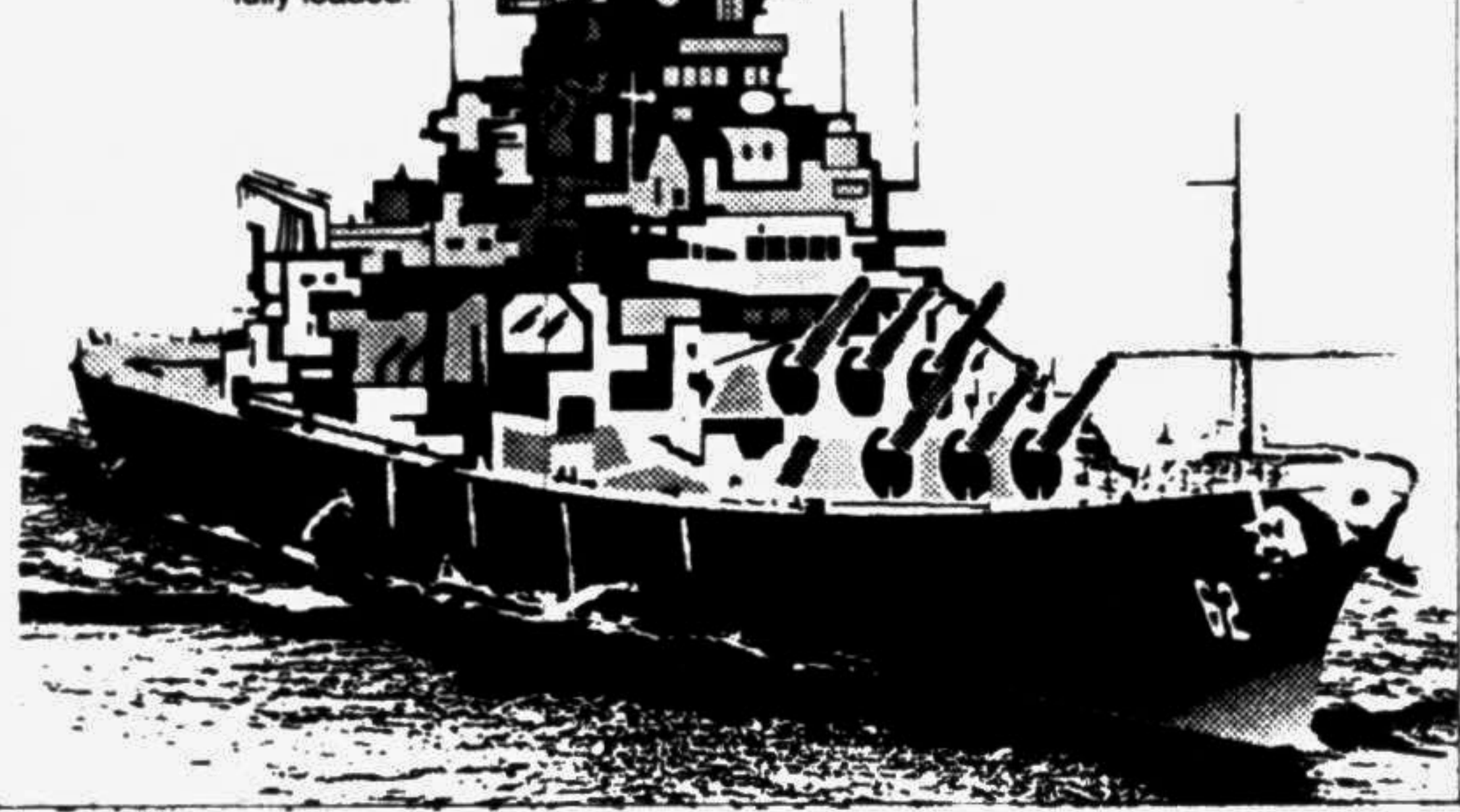


Ground War in Gulf ... Day One

USS Missouri

Commissioned: June 1944.
 Armament: 9 x 16-inch guns with 25 mile range, 32 Tomahawk cruise missile launchers, 16 Harpoon surface to surface missile launchers, 4 Sikorsky helicopters.
 Speed: 35 knots.
 Maximum range: 15,000 miles.
 Complement: 1,518 men (65 officers).
 Displacement: 46,177 tons, 57,353 tons fully loaded.



LONDON, Feb 24: The big guns of the U.S. battleship Missouri pounded Iraqi positions along the Kuwaiti coast soon after Saturday's American deadline for Iraq to start withdrawing expired, a pool despatch from the Allied fleet said, reports Reuter.

British Independent Television News (ITN) correspondent Michael Nicholson, aboard Britain's frigate Gloucester, said that, with oil wells on fire, "It looks like all Kuwait is ablaze."

Of Missouri's bombardment of Iraqi coastal defences in Kuwait, Nicholson said: "From Gloucester's bridge I can see the World War II ship lit up by the muzzle flashes from her enormous 16-inch guns."

The shells which weigh nearly a ton each are targeted on missile sites, anti-aircraft batteries, fuel dumps and underground bunkers where an estimated 3,000 Iraqi troops are sheltering.

"Missouri was escorted into her firing position through a cleared minefield by five (British) Royal Navy minesweepers with British and American destroyers and frigates ... it was quite an armada."

"Missouri's shelling follows nearly 10 days of intensive bombing ... the last B-52 raid ended only a few hours before Missouri began her bombard-

Missouri pounds Iraqi positions

'It looks like all Kuwait is ablaze'

ment," Nicholson said.

"From this ship at this moment looking towards Kuwait I can see the entire coastline on fire. I have counted nearly 40 separate huge columns of flames and smoke rising thousands of feet above the shoreline, and beyond them the night sky glows with many, many more."

A report from aboard USS Nassau says: U.S. bombers pounded Iraqi coastal defences in Kuwait on Saturday after the U.S. deadline expired for Iraq to withdraw its troops from the Emirate.

"We are turning up the pace a bit," said Major General Harry Jenkins, Commander of the Marine Amphibious Force in the Gulf.

Harrier jump-jets and other marine and naval bombers pounded armour, artillery and anti-aircraft guns on Kuwaiti islands.

Topmost among targets was artillery guarding areas the marines are considering as landing zones for a beach assault.

Rocky bombs, which explode in mid-air unleashing hundreds of tiny armour-piercing bomblets, were in the marine arsenal on Saturday.

"They're impossible to hide from," Jenkins told reporters on board the amphibious command ship Nassau as a group of Harriers — capable of vertical take-off and landings — flew off.

Jenkins said his planning had been little affected by the 1700 GMT Saturday deadline to Baghdad set by U.S. President George Bush.

Speaking before the deadline expired without a response from Baghdad, Jenkins said it was undecided if the marines would launch a beach assault.

But the Harriers were being sent out to lessen the possibility of high casualties from a dangerous Allied landing against Iraqi fortifications.

"That weighs heavily in the decisions we try to make," Jenkins said. "We're doing everything possible to improve our chances. We're ready now and we're more ready with each passing minute."

US Marines destroyed 18 Iraqi tanks and took 200 prisoners in a two-day battle in Kuwait that preceded the all-out ground war, field reports said Saturday.

Lt. General Walter F. Boomer, commander of the more than 80,000 Marine ground troops in northern Saudi Arabia, said the battle was part of clashes that prepared for the offensive President Bush said began early Sunday.

At least three Marines were

wounded in the battle, which occurred against the eerie backdrop of the flaming Umm Qudr oil field in southwestern Kuwait, allegedly set on fire by Iraqis. U.S. forces were backed by air strikes.

Reporters said the fighting was within 1.2 miles (2.4 kilometers) of the Umm Qudr field, which stretches up to the Saudi border. That would be about 40 miles (65 kilometers) from Kuwait City.

"It's been a pretty brisk fight," said one of the field officers, Colonel John Sylvester, commander of the U.S. Army's 2nd Armored Division Tiger Brigade, formed during World War II by General George S. Patton.

The unit gained fame during the war, when it was known as the "Hell on Wheels" brigade.

The Marines also detected traces of chemical weapons that apparently leaked from an Iraqi storage site after it was hit by Allied bombers, said Lt. Col. Van Huly, a spokesman.

The U.S. forces reported destroying 18 Iraqi tanks and 15 other vehicles. Some of the Iraqi prisoners waved white flags in surrender.

The battle began Thursday when about 500 Marines on a reconnaissance patrol in light armoured vehicles just inside Kuwait were hit by mortars, artillery and machine gun fire.

A million Allied, Iraqi troops locked in pitched ground war

WASHINGTON, Feb 24: More than 1 million allied and Iraqi soldiers confront each other in the Gulf War as the ground offensive begins, reports AP.

The United States mounted a massive ground assault against Iraqi troops in Kuwait beginning at about 0100 GMT, a Defense Department source said.

Iraq's army had 28 to 33 divisions in Kuwait, totaling 545,000 troops, when the conflict began Jan. 17. They were equipped with 4,200 tanks, 2,800 armored personnel carriers and 3,100 artillery pieces.

But more than five weeks of bombing devastated Iraq's equipment; the Defense Department estimated it had destroyed 39 per cent of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's tanks, 32 per cent of his armored vehicles and 48 per cent of his artillery. Casualties were incalculable.

A long line of Iraqi infantry is dug in along Kuwait's border with Saudi Arabia, backed up by divisions of Iraqi tanks. And 150,000 troops of Saddam's Republican Guard are held in reserve on the northern Iraqi-Kuwaiti border.

The US Army has 295,000 troops in Saudi Arabia while the Marines have 94,000, including an amphibious force of 18,000 men on ships in the Gulf.

Other allied countries sent 205,000 troops to the Gulf to face the Iraqis. The United States has 2,000 tanks, more than 2,000 pieces of artillery and 2,200 armored personnel carriers on the ground in Saudi Arabia.

The allies' front-line soldiers: —Ten US Army and Marine divisions, more than 160,000 combat troops. The US combat forces include two divisions of airborne troops, three of ar-

mored and three of mechanized infantry. The Marines have two divisions on land and 18,000 men on ships in the Gulf.

—The British 1st Armored Division with more than 160 Challenger tanks. The British force includes the 7th Armored Brigade with 9,500 troops, successors to the famous "Desert Rats" of World War II.

—The French 6th Light Armored Division with 12,000 men. The French deployed a 4,000-man French Rapid Action Force, including the Foreign Legion's 3rd Infantry Regiment with anti-tank missiles.

—Some 36,000 Egyptian troops with 480 tanks, paratroopers, commandos, chemical warfare specialists and infantry.

—Syria's 15,000-man 9th Armored Division, with some 270 Soviet T-62 tanks.

—The Gulf Cooperation

Council's rapid deployment force of up to 10,000 troops. The council force has 330 combat aircraft, 800 tanks and 150,500 troops from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait.

—The war so far has been fought largely by US Air Force and Navy pilots flying bombing missions over Iraq and Kuwait.

The Navy has 82,000 sailors on more than 115 ships in the Gulf and flying 450 fighter jets. The Air Force has 56,000 personnel and 800 combat aircraft.

The American force of more than 530,000 soldiers is the largest deployed overseas since the peak of the Vietnam War in 1968, when 545,000 Americans were involved.

Kuwaitis jubilant

DHAHRAN (Saudi Arabia), Feb 24: Jubilant Kuwaitis slapped each other on the back and taped up signs reading "next stop Kuwait City" as US and allied troops launched a large-scale ground campaign to drive Iraqi troops from their homeland, reports AFP.

"I'm delighted, very happy. This is the last stage of the liberation of Kuwait," said Adnan Alshauhan, 25, a Kuwaiti Ministry of Information official. "The ground war is because of the Iraqis. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein didn't listen to the voice of peace."

"Kuwait has suffered for long months and now is the time to return to our country," he said.

"We are very glad of course but the same time we are very worried about our family there (in Kuwait)," said Wael Alwily, 25, a red, green and black "free Kuwait" sticker on his dangling identification card.

High-tech video of Gulf ground war

Knight Raiders let loose a hell over Iraqi troops

NORTHERN SAUDI ARABIA, Feb 24: The first high-tech video of Gulf War ground fighting shows terrified Iraqi infantrymen shot to pieces in the dark by US attack helicopters, reports Reuter.

One by one they were cut down, bewildered by an enemy they could not see.

Some were blown to bits by exploding cannon shells. Others, jarred from sleep, fled their bunkers under a firestorm.

The footage was shot through the night vision goggles of the Apache AH-64 attack helicopter, which turn pitch dark into ghostly day.

Reporters and even hardened soldiers held their breath when the first video was shown a briefing tent of the 18th airborne corps, whose

chopper crews have already begun carrying the war to the Iraqis.

Combat reporters permitted to see the video did not say where or when the engagement took place. No casualty count was given. Reports from the front are subject to US military censorship.

Apaches equipped with cannons, laser-guided missiles and infrared optics — have led several lightning strikes behind Iraqi lines in recent days, raiding bunkers and taking prisoners.

The pilots of the 6th cavalry, the Knight Raiders as they call themselves, exult in their prowess.

"I just didn't quite envision going up there and shooting the hell out of everything in the dark and have them not know what the hell hit them," said Ron Balak of Beemer, Nebraska.

"A truck blows up to the right, the ground blows up to the left. They had no idea where we were or what was hitting them," he said.

"When I got back I sat there on the wing and I was laughing. I wasn't laughing at the Iraqis, I was laughing at the training, the anticipation... I was probably laughing at myself... sneaking up there, and blowing this up and blowing that up."

"A guy came up to me and we were slapping each other on the back and all that stuff and he said, 'by God, I thought we had shot into a damn farm. It looked like somebody opened the sheep pen.'"

The Americans expect night vision equipment to give them an enormous advantage over the Iraqis.

The Apaches strike only at night. Reuter correspondent Kevin Cooney at an Apache base in northern Saudi Arabia, watched a video in which three helicopters destroyed a Soviet-made radar installation inside Iraq.

Chief warrant officer 2nd grade Arthur Gribenski of

Durham, North Carolina, who fired two Hellfire missiles into the complex, said his flight, from the 3/227th battalion, was stalking a truck convoy as its target of the night.

With the convoy in sight, a radar detector went red, showing that the helicopter had been picked up by Iraqi radar. The light decided to go after the radar.

"We saw what we needed to see, we engaged and took it out," Gribenski said. "The night systems were perfect."

"It was pretty dark. With the naked eye you couldn't see a thing."

The videotape shows the lead Apache's scope, which can magnify 126 times, picking out the radar complex miles away.

Gribenski, the weapons operator, fixes his laser beam on it and fires the Hellfire, which carries 17 pounds (eight kg) of high explosive in its nose.

Blasted out of the craft's firing pod, the missile rises high into the overcast sky, picks up the laser beam, races toward the target and destroys a 130-foot (40-metre) radar antenna in a ball of fire.

The next target is the communications building of the radar complex. It is just as quickly turned to rubble.

"Good kill," said one crew member. The Apache, built by McDonnell Douglas, was long a target of Congressional critics who thought the technology too temperamental to justify its cost.

Lieutenant-Colonel Tony Jones of Washington, Indiana, commander of the 3/227th, says the desert is the perfect place for the Apache because men and equipment seem to jump out of the flat landscape.

The Apache was designed primarily to destroy tanks. Chief Warrant Officer Brian Walker of Chattanooga, Tennessee, says he can't wait for Iraqi armoured units to come out of their dug-in positions.

"Once they are on the road, there is nothing that can take them out like an Apache."

"It will be a duck hunt."

Moscow still supplying arms to Iraq: Weinberger

LONDON, Feb 24: Former US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger said Saturday that the Soviet Union is still supplying arms to Iraq and suggested Soviet military advisers remain in Iraq, reports AP.

The Soviets have said they cut all arms shipments to Iraq as part of the worldwide UN embargo on trade with Baghdad following the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait. Moscow also says Soviet military advisers have left.

"They (the Soviets) have been behaving in a way which demonstrates their principal goal is to help Iraq and end up as the principal friend of the radical Arab states," Weinberger said in a British Broadcasting Corp. television interview.

Of Soviet arms supplies, Weinberger said without elaboration, "the information I have been given is that it still happening."

US President George Bush has said that all Soviet military advisers have left Iraq. "I would have to say it was a diplomatic way of putting it," Weinberger said, suggesting that some advisers remain.

Baghdad is formerly the Soviet Union's biggest arms client in the Middle East, and has done business with the So-

viet military for nearly 30 years.

Roughly 90 per cent of Iraq's ground weapons are of Soviet design, according to Henry Dodds, editor of Jane's Soviet Intelligence Review.

Another report says: The ground forces of Iraq have a definite Soviet flavor: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's tanks, rifles, machine guns and rockets are Soviet-designed.

The Iraqi army began doing

business with the Soviet military nearly 30 years ago. Ties between the two countries grew stronger when Saddam's Ba'ath political party came to power in the late 1960s. Roughly 90 per cent of Iraq's ground weapons are of Soviet design, says Henry Dodds, editor of Jane's Soviet Intelligence Review, a highly respected source in the field.

To build their ground forces, the Iraqis:

—Brought in a Soviet military group that set up a gun factory in Iraq capable of producing 150,000 Soviet-style Ak-47 assault rifles a year. Modernized versions of the rifle now in the hands of Iraqi soldiers fire small-caliber, high-velocity ammunition, just like the US infantry rifle, the M16.

—Purchased thousands of Soviet-designed PKM machine guns. Some analysts say the PKMs are less prone to jamming than the American M60 machine gun.

—Equipped Iraqi infantry with Soviet anti-tank rockets called RPG-7s that fire high-explosive projectiles out of a tube. Syrian troops used the shoulder-fired weapons with devastating effect against Israeli tanks in the 1973 war.

—Provided infantrymen with Soviet-designed Sagger guided missiles to knock out tanks at distances of over a mile

NICOSIA, Feb 24: President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on Saturday that Iran would intensify efforts to end the Gulf war, Teheran Radio reported, reports Reuter.


It said they discussed developments during a 30-minute telephone conversation on Saturday evening. Iraq defied a US deadline to start leaving Kuwait by 1700 GMT on Saturday to avoid a ground war.

Rafsanjani said he would ask a special committee of the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Teheran to concentrate its efforts today (Sunday) towards halting the conflict.



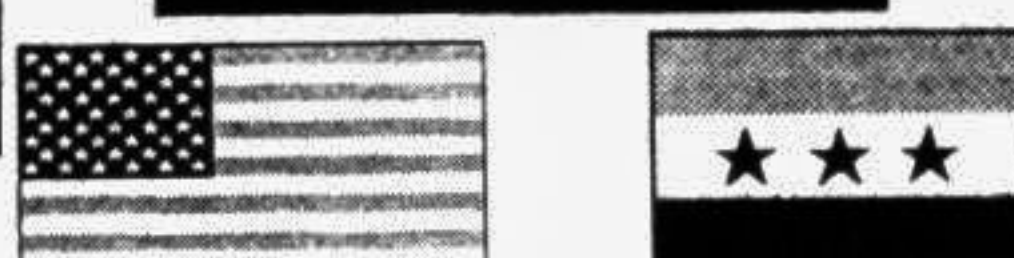
SOMEWHERE IN KUWAIT: Allied tanks, sweeping the Kuwaiti territory on the Day One of Ground War, seen approaching Kuwait City.


Now the Ground War After ...



President George Bush....

War of words





President Saddam Hussein....

August

- 2 ▶ Iraq invades Kuwait
- 8 ◀ First US troops sent to Gulf. The mission of our troops is wholly defensive.
- 13 ▶ We must stand up to evil.
- 25 ▶ We cannot permit a resource (oil) so vital to be dominated by one so ruthless... and we won't.
- 26 ▶ Iraq will not be permitted to annex Kuwait.

September

- 8 ▶ (US public should) stay together in support of our kids halfway around the world.
- 11 ▶ The increase in the number of American troops committed is to ensure an adequate offensive military option.
- 24 ▶ Good will prevail; the darkness in the desert sky cannot stand against the way of light.
- 25 ▶ UN Security council resolution 678 authorises members to use 'all necessary means' to ensure Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

October

- 24 ▶ We are prepared to go the extra mile for peace.

November

- 9 ▶ Saddam Hussein is about to hoodwink the Americans into a settlement.
- 19 ▶ Chances of war are fifty-fifty.
- 25 ▶ Iraqi troops warned to prepare for 'great sacrifices' in the 'mother of battles'.

December

- 6 ▶ Aziz: What's at stake is the fate of the whole region.
- 9 ▶ (US troops) will swim in their own blood.

January

- 7 ▶ Deadline set by UN Security Council after which Allies may use force against Saddam.

Briefing blackout to confuse enemy: Cheney

WASHINGTON, Feb 24: US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said on Saturday night that Allied forces had launched a major ground assault to drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait, but he refused to give details which he said might aid a "confused" enemy, reports Reuter.

"Allied military units are on the move," he told reporters at a Pentagon news conference shortly after President George Bush announced that he had authorized the attack.

"This is a major military operation against a well-equipped, well-fortified opponent," Cheney said.

"We must assume that the enemy is confused about what is happening on the battlefield and it is absolutely essential that we do not do anything inadvertently ourselves to clarify the picture for him."

In announcing the long-awaited ground war, which opponents had charged could

cost hundreds or thousands of US casualties, Cheney said that further military briefings in Washington and the Gulf would be temporarily halted.

US forces in the Gulf include more than 533,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen among an Allied force of over involved or whether amphibious US Marine forces might have attacked Kuwait from the Gulf.

Cheney told reporters that Schwarzkopf and commanders at the Pentagon had agreed previously that the attack on Kuwait would begin on Saturday. The plan had been temporarily put on hold on Friday until the failure of diplomatic negotiations with Baghdad initiated by the Soviet Union.

"Let me emphasize that we have an obligation to provide as much information as we can... but we are currently involved in an extremely complex military operation where the lives of thousands of Allied troops are at stake."