

# 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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*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 I**

**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*

Because part of the American strategy in the Gulf War was to saturate the public with images of the state-of-the-art technology being deployed against the Iraqis rather than dwelling on the death and devastation wreaked by such weapons, even now many people are not aware of the human costs exacted by them.

Visiting the Gulf eight months after the war, the filmmaker takes a down-to-earth look at some factors that led up to it, and the myriad difficulties faced by people in the region in its aftermath. He concludes that the military intervention in the Gulf resolved little in a dispute between Iraq and Kuwait that has existed since both countries were carved by the British out of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. Despite some posturing about a political will for peace and disarmament at the end of the Cold War, the biggest arms buildup in the history of the Middle East is taking place in the wake of the recent conflict.

### 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**

17 minutes  
38 seconds  
Order Number:  
C9194 013

## Points for Discussion (Part 1)



**Martin Duckworth**

- Looking at a map of the Gulf states, what strikes you about the region?

- Although it was often made to appear that bombs dropped on Iraq hit their targets squarely, over half actually missed them, and most of the victims were civilians.

What does this indicate about media coverage of the Gulf War? Can you think of any other information that became available after the war that conflicted with impressions created earlier?

- Based on the historical overview of how the states of Iraq and Kuwait were formed, discuss the involvement of western nations in the evolution of the 1991 Gulf Crisis. Why do you think the United Nations intervened to stop the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait when it had taken no action against Saddam Hussein during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war?

- The film indicates that Iraq and Kuwait control 20% of the world's oil reserves. How big a role do you think this resource played in the UN decision to eject the Iraqis from Kuwait by force?

- The film shows a variety of people in postwar Kuwait, including a political science professor, wealthy oil magnates, and foreign workers from Bangladesh, and Canada. What are some of the differences in the way they live? To what extent have they been affected by the recent conflict?

- George Bush spoke of "a historic movement towards a new world order." In the context of what followed, what do you think he meant by those words?

- During the House of Commons debate about Canadian participation in the Gulf War, Audrey McLaughlin said, "The option of killing people to resolve disputes must disappear..." Do you agree? What are some other possible war conflicts?