

FOREWORD

On 12 and 13 September 1991, the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security convened an international conference on the role of the media in war and conflict. This was one year after the world community, through the United Nations Security Council, passed a series of resolutions which demanded that Iraq withdraw its forces from occupied Kuwait. All these urgings and injunctions, beginning on the day of the invasion through the end of November were ignored, and by January, a coalition of countries was involved in a shooting war with Iraq on a scale not seen since the Korean conflict.

The conference -- with participants drawn from governments, the press and media, and academics from many countries -- consequently devoted much energy and discussion to events in the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf War became a case study for detailed analysis of how mass media, television, radio and the written press covered that war, interacted with the protagonists' governments and armies, changed the war's course and outcome, and influenced the publics of various countries about what they were seeing, hearing and reading.

While the Persian Gulf story took up a large part of the conference discourse, and gave it obvious timeliness and animation, the Institute conceived the event some months before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The aim of the conference was to examine critically the role mass media -- which, compared to war, is a relatively recent human innovation -- has played in human kind's most dangerous and lethal preoccupation. To this end, we invited representatives of the major players in any modern war -- soldiers, journalists (print and electronic), and government officials -- as well as prominent theorists in communications and media studies. The questions we put to the participants, using the Persian Gulf War and other conflicts as case studies, were these:

What did the Gulf War teach us about the power of the media in the 1990s? What is the nature of the relationship between journalists on the one hand and the armed forces, politicians and diplomats on the other? Has this relationship changed as warfare has evolved, and why? What are the rules about media coverage of war made by