

THE MIDDLE EAST

When Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, and subsequently annexed it, Canada joined with other members of the international community in opposing the action. This conflict caused the most direct military involvement in the Middle East in Canada's history.

As a member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) until the end of December 1990, Canada participated in the passage of a series of resolutions imposing sanctions on Iraq, calling for the release of foreign nationals and the protection of foreign diplomatic missions in Kuwait, and condemning the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq. Canada was assiduous in working for a central role for the United Nations in the response to Iraq's aggression. During a period of extraordinary political activity, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, as well as other ministers, made extensive efforts to encourage Iraqi compliance with the United Nations' resolutions calling upon Iraq to withdraw. Despite all efforts, diplomacy failed. On January 16, in conformity with UNSC resolutions, coalition forces moved to push Iraq out of Kuwait.

Members of the Department working in Canadian embassies in Kuwait and Baghdad performed heroically during this period. In Kuwait, despite intense Iraqi pressure, the Embassy remained present in Kuwait City from the invasion until October 22, when it finally suspended operations and the staff moved to Baghdad. From the Embassy in Baghdad, tremendous efforts were made, first in close coordination with the Canadian mission in Kuwait, and later alone, to ensure the safety of Canadian nationals under Iraqi control. Hundreds of Canadians were successfully repatriated. Indeed, Canada was the first country to organize an evacuation flight for women and children from Kuwait, once they were permitted to leave. The last four members of the Baghdad Embassy left on January 12 and the mission was still closed at the end of March 1991.

Canada's support for the actions in the Gulf, under the aegis of the United Nations, included a significant military contribution. Canada deployed three ships to the Gulf to deter further aggression and to assist in enforcing United Nations' mandated sanctions. A destroyer, HMCS *Terra Nova*, a frigate, HMCS *Athabaskan*, and a supply vessel, HMCS *Protecteur*, were based in Manama, Bahrain. Twenty-six CF-18 aircraft were dispatched to Qatar, initially to provide the naval force with air cover, but later to participate in coalition bombing raids.

Canada also operated a 500-person field hospital in Saudi Arabia.

During the period when our Embassy in Kuwait was non-operational, Canada opened an "Office of the Embassy" in Manama, and another one in Doha, Qatar. These offices were closed when the Embassy in Kuwait re-opened.

These contributions significantly increased Canada's profile in the region, particularly in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states where bilateral relations were considerably strengthened. The Secretary of State for External Affairs visited Kuwait in the first 10 days after its liberation. Canada was among the first nations to reopen an embassy in Kuwait in March 1991.

Even before the end of hostilities in March 1991, Canada developed a number of proposals for the post-war period. These included post-crisis regional security arrangements, more rigorous control of both conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, and an agreement against the use of the environment as an instrument of war. Regional conflicts continued to threaten peace and stability in the area. In particular, it had become clear to Canada and the international community that serious steps would have to be taken to help the parties concerned to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute, now over 40 years old.

The aftermath of the Gulf crisis was not in any sense clear-cut. Although Kuwait moved relatively quickly toward the reconstruction of its devastated economy, Iraq was faced with a long series of requirements under the provisions of the UNSC Cease-fire Resolution 687 before the comprehensive sanctions could be lifted. The Iraqi regime, however, chose to mobilize its remaining forces to put down uprisings of its Kurdish and Shi'ia peoples. Canada contributed to the resulting international humanitarian effort to assist Iraqi Kurdish refugees. This continued threat of violence in the area delayed the complete withdrawal of coalition forces and the lifting of United Nations' punitive measures.

The search for a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement to the seemingly intractable Arab-Israeli dispute has taken on a new urgency in the wake of the Gulf conflict. The coalition partners, including Canada, reiterated their commitment to pursue greater security for all the states in the region, and to seek a negotiated settlement of the Palestinian question based on UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. Canada has expressed full support for the U.S. efforts to advance the peace process and has urged