

endangered itself, and he used some rather explicit words in letting it be known that he might indeed have aggressive designs. Certainly, Kuwait failed to take into account the disparity of power between a little tiny country which for all practical purposes had no defence at all and a huge country like Iraq with this 1,000,000-man army that came out of the Iraq-Iran war. It was a little like Noriega provoking the big bully to the North, and we know what happened to him.

In capitals all over the region, Amman and Cairo, particularly diplomats and leaders were saying, what's going on here? What is this risky game that the Kuwaitis are playing? What's behind it, they can't possibly be doing all of this on their own. I heard this quite often; is this some American game? Well it's not up to me to say how the negotiations should have turned out. That was up to them. But I have no doubt that the Kuwaitis were influenced in their negotiating strategy by the things that Schwarzkopf was saying to them, by the fact that they thought that America was standing behind them. There was a time, I must confess, when I first got into the story that I thought it was a general conspiracy -- that somehow the United States and Kuwait were accomplices in this effort to undermine Iraq. And I looked very hard and I can't rule this out, but I have found no evidence that there was any definite, preconceived plan on this matter. But I think that there need not be: the Kuwaitis have a reputation among Arabs and among others who need them. They are very charming people, but they like their money, they are very greedy. This has been an intrinsic part of their recent history, certainly since the discovery of this huge wealth in oil that they have beneath their territory and it makes sense that the fact that they feel they have the United States behind them, seriously changes the negotiating positions that they would have taken had they felt a little more naked in the face of Iraqi power.

This was confirmed for me by Sheikh Ali -- currently the Finance Minister. He had been the Oil Minister and the Oil Ministry was largely subsumed by the Finance Ministry, so he was one of the key players in all of these negotiations. He told me that he was influenced in all the time he talked to the Iraqis by the fact that he knew he had American support. And he said to me furthermore that he thought Saddam was pretty stupid not to understand this.