

## Topic Area B

The 2003 US invasion of Iraq and its aftermath.

Delegates are expected to research this topic comprehensively in consideration of all aspects and the impact and involvement of all major actors.

Why did this invasion take place?

The political turmoil and drastically deteriorated security environment, which characterises modern day Iraq, can be traced back to the United States (US) invasion of that country and ISIS, which has recently emerged in Iraq and Syria, in the insurgency against the resultant US occupation, back then in the form of al-Qaeda in Iraq. But why did the US invade and occupy Iraq in the first place? To this day, there is a divisive debate about what the Bush administration's motives were, with the most likely explanation being a combination of all of the reasons offered. What must also be considered is that the events leading up to the 2003 invasion only go half way to explain why the US chose to launch this campaign, and in order to understand the complex and multidimensional factors contributing to the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq, one must go back further and examine pre 9/11 US policy. Likewise, the official and publically stated reasons for military action only go some way to explain the invasion, and one must look at the unofficial factors and goals which were determinants of equal importance.

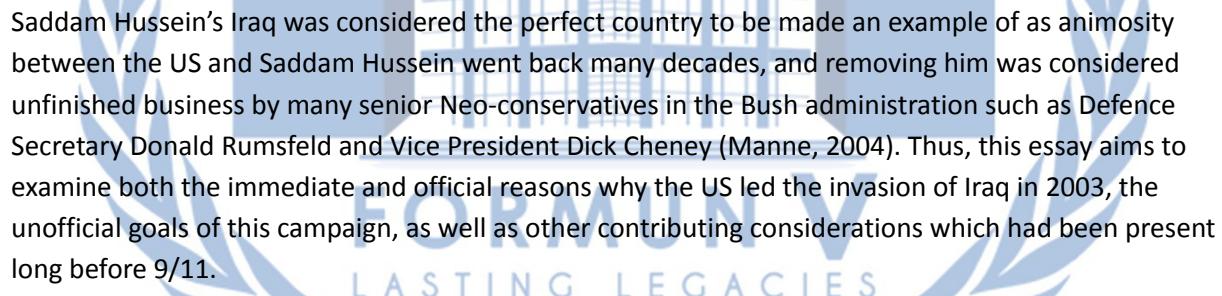
The immediate considerations behind the invasion of Iraq were characterized by concerns brought to the forefront by the events of September 11th 2001, namely global terrorism, and more importantly, the weapons at its disposal in a new era of transnational asymmetrical war waged by non-state actors. As President George W. Bush made it clear in his State of the Union on January 29th 2002, in meeting this challenge, the US would not differentiate between terrorist groups and nations which harbour or arm them (Bush, 2002). This policy led to the invasion of Afghanistan, motivated by the need to remove al-Qaeda's safe haven and training ground.

Iraq did not specifically harbour al-Qaeda, but it had provided training camps and other support to terrorist groups fighting the government of Turkey and Iran, as well as hard-line Palestinian groups. In fact, "the question of Iraq's link to terrorism grew more urgent with Saddam's suspected determination to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which Bush administration officials feared he might share with terrorists who could launch devastating attacks against the United States" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2005). Nonetheless, the official reason that the US cited for launching the invasion was exemplified by Colin Powell's statement to the United Nations on February 5<sup>th</sup> 2003 (Washington Post, 2005).

However, the unofficial reasons why the US led the Invasion of Iraq in 2003 are equally important. The main unofficial consideration was that removing Saddam Hussein would be a demonstration of US

military might against a visible enemy, a demonstration which hawkish elements within the Bush administration and the military establishment considered necessary to deter others and to dispel any appearance of weakness following 9/11 (Karon, 2011). This consideration is motivated by Realism, and, according to Daniel Lieberfeld's explanatory perspectives on the Iraq Invasion, was meant to "maintain unipolarity, maintain hegemony and avoid post-9/11 decline by demonstrating U.S. willingness to use force" (Lieberfeld, 2005).

The fact that Iraq has the world's second largest reserves of oil can also not be overlooked. Although major critics of the war such as the political scholars Paul Pillar, Stephen Walt, and John Mearsheimer generally disagree that the war was about oil, Pillar did state that "Iraq's oil resources are part of what makes it an important and influential state in the Middle East, and thus one where it was hoped that change would serve as a catalyst for change elsewhere in the region" (Pillar, 2008). The Bush administration hoped that removing Saddam Hussein would result in a domino effect, where all regimes in the greater Middle East hostile to the US and its interests in the region would be intimidated into cooperation, or toppled by their populations following the example the US had set freeing the Iraqi people (Gauss III, 2009).



Saddam Hussein's Iraq was considered the perfect country to be made an example of as animosity between the US and Saddam Hussein went back many decades, and removing him was considered unfinished business by many senior Neo-conservatives in the Bush administration such as Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney (Manne, 2004). Thus, this essay aims to examine both the immediate and official reasons why the US led the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the unofficial goals of this campaign, as well as other contributing considerations which had been present long before 9/11.

The al-Qaeda attacks on New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania graphically brought home the dangers of international terrorism to the United States. To combat this threat, the US embarked on the global War on Terror, reassigning terrorism from a law enforcement issue to a military issue warranting aggressive counterattack. This was due to the realisation that:

Non-state and clandestinely state sponsored groups now [had] the ability and willingness to employ means of mass destruction [which] has dictated the recognition that States no longer [had] a monopoly on war. Therefore, it [had] become appropriate to use war powers against foreign terrorist organizations (Terwilliger, 2005).

Although al-Qaeda was the prime target, any organisation deemed to be a terrorist organisation would also be targeted. The term "War on Terror" originated from President George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union, in which he made clear that the US would not only combat terrorist

organisations aggressively, but also any country deemed to be training, equipping or supporting them (Bush, 2002). In his words, "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, aiming to threaten the peace of the world" (Bush, 2002). The speech went on to say that "Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror" (Bush, 2002), a statement which clearly identifies Iraq as a sponsor of terrorism, and therefore a prime target and central front in the War on Terror.

The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, otherwise known as the 9/11 Commission, which was set up in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, dealt extensively with the issue of Iraq's support of terrorism. During its third public hearing, it interviewed Judith S. Yaphe, a Distinguished Research Fellow for the Middle East in the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS). On July 9<sup>th</sup> 2003, she stated that "my testimony focuses on the role and actions of Iraq as a state sponsor of terrorism under the control of Saddam Husayn. Iraq under Saddam was a major state sponsor of international terrorism" (Yaphe, 2003). She went on to say:

Baghdad actively sponsored terrorist groups, providing safe haven, training, arms, and logistical support, requiring in exchange that the groups carry out operations ordered by Baghdad for Saddam's objectives. Terrorist groups were not permitted to have offices, recruitment, or training facilities or freely use territory under the regime's direct control without explicit permission from Saddam.

Saddam used foreign terrorist groups as an instrument of foreign policy. Groups hosted by Saddam were denied protection if he wanted to improve relations with a neighbouring country and encouraged to attack those Saddam wanted to pressure. If they refused Saddam's "requests," they were exiled from Iraq (Yaphe, 2003).

In his 2002 State of the Union which laid out US strategy, President Bush stated:

The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens, leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world (Bush, 2002).

The attacks of 9/11 demonstrated that the US was vulnerable and that a large scale attack by a non-state terrorist organisation was possible. It also demonstrated that these organisations had the will to cause as much death and destruction as possible and did not have any scruples about inflicting casualties on civilians or were prepared to follow rules of war accepted by most nation states to some degree or other. It, therefore, followed that groups such as these would try to acquire weapons as destructive as possible, which in the modern world was no longer as difficult or unthinkable as it once was. During the Cold War era, only nation states possessed the capability to inflict large scale damage, but in the post Cold War world, with the democratization of technology, small groups of people not bound to any specific state could inflict catastrophic damage (Tschorr, 2002).

2007). The emphasis, therefore, was no longer on these groups alone, but also on their possible sponsors. At the top of this list were countries which had grievances with the United States, had links to terrorist organisations, were located in the Muslim Middle East, had WMD or the ability to manufacture them, and had used them in the past. The one country which stood out more than most was Iraq.

On December 16th 1998, a four day air campaign by the US began “to strike military and security targets in Iraq that contributed to Iraq’s ability to produce, store, maintain and deliver weapons of mass destruction” (Wright and Hopper, 2005). This US campaign was known as Operation Desert Fox and was considered to have finished off what was left of Iraq’s WMD Infrastructure (Wright and Hopper, 2005). Finally, on November 8th 2002, UN resolution 1441 claimed that Iraq was still in material breach of other UN resolutions and gave Saddam one more chance to comply (Wright and Hopper, 2005). Weapons inspectors re-entered the country and, although they did not find any WMD, the US maintained that Saddam was hiding them and covering up an active programme to produce them. During this time, the US was gearing up for war, as it viewed, officially at least, the threat that Iraq’s weapons programme posed as unacceptable in the post 9/11 world.

Another possible consideration was now that the US had proved that it had the will to go to war by invading Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries that were a part of the “Axis of Evil,” they would normally not associate with as an insurance policy in case the US invaded (Soderblom, 2004). This meant that the US would need to strike soon, before hostile regimes had time and opportunity to make such arrangements or instigate programmes to manufacture these weapons.

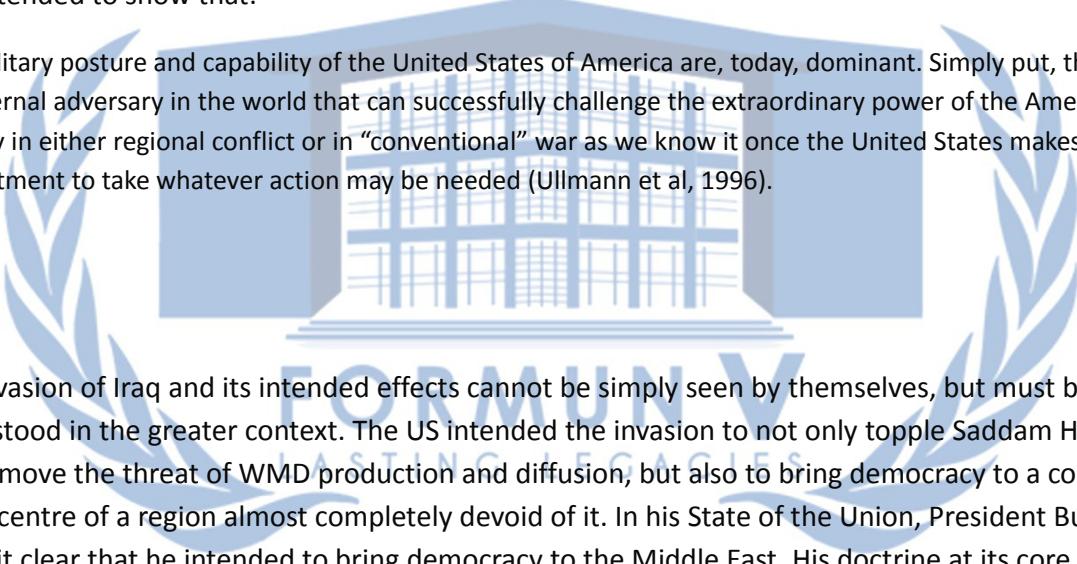
As it turned out, no WMD were ever found, but that does not necessarily mean that their potential existence did not warrant the invasion. Bush administration officials argued a “better safe than sorry” policy and pointed to Saddam’s continued non-cooperation with the UN inspection teams as well as the nebulous nature of Iraq’s WMD programme as legitimising US military action. Detractors of this stance argue that even if the Bush administration did not outright lie about Iraq’s WMD programme, it at the very least massively inflated its dimensions, sophistication, and threat level in order to justify the war. The most outspoken critics of the Bush administration claimed that the Iraq War was about oil, citing administration officials’ statements to that effect (Wright, 2003). According to Noam Chomsky, the deals taking shape between Iraq’s Oil Ministry and Western oil companies also:

Raises critical questions about the nature of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq — questions that should certainly be addressed by presidential candidates and seriously discussed in the United States, and of course in occupied Iraq, where it appears that the population has little if any role in determining the future of their country (Chomsky, 2008).

Although it is unlikely that oil was not also a consideration, there is no denying that the issue of weapons of mass destruction was central to the US led invasion of Iraq.

Another reason why the US led the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was that it presented a visible enemy. The US invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 had led to the rapid collapse of the Taliban regime and the remainder of its fighters along with al-Qaeda had retreated into the tribal areas bordering Pakistan. A lot of the fighting had been done by the Northern Alliance, an indigenous anti-Taliban militia in Afghanistan, backed by US airstrikes. US Special Forces and then US ground forces did enter Afghanistan and fought the Taliban and al-Qaeda, notably during Operation Anaconda in March 2002 (Naylor, 2006), but it was not the awe inspiring hammer blow which the US wanted to demonstrate its power. "Instead, Pentagon planners began shifting military and intelligence resources away from Afghanistan in the direction of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which was increasingly mentioned as a chief U.S. threat in the war on terror" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2002). Iraq presented a much better arena to show the world the extent of the US' military supremacy. Iraq also possessed a proper traditional army, which could be defeated more conventionally bringing the full spectrum of US dominance to bear in a campaign of "Shock and Awe" (CNN, 2003). This campaign was intended to show that:

The military posture and capability of the United States of America are, today, dominant. Simply put, there is no external adversary in the world that can successfully challenge the extraordinary power of the American military in either regional conflict or in "conventional" war as we know it once the United States makes the commitment to take whatever action may be needed (Ullmann et al, 1996).



The invasion of Iraq and its intended effects cannot be simply seen by themselves, but must be understood in the greater context. The US intended the invasion to not only topple Saddam Hussein and remove the threat of WMD production and diffusion, but also to bring democracy to a country in the centre of a region almost completely devoid of it. In his State of the Union, President Bush made it clear that he intended to bring democracy to the Middle East. His doctrine at its core was that people who are free and prosperous do not fly airplanes into skyscrapers. In his speech, he made his point that "all fathers and mothers, in all societies, want their children to be educated and live free from poverty and violence. No people on earth yearn to be oppressed, or aspire to servitude, or eagerly await the midnight knock of the secret police" (Bush, 2002). His policy in Iraq, derived from Wilsonianism (Bhansali, date unknown) and Manifest Destiny (Jones, 2014) was:

Not merely to expunge the totalitarians there, but to ensure that they never return by reconstructing their societies along democratic lines. Authoritarianism (at least in the Middle East) is no longer acceptable. The U.S. now proposes to liberate these nations from the captivity of their own unhappy traditions (Kesler, 2005).

Series of Events:

## March 19<sup>[edit]</sup>

As anti-war protests continue, [Greenpeace](#) demonstrators chain themselves to the gates of the Australian prime minister's residence, [The Lodge](#).<sup>[6][7]</sup>

## March 20<sup>[edit]</sup>

The first assaults on Baghdad begin shortly following the 01:00 UTC expiry of the United States' 48-hour deadline for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave Iraq.

02:30 UTC: Explosions are reported in [Baghdad](#), damaging civilian buildings. The [United States Department of Defense](#) later states that the assault consisted of 36 [Tomahawk missiles](#) and two [F-117](#)-launched [GBU-27](#) bombs, and that the target was a military bunker thought to contain high-level Iraqi governmental officials, including Saddam Hussein himself. Later, on May 29, [CBS Evening News](#) reports that the bunker never existed.<sup>[8]</sup>

03:15 UTC: U.S. President George W. Bush states that he ordered the coalition to launch an "attack of opportunity" against specified targets in Iraq. The military action was dubbed "Operation Iraqi Freedom".<sup>[9]</sup>

Iraqi state [television](#) broadcasts an address from Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. The U.S. and U.K. analyze the footage closely, believing that one of his body doubles may have made the speech.<sup>[10]</sup> However, the U.S. eventually says it believes the address was indeed delivered by Saddam Hussein himself. It has not yet been ascertained when the address was recorded, however. Speculation begins that Saddam Hussein may have been killed. However, these reports are deemed to be false.

It is announced that [Special Operations Forces](#) are operating inside Iraq. Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States all have special operations forces in the area. Soon after the strike on Baghdad, Iraq launches a number of missiles at targets in [Kuwait](#), including at the coalition forces stationed there.<sup>[11]</sup> 2-3 scud missiles are also intercepted.<sup>[12]</sup> The coalition report that they caused no damage. Later in the day, both U.K. and U.S. ground troops move into the demilitarized zone between Iraq and its neighbor, [Kuwait](#), and then into Iraq itself. During the night, 12 British military personnel and four American troops are killed when a transport helicopter crashes.<sup>[13]</sup>

## March 22<sup>[edit]</sup>

Airstrikes on Baghdad continue, with the attacks now concentrated on the city's outskirts.

Around midnight UTC (early morning local time), reports indicate that 1,500 Turkish troops had moved into northern Iraq.<sup>[14]</sup> The intervention of Turkish troops had been opposed by the U.S. German government has announced that it will call back the German [AWACS](#) personnel watching [NATO](#) airspace above Turkey if Turkish troops engage in fights in northern Iraq. Turkey later denies they moved troops into Iraq.<sup>[15]</sup>

At 1:15 (UTC), a collision of two [Royal Navy Westland Sea King](#) helicopters from [HMS Ark Royal](#) over the Persian Gulf kills six Britons and one American.<sup>[16]</sup>

At 10:00 UTC, it is reported that U.S. forces are attempting to capture the city of [Basra](#), and are involved in a major tank battle on the western side of the city.

Kurdish officials report a U.S. missile attack on territory held by the [Kurdish Islamist](#) group [Ansar al-Islam](#).

According to Iraqi government reports, two civilians are killed and 207 wounded, consisting of mostly women and children. They claim that there have been no defections or surrenders of Iraqi soldiers, and that footage to the contrary is in fact that of kidnapped Iraqi civilians.

Five U.S. tanks and numerous vehicles have been destroyed by Iraqi fighters, and coalition forces enter but are later repelled from [Umm Qasr](#).

The Iraqi government puts a bounty of 50 million dinars (\$33,000USD) for the capture, or 25 million dinars for the killing of each "mercenary".<sup>[12]</sup>

Parts of the city of [Basra](#) are entered by the British.

A [hand grenade](#) attack on a rear base of the [101st Airborne Division](#) in [Kuwait](#) causes the death of Capt. Chris Seifert of the Army and Maj. Gregory Stone of the Air Force and injuries to 14 others. An American soldier, [Sgt. Hasan Akbar](#) is arrested for the attack.

## March 23 [edit]

American and British forces succeed in taking the [airport](#) outside of [Basra](#), and battle with Iraqi forces for control of the city itself.

U.S. Marines battle Iraqi forces near the city of [Nassiriya](#), a key crossing of the [Euphrates](#) about 225 miles (362 km) southeast of Baghdad.

News media report that pictures of British and American soldiers wounded and killed by Iraqi forces were shown by the Arabian [Al Jazeera](#) TV network.

Sixteen Americans go missing; five of them were shown on Iraqi state-run television as prisoners of war and at least four are shown dead in what appears to be a hospital room.

In another incident about ten U.S. Marines are confirmed to be killed, after they ran into an ambush during the [Battle of Nasiriyah](#).

The British television network [ITV](#) reports that its reporter [Terry Lloyd](#) was killed near [Basra](#).

The battles around the Iraqi cities of [Basra](#) and [Nassiriya](#) continue.

Iraq reports that it has captured a number of American [prisoners of war](#). The United States military states that 12 soldiers from a maintenance unit are missing. A videotape of the captured and dead soldiers are released, showing possible [torture](#) and execution-style killings. U.S. officials charge that Iraqi treatment of the captives violates the [Geneva Conventions](#).

A [RAF Panavia Tornado](#) is shot down by "friendly fire" by an American [Patriot missile](#) battery.

Coalition forces take control of a large complex of buildings in [An Najaf](#) Province near the city of [Najaf](#). Some news sources proclaim that this is a "huge [chemical weapons](#) plant", <sup>[18]</sup> but [Pentagon](#) officials call such announcements "premature" and state that no [weapons of mass destruction](#) had yet been found.

In Belgium, legal complaints are filed against American officials for "[crimes against humanity](#)". It was reported that an Iraqi representing seven families deposited complaints for violation of human rights against former U.S. President [George H. W. Bush](#), [Dick Cheney](#), [Norman Schwarzkopf](#) in Belgium. Supported by a socialist deputy and a non-governmental organization ([NGO](#)), the Iraqis denounce the bombing of a shelter which had made 403 civilian victims in [Baghdad](#) in February 1991 during the [Persian Gulf War](#). This is made possible by the Belgian law of universal competence, which provides justice on war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and can apply to any nationalities. U.S. Secretary of State [Colin Powell](#) indicates the event was a "serious problem", affecting the ability to go to Belgium, in particular to [NATO](#) in [Brussels](#). Powell stated that this law was a subject of worry.

## March 24 [\[edit\]](#)

An operation of about thirty American attack helicopters attack the Medina Division of the Iraqi Republican Guard, entrenched in the Karbala area. One U.S. Army Apache helicopter is shot down and captured by Iraqi civilians, along with its two crewmen, who appear later on Arab satellite T.V. channels. A CNN reporter that was embedded with a helicopter unit that participated in the battle reports the destruction of another helicopter and that helicopters were under heavy fire, with only two of them managing to achieve their objectives. The helicopter's crewmen are later safely recovered.

China gives the United States the address of its embassy in Baghdad in hopes of avoiding a repeat of the deadly [attack on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade](#).<sup>[19]</sup>

Five people, including one woman, are killed when a missile falls down onto their houses in a populated district in the west of Baghdad.

The United States accuses the Russians of deliveries of weapons to Iraq. [Ari Fleischer](#), the spokesman of the U.S. president, rejects denials by Moscow and claims that Washington has "evidence" of these deliveries, which could give the Iraqis invaluable assets against British and American forces. Devices listed are binoculars for night vision, GPS units, and anti-tank missiles. Fleischer says the U.S. government asked the Russians to immediately put an end to its assistance. The Russian government and the companies mentioned as having delivered armaments to Iraq rejects these allegations on Monday, describing them as "inventions" and reaffirming that Moscow strictly respects the embargo imposed by the U.N. on Baghdad. Russian President Vladimir Putin rejects the American charges himself during a telephone conversation with George W. Bush, the U.S. presidential press secretary indicated Tuesday, quoted by the Interfax agency.

The [Arab League](#) votes 21-1 in favor of a [resolution](#) demanding the immediate and unconditional removal of U.S. and British soldiers from Iraq. The lone dissenting vote was cast by [Kuwait](#).

Iraqi leader [Saddam Hussein](#) gives a televised address on Iraqi state television, urging Iraqi citizens to fight coalition forces:

Oh, brave fighters! Hit your enemy with all your strength. Oh Iraqis, fight with the strength of the spirit of jihad which you carry in you and push them to the point where they cannot go on.<sup>[20]</sup>

## March 25[edit]

Coalition forces begin fighting Iraqi militia in [Basra](#), second largest city in Iraq. British soldiers reported that the Shiite population of Basra appeared to be rebelling against the Iraqi militia. The anti-Saddam resistance group based in [Iran](#), the [Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq](#), confirmed that the Shiite revolt was taking place in Basra. According to some sources, the Iraqi militia forces were attacking the local Basra civilians, attempting to stop the revolt, with artillery and mortars. The Iraqi Information Minister [Muhammed al-Sahaf](#) denied that any uprising was taking place in Basra.

The Red Cross warned that a humanitarian crisis was emerging in the city. The Red Cross, Save the Children and other organizations are attempting to reach the city. Kuwait also has a caravan of supply trucks heading north into Iraq. Coalition forces announce that the port city of [Umm Qasr](#) was now "safe and open" and divers begin searching for mines off shore. Once the waters are clear, British ships, which are waiting off of the Iraqi coast, land in Umm Qasr with additional medicine, food and water for the area. Coalition forces have a small supply of food and water that they begin to pass out to the citizens of Umm Qasr.

While fighting in [Nasiriya](#), coalition forces discover and confiscate weapons caches and gear to protect against chemical weapons, including a [T-55](#) tank, over 3,000 chemical suits with masks, and Iraqi munitions and military uniforms. All of this equipment was hidden in a Nasiriya hospital.

U.S. forces advance toward [Baghdad](#), but are hampered by extreme dust storms.

Thousands of chemical suits as well as a tank and a large stockpile of weapons are reportedly found by coalition forces in the [An Nasiriyah hospital](#) in Iraq. Coalition forces enter the hospital after being fired upon by Iraqi soldiers hiding in the building.<sup>[21]</sup> U.S. officials report the possibility that [chemical weapons](#) would be deployed on coalition troops as they approach [Baghdad](#).<sup>[22]</sup>

British forces report that a popular uprising in the city of [Basra](#) has provoked Iraqi troops to fire upon [civilians](#) with [mortars](#). British forces attack the mortar position.<sup>[23]</sup>

According to a U.S. officer, approximately 650 Iraqis were killed around [Najaf](#) "in the last twenty-four hours" while the American forces would not have, on their side, recorded any casualties. This assessment, not confirmed by any independent source, would be the heaviest since the beginning of the offensive, the Thursday prior.

## March 26[edit]

The American central command in Qatar admits to have carried out bombardments which could have killed civilians because Iraqi military assets were being placed close to civilian areas - within 300 feet (100 m) in some cases. This occurs a few hours after two explosions occurred in on a commercial street of Baghdad which killed 14 Iraqi civilians and injured thirty more, according to Iraqi civil defense. Also on this day special units of the Iraqi Republican Guard, for the first time, take part in the fights against the American and British

forces. Just after the marketplace explosions in Baghdad, Russia calls for "the immediate end of the war against Iraq" and discussions to resume within the Security Council.

954 soldiers from the American [173rd Airborne Brigade](#), commanded by Colonel William C. Mayville, conduct a combat parajump into Northern Iraq onto Bashur Airfield. Their mission is to secure a northern front to air-land ground units including armor and logistical assets. The paratroopers also assist [Special Operations Forces](#) (SOF) already active in the areas north of [Kirkuk](#) and [Mosul](#).<sup>[24][25]</sup>

## March 27 [\[edit\]](#)

U.S. forces take the [bridge](#) at [Samawah](#).

## March 28 [\[edit\]](#)

The [U.N. Security Council](#) unanimously adopts a resolution allowing the resumption of the [Oil for Food program](#), suspended on March 18, and which 60% of the Iraqi population relies upon for sustenance. The Secretary General of the United Nations, [Kofi Annan](#), underlines that this vote should not be confused with a recognition of the war carried out and with a way to legitimize the military action afterwards. The resolution states that the chief responsibility for addressing humanitarian consequences of the war would fall to the United States and the United Kingdom if they take control of the country. This refers to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which defines the responsibilities of a country in wartime to occupying forces.

U.S. Secretary of Defense [Donald Rumsfeld](#) accuses [Syria](#) of supplying arms and materiel to Iraq; Syria denies these allegations.

The first coalition forces humanitarian aid ship, the [RFA Sir Galahad](#), prepares to dock at the Iraqi port of [Umm Qasr](#) at 11:45 p.m. (UTC).

After 2 days of fighting, Royal Marines from J Company, 42 Commando, liberated the town of Umm Khayyal, killing a number of Fedayeen fighters.<sup>[26]</sup>

## March 29 [\[edit\]](#)

The Iraqi Information Minister [Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf](#) accuses U.S. forces of killing 140 civilians during the last 24 hours and denies allegations that Iraqi soldiers are disguising themselves as civilians.

An explosion damaged a shopping center in [Kuwait City](#) before dawn. Initial reports suggest the cause is a malfunctioning U.S. [cruise missile](#), but later reports focused on an Iraqi [Silkworm missile](#) as being responsible. No injuries are reported.

An Iraqi [suicide bomber](#), driving a [taxi](#), kills four U.S. soldiers in an attack.

## March 31 [\[edit\]](#)

U.S. forces kill seven civilians, including women and children, in an automobile whose driver refused to stop at a checkpoint. According to one account the driver ignored several warning shots, as well as gunfire into the vehicle's engine.<sup>[22]</sup>

Journalist [Peter Arnett](#) is fired by [NBC](#) after giving an interview to Iraqi [television](#), which some considered as unfairly critical of the [Bush administration's war on Iraq](#). Later in the day, Arnett is hired by a British tabloid, the [Daily Mirror](#).

The [U.S. Department of Defense](#) orders [Fox News](#) embedded reporter [Geraldo Rivera](#) away from its troops and demands him to leave Iraq after accusing him of reporting the positions of U.S. forces.

## April 2<sup>[edit]</sup>

U.S. forces reach the outskirts of Baghdad and encounter fierce fighting from small units of Iraqi Republican Guard.

Kurdish militiamen, aided by U.S. forces, move into [Kanilan](#) near [Mosul](#) in northern Iraq. Citizens living in the town tell reporters that they are happy that the Iraqi soldiers are gone.

## April 3<sup>[edit]</sup>

U.S. forces take control of [Saddam International Airport](#), in southern Baghdad. They rename the airport to "Baghdad International Airport".

## April 4<sup>[edit]</sup>

 [MSNBC](#) finds evidence of the deadly toxins [ricin](#), and [botulinum](#) at a laboratory in northern Iraq, used as a training camp for [Ansar al-Islam](#), a terrorist group with ties to the al-Qaida terrorist network.<sup>[28]</sup> The tests conducted by MSNBC were the same type of tests used by U.N. weapons inspectors. U.S. officials said that they planned on conducting their own tests of the area.

U.S. forces search the Latifiyah Explosives and Ammunition Plant, south of Baghdad, and discover thousands of boxes full of vials of a white powdery substance, [atropine](#) (a nerve agent antidote) and Arabic documents on how to engage in chemical warfare. Early reports suggest that the powdery substance is an explosive, although additional tests are needed. Some vials contained a liquid. The facility had been identified by the International Atomic Energy Agency as a suspected chemical, biological and nuclear weapons site. U.N. weapons inspectors visited the plant at least nine times, including as recently as February 18. Later tests show no forbidden weaponry.

## April 6<sup>[edit]</sup>

[Basra](#) becomes the first major Iraqi city to be captured by coalition forces when it comes under British control.

## April 8

The [International Atomic Energy Agency](#)'s chief, [Mohamed ElBaradei](#), reiterates a statement he made on March 31 that only the IAEA has a mandate to search for and destroy any [nuclear weapons](#) or parts of nuclear weapons that are found in Iraq.<sup>[29]</sup>

Two American [air to surface missiles](#) hit [Al Jazeera](#)'s office in [Baghdad](#), killing a reporter and wounding a cameraman. The nearby office of Arab satellite T.V. channel [Abu Dhabi](#) is also hit by air strikes. Al-Jazeera accuses the U.S. of attacking civilian media as censorship. On the same day, an American [M1 Abrams main battle tank](#) fires into the fifteens floor of Baghdad's [Palestine Hotel](#), where many foreign journalists are berthed, killing two cameramen and wounding three. In the case of Abu Dhabi, the station airs footage of Iraqi fire coming from underneath the camera's viewpoint. In the hotel's case, however, other journalists on the scene deny any fire from or around the hotel.<sup>[30][31]</sup>

## April 9

[Baghdad](#) is captured by U.S. forces. Some Iraqis cheer in the streets as U.S. forces capture deserted [Ba'ath Party](#) ministry buildings and pull down a huge iron statue of [Saddam Hussein](#), ending his 24-year rule of Iraq. Looting of government offices breaks out and forces fighting for Hussein melt away in large portions of the city.<sup>[32]</sup>

## April 12

Looting and unrest, especially in major cities such as [Baghdad](#) and [Basra](#) becomes a very serious issue. In Baghdad, with the notable exception of the Oil Ministry, which was guarded by American soldiers, the majority of government and public buildings are totally plundered, to the point where there is nothing of any value left. This includes the [National Museum of Iraq](#), with initial reports stating that 170,000 artifacts have been lost. The reports are later discovered to have been exaggerated, with the actual losses ultimately being determined to have been around 15,000 items. Many major hospitals are also looted. The losses caused by looting and plundering starts to cause more and more damage to Iraqi civilian infrastructure, economy, and culture, than those caused by three weeks of coalition bombing.

## April 13

[Tikrit](#), the home town of [Saddam Hussein](#), and the last town not under control of the coalition, was taken by the Marines of [Task Force Tripoli](#). Perhaps to the surprise of many, there was little resistance.

## April 15

With the capture of the [Tikrit](#) region, the coalition declares that the war in Iraq is effectively over.<sup>[33]</sup>

## May 1

U.S. President [George W. Bush announces](#) from the flight deck of the [aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln](#), that major combat operations by the U.S. in Iraq "have ended".

