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President's Notes

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President's Notes

On 2 August of this year the course of history was altered. On that day Iraq initiated its brutal military attack and subsequent forceful occupation of its tiny southern neighbor, Kuwait. Regardless of the outcome of the current crisis, the world will never be the same.

Unfamiliar patterns of political and military cooperation have evolved in response to the Iraqi aggression. The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to condemn Iraq. The United States and the Soviet Union are in accord in areas and on subjects that heretofore escaped agreement. Saudi Arabia took the unprecedented step of asking U.S. forces to come into the kingdom to assist in its defense, and Syria, which had alienated most moderate Arab States with its position during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, also has troops stationed in Saudi Arabia. Saddam Hussein, in an act of desperation to avoid complete isolation, has relinquished his modest gains won in the long eight-year war with Iran. Jordan, long considered a moderate pro-western country, seems closer to Iraq than to its more traditional friends.

Admiral Strasser holds a B.S. from the Naval Academy, two master's degrees from The Fletcher School, Tufts University and, from the same school, a Ph.D. in political science. He was graduated from the command and staff course at the Naval War College in 1972. He commanded the USS *O'Callahan* (FF 1051), Destroyer Squadron 35, Cruiser-Destroyer Group 3, and Battle Group Foxtrot. His seven years in Washington include two years in the office of the Chairman, JCS.

An even more amazing feat, yet one almost taken for granted, has been the rapidity and the skill with which the President's call for a U.S. military buildup in the area has been answered. During a period when many at home were advocating massive reductions in the size of U.S. forces, our military, as has so often been the case throughout our history, was tasked to respond as the leading edge of U.S. foreign policy. The results have indeed been impressive.

In a repeat of almost all crises since World War II, naval forces have been a key element of the U.S. military response which has truly been a joint one. The *Eisenhower* battle group transited the Suez Canal into the Red Sea, and the *Independence*, with her escorts, steamed north into the Gulf of Oman to augment the seven Middle East Force units. The mission of both groups is to establish a naval embargo of Iraq, while at the same time providing strike capability to support the U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia. Coast Guard detachments are aboard many of these Navy ships to assist in boarding merchant vessels suspected of attempting to violate the embargo. A third carrier battle group is now on station in the Eastern Mediterranean and all three air wings are ready in all respects should they be called upon by the National Command Authorities to project power ashore or at sea.

Our Marine Corps has also responded in impressive fashion. The Maritime Prepositioned Ships (MPS) quickly weighed anchor and sailed to the Gulf where the equipment they carried was expeditiously married up with 7th and 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs), forming an Expeditionary Force. This first real test of the MPS was totally successful in every respect, completely validating this concept. Two additional MEBs have arrived aboard amphibious ships thus providing a composite U.S. Marine Corps force of over 40,000.

As these naval units were moving, advanced elements of the Army's 10th Airborne Corps and the 9th Air Force began flying into Saudi Arabia. The Army has now deployed a sizeable force to Saudi Arabia and more troops are on the way. Elements of more than four divisions will ultimately contribute to deterring further Iraqi adventurism. Air Force aircraft have now arrived in several Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and await the President's call in the event hostilities cannot be avoided. Both naval and air lift have performed superbly, transporting enormous quantities of men and material to the distant Gulf. The first fast sealift ships from the East Coast arrived in the area within 10 days and now have established an initial seabridge to support the 150,000 U.S. troops involved. An estimated 95 percent of the supplies for Desert Shield are being transported by the Military Sealift Command.

As a nation, we have come to expect this type of performance from our military even though it is anything but routine. From a naval perspective, it is not an easy task to deploy a large naval force some 12,000 miles from

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our shores, sustain it on station for long periods and maintain morale and readiness to respond at a moment's notice. Make no mistake about it, no other nation in the world, including the Soviet Union, can do it. Yet the U.S. Navy has three CVBGs and a large Marine contingent in the area today and has maintained at least one carrier there almost continuously throughout the decade of the 1980s. The Army and Air Force deployments were equally impressive. The capability to do what we have done resides only in this country. This should be a source of great pride for all Americans.

We are indeed heartened to be joined at sea during this crisis, as was the case in 1987-89 during the Kuwaiti reflagging operations, by ships from many of our friends and allies. This time, strongly united in their opposition to Iraqi aggression and support of the Security Council resolutions, some 13 countries have dispatched naval ships to the Gulf. In addition to our European allies, units from Canada, Australia, and Argentina are also in the area or en route to assist with the maritime embargo.

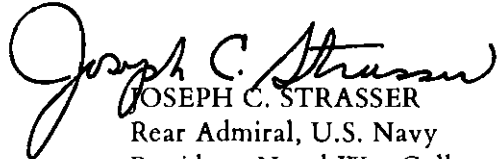
This strong international support is not confined to the sea. Ground units from a host of countries have deployed to the Saudi Arabian desert to demonstrate world resolve to oppose the forceful annexation of Kuwait. U.S. Army and Marine Corps units are alongside troops from Egypt, Syria, Morocco, the GCC countries, Britain and France, all postured to repel an Iraqi assault. Pakistani, Afghan and Bangladesh forces have also arrived to help guard Mecca.

The Iraqi aggression against its small neighbor has prompted a remarkable show of global unity. Responding to strong U.S. leadership, the nations of the world have shown, both at the United Nations and in and around the Arabian Gulf, that they will not accept rule by force. The Charter of the United Nations clearly recognizes the political independence and territorial integrity of each of its members, and over the past two months the United Nations Security Council has demonstrated unprecedented unanimity in condemning and isolating Iraq both diplomatically and economically. As Americans, we should be heartened that our political leaders and our military are squarely at the forefront of this effort.

From the pedagogical viewpoint, the U.S. and world response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has served to focus our studies at the War College and perhaps points towards the sort of military confrontation we can expect in a post Cold War world. It is fraught with dangers that spill over international boundaries as the plight of innocent refugees and hostages are added to the burdens with which national decision makers have to contend.

This is indeed an exciting time to assume the presidency of the Naval War College. For those who may not be aware, I relieved Rear Admiral Ron Kurth on 17 July. I look forward to the opportunity to lead this prestigious institution

and to present my views on subjects of interest to our Navy and Nation on a quarterly basis in the *Naval War College Review*. I also pledge to all of you, the alumni, friends and supporters of this school, that I will do all in my power to maintain the preeminence of the Naval War College as the finest institution of its kind in the world.


JOSEPH C. STRASSER
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, Naval War College
1 October 1990