

PEACEKEEPER **AT WAR**

A personal view of the Gulf War

What comes to mind when you think of the Gulf War? A spectacular fireworks display over Baghdad? Scud missiles, "smart bombs" and "surgical strikes"? Gesticulating journalists who became overnight celebrities because of constant television exposure? Or the triumphant return of western troops to parades and yellow ribbons?

These are the images with which the public was bombarded during the war — a thick technological veneer obscuring the bloody reality. This two-part film strips away that superficial polish to probe some little-explored issues behind the recent Middle East conflict.

Part 1 fills in some of the background to the 1991 Gulf War that has tended not to make the headlines. It looks at the recent historical context, including Canadian and American involvement, the importance of the region's oil resources, the origins of the conflict and the effect the war has had on people in the region. It also introduces Canada's role in the United Nations since the fifty founding member-states came together in an attempt to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Part 2 examines Canadian participation in the violent response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in the context of Canada's pivotal role in forming and developing the United Nations Peacekeeping Force. The filmmaker contrasts the part played by this force in the negotiated settlement of the Suez Crisis of 1956 with its actions during and after the Gulf War, questioning the recent deviation from its traditional mandate. Is it desirable or even possible, he asks, to fight and be a peacekeeper at the same time?

Produced and distributed by the
National Film Board of Canada



Closed captioned.
A decoder is required.

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PEACEKEEPER **AT WAR**



*A personal view of the
Gulf War*



VHS

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FROM THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

PEACEKEEPER **AT WAR**

A personal view of the Gulf War

PART II

**After 35 years of peace initiatives in the Middle East,
Canada rushed off to war in January, 1991 as part of
Operation Desert Storm...**

Background information for *Peacekeeper at War*

When the United Nations was formed in 1945, Canada was one of the founding members. Eleven years later, when the Suez Crisis occurred, an emergency session was called to try to resolve it. Canada's Minister of External Affairs, Lester Pearson, proposed to separate the opponents by a neutral force under UN command, made up of units from small-and medium-sized powers. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force was born. Its mandate was to set up and administer a demilitarized zone at the invitation of the conflicting sides so that they could negotiate a settlement. Since this first, successful deployment of the force in Egypt in 1956, Canada has sent 80,000 soldiers to serve in peacekeeping missions around the world — more than any other country.

The role played by the Peacekeeping Force in the recent conflict in the Middle East was very different. This time, the UN was one of the belligerents, and there was no negotiation. Canada played an active part in the US - led attack on Iraq though a majority of Canadians were opposed to their country's participation before the launching of Operation Desert Storm.

Recommended Reading

A History of the Arab Peoples, Albert Hourani. Harvard University Press, 1991.

The Commanders, by Bob Woodward, Assistant Managing Editor of the Washington Post. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1991.

George Bush's War, by Jean Edward Smith, Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. Henry Holt, New York, 1992.

Triumph Without Victory: the Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War, by the staff of US News and World Report. Times Books, 1992.

It Was, It Was Not — Essays and Art on the War Against Iraq, edited by Mordecai Briemberg. New Star Books, Vancouver, 1992.

A Bargain for Humanity: Global Security by 2000, Doug Roche, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament to the United Nations. University of Alberta Press, 1993

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Directed,
Photographed
and
Written by
Martin Duckworth

Location
Sound
Glen Hodgins

Editing
Judith Merritt

Music
Larry Crosley

Sound Editing
André Chaput

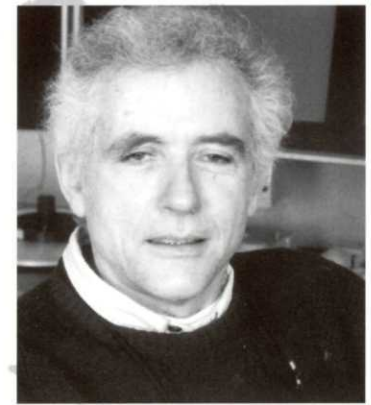
Re-recording
**Jean-Pierre
Joutel,
Serge Boivin**

Producers
**Bill Brind,
Judith Merritt**

Executive Producer
Dennis Murphy

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Points for Discussion (Part 2)



Martin Duckworth

- What were the origins of the United Nations and its Peacekeeping Force? Why was Lester Pearson awarded the Nobel Peace Prize?
- Do you think that Canada has a responsibility to help resolve disputes in other parts of the world? Why or why not?
- Do you think a military peacekeeping force can be influential in resolving disputes or preventing them from escalating? Can you think of other means that might be equally effective?
- Were the Canadian troops allocated to UN peacekeeping in the Gulf actually defending Canadian interests? If so, what were these interests? If not, what were they defending? Do you feel this was in keeping with their mandate?
- The film indicates that in six weeks, the United States, Britain and France dropped as many bombs as the American Air Force did in five years during the Vietnamese War. Do these figures surprise you? Why do you think all this arsenal was unleashed against Iraq?
- Discuss the paradox of a neutral force formed to promote peace taking sides in a conflict. Do you think it is possible to fight and work for peace at the same time?
- Can you think of any other war zones where UN troops have attacked one side in support of another despite their designated role as peacekeepers?
- "... surely by now the glamour has gone out of war," stated Lester Pearson in 1957. Do you think the general impression that remains of the Gulf War and other recent conflicts is a romanticized one? Or is it realistic?