, less predictably, the Shiites once the war against Iraq had begun. Do you feel that the aftermath of the conflict with Iraq has been less than satisfactory? Do you feel that more might have been done prior to the conflict to ensure a somewhat different outcome? Given the extraordinary success you and Secretary of State James Baker achieved in building and maintaining the coalition, and given the enormously successful military performance of the United States and its allies, many have suggested that the results are disappointing. Is this your own view of the war and its aftermath?

10. Could you please summarize what you consider the main effects of the war? It is clear, of course, that the United States accomplished its main objective in forcing Iraq out of Kuwait. Beyond that, could you outline other impacts that you consider most important--such as on the United Nations, on other nations in the region, on prospects for the Mideast peace process, on relations between the superpowers, on America's pride in its military and in itself?

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

7202

SIGNED

October 1, 1991

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM: RICHARD N. HAASS 

SUBJECT: Request for Comments on Text of U.S. News and World Report Book on Persian Gulf Crisis

**Natl Sec Advisor
has seen**

Attached is the President's response to questions from U.S. News and World Report on the Gulf War. As you can see, I've done just minimal editing of the President's draft.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the Memorandum to Marlin Fitzwater at Tab I.

Attachment(s)

Tab I Memo to Fitzwater

Tab A President's Draft Report

DOC ACTION OFFICER

CAO ASSIGNED ACTION REQUIRED

001 HAASS
002 SCOWCROFT
003

Z 91093016 PREPARE MEMO FOR SCOWCROFT
Z 91100218 FOR SIGNATURE
X 91101508 SCOWCROFT SGD MEMO

*Request for comments on Text of US News
and World Report*

**National Security Council
The White House**

PROOFED BY: WEA LOG # 7202
URGENT NOT PROOFED: _____ SYSTEM PRS NSC INT
BYPASSED WW DESK: _____ DOCLOG WEA AIO _____

W58

	SEQUENCE TO	HAS SEEN	DISPOSITION
Ken Hill	<u>1</u>	<u>K</u>	<u>A</u>
Bill Sittmann	_____	_____	_____
Bob Gates	_____	_____	_____
Brent Scowcroft	<u>2</u>	_____	_____
Bill Sittmann	_____	_____	_____
Situation Room	_____	_____	_____
West Wing Desk	<u>3</u>	<u>AD 10/15</u>	<u>D</u>
NSC Secretariat	<u>4</u>	_____	<u>N/R</u>
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TO: FITZWATER, M

FROM: SCOWCROFT

DOC DATE: 15 OCT 91
SOURCE REF:

KEYWORDS: IRAQ
PERSIAN GULF
PUBLIC STATEMENTS

KUWAIT
MEDIA
WH STAFF SECRETARY

PERSONS: WALSH, KEN

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR REVIEW OF PRES RESPONSE TO US NEWS & WORLD RPT ON
PERSIAN GULF CRISIS

ACTION: SCOWCROFT SGD MEMO DUE DATE: 03 OCT 91 STATUS: C

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