



WAR IN THE GULF: AN ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

POLITICAL ECOLOGY GROUP — PEG



Patrick Downs/Los Angeles Times

As this paper went to press, the Persian Gulf war was entering its second week, and the environmental consequences of the conflict were becoming increasingly prominent. As the war continues, the information and analysis we present here is all the more urgent. We hope that all who read it will find this paper a useful educational and organizing tool.

The war in the Persian Gulf marks a critical juncture for the environmental movement. We can either remain silent while a massive social and environmental tragedy unfolds, or we can question the premises and consequences of that "way of life" for which more than 400,000 young Americans

have been sent overseas to kill and die. We can either define ourselves as a single issue movement or we can recognize that environmental questions in the Gulf and here at home are intertwined with those of peace, social justice, and human survival.

As US war planes fly 2,000 bombing

raids a night on Iraq and Kuwait, and as oil spills into the Gulf waters, we are witnessing the unfolding of a major human and environmental tragedy. The bombing of nuclear weapons plants, chemical weapons facilities, oil drilling platforms, refineries, and nuclear powered ships bearing nuclear arms all present horrifying scenarios of social and ecological catastrophe. The use of chemical, nuclear and biological weapons would have serious immediate and long-term impacts on the environment and human health. Scientists are warning that the environmental effects of

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Iraq's possible sabotage and burning of Kuwaiti oil fields could extend beyond the Persian Gulf, possibly disrupting the Asian monsoons whose rains feed more than a billion people.

The targeting of Iraq's plentiful water resources, whether through the destruction of dams, dikes, wells, marshlands or irrigated agricultural systems, would have profound impacts on the Persian Gulf's ecological stability, most directly affecting the rural populations of the area. The devastation of the land, and the subsequent creation of at least a million refugees, are inevitable consequences of a full-scale war in the Gulf.

As the US wages war in the Gulf, our

government is once again, as in Vietnam, destroying a region in order to "save" it. Then the United States was destroying the country to supposedly save it from communism. Now, with the cold war behind us, the US has responded to Saddam Hussein's naked aggression against Kuwait with naked hypocrisy. Our country is going to war to reinstall the non-democratic government of an oil rich elite and to fight against a repressive ruler whom, like Noriega, our government helped arm and support for years.

At stake are issues that reach beyond the ruthless acts of Saddam Hussein, the massive deployment of US troops to the region, and the terrible impacts of war. Much of the world's future may

be shaped by this conflict. By defining the US role in the "New World Order" as one of global police force, President Bush is charting a course for America and the rest of the world. This course is based on US military intervention to control access to oil and other natural resources in the Third World. In doing so, Bush is simultaneously declaring war on the peace dividend and on domestic social and environmental policy alternatives.

The Gulf war is the culmination of more than a decade of government energy policies that have consistently undermined efforts to promote efficiency and renewable alternatives to oil. The war is being used to give a powerful new boost to efforts to exploit oil and other natural resources in native lands and ecologically fragile wilderness areas. It is also being used to breathe new life into poisonous corporate energy "alternatives" like nuclear power. This war is something that US environmentalists cannot afford to ignore.

The US is at war to control the flow of oil into the world's smog producing automobiles and smoke-belching, toxic waste-producing factories. With 6% of the world's population, the United States consumes 25% of the world's oil. As Friends of the Earth recently put it to Secretary of State Baker, it is unacceptable that we are waging war "to perpetuate policies which are despoiling the global environment ... and accelerating global warming." ¹

By the time this paper reaches the reader we may still be at war in the Persian Gulf, there may be a stalemate, or the immediate fighting may have ended only for the world to find the US military digging in for the long haul. In any case, the purpose of this paper is to provide information and analysis of the environmental and social issues that surround this war. These issues will continue to exist once the fighting stops and must be resolved for any real peace to be possible. We hope that what we present in this Action Paper will help strengthen the environmental movement in its response to a war that represents almost everything that environmentalists are fighting against in this, the supposedly green decade.



BREAKING THE CAMEL'S BACK: ECOLOGY AND WAR IN THE PERSIAN GULF

"We are heading for ecological disaster for years to come."

Dr. Abdullah Toukan, Chief Scientific Adviser to King Hussein of Jordan

At press time an oil spill ten-times the size of the Exxon Valdez had flooded the Gulf and the Bush Administration was accusing Saddam Hussein of "environmental terrorism." Iraq shot back, calling Bush an environmental terrorist for bombing the Iraqi countryside and Iraqi tankers. The US Government began this war knowing that environmental catastrophe was its inevitable consequence. The fact of the matter is that war is a social and environmental nightmare, and those who wage it terrorize human life and ecology alike.

Waged by adversaries bristling with lethal arsenals, this war will kill hundreds of thousands of people outright as well as having long-lasting effects on the region's environment. While the war is being fought over oil, it is destroying the region's other resources—its seas and its agricultural land. The environmental damage will lead to famine, disease, and long-term suffering for people in the region.

WAR AND THE ENVIRONMENT: RECENT HISTORY



Environmental warfare—the destruction of terrain, crops or entire ecosystems—has been a military tactic since biblical

times. As technology has become more sophisticated, the ecological consequences of warfare have become increasingly severe—whether they be the result of the strategic destruction of the environment or simply the consequences of battle. While in the heat of the moment, environmental concerns in the Persian Gulf may seem trivial, they must have also appeared that way to policy makers supervising US nuclear weapons production at Hanford Reservation and Rocky Flats, or to generals deciding to defoliate Vietnam. But the historical record clearly points to the grave ecological consequences of military build-up and warfare. To destroy a country in order to "save" it is to achieve a pyrrhic victory. The clearest contemporary example of the environmental impacts of warfare is the case of Vietnam where experts coined the term "ecocide" to describe the devastation.

The Vietnam War

In Vietnam, the US government employed a scorched earth policy that deliberately destroyed the environment in order to deny the Vietnamese guerrillas cover and to separate them from the local population. As a result, between one-fourth and one-half of

the land of Vietnam suffered defoliation at some point during the war. During the 1960s and 1970s, vast areas of tropical forests, mangroves and agricultural lands fell victim to chemical weapons such as napalm, white phosphorus and herbicides—most notably Agent Orange. Planes dropped 13 million tons of bombs that pockmarked the land with 25 million craters, displacing 3 billion cubic meters of soil and leading to disease and water shortages. Two million Vietnamese died in the war, hundreds of thousands more are suffering from cancer and other diseases, while thousands of children—Vietnamese and American—have been born with birth defects caused by these chemicals.

Vietnam's environment remains devastated from the war; according to a report issued by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, "much of the damage can probably never be repaired."² This tragic saga of environmental destruction has been repeated frequently in recent years in the US scorched-earth bombing in El Salvador, the Contras' targeting of environmental projects in Nicaragua, the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan, and elsewhere.³



Department of Defense

The US government has initiated the world's largest and most environmentally devastating military conflict since the Vietnam War.



The Iran-Iraq War

The war between Iran and Iraq, fought in the 1980s, holds some important environmental lessons for the Persian Gulf region. The ecological effects of Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons on Iranian troops and on the Kurdish population of Iraq have not been thoroughly documented, but some information does exist. Iran claims that as many as 50,000 people were killed or wounded by Iraqi chemical attacks during the war.

In the first half of 1988, according to Dr. Jason Clay, Executive Director of the human rights organization Cultural Survival, Iraq "launched two separate chemical warfare campaigns on Kurds, killing thousands and prompting more than 100,000 to flee the country as refugees." Mustard gas, a known carcinogen, was used on the Kurds living along the Turkish border, poisoning their land for years, if not decades, and thus destroying not only the Kurds way of life, but any productive activity there. The chemical weapons were used as part of an ongoing effort to remove the Kurds from territory in the mountains along the Turkish and Iranian border, gain access to natural resources such as uranium, and "destroy the Kurds as a people." Since 1970 more than 3,000 Kurdish villages

have been destroyed and more than 1 million Kurds forcibly removed from their homes.⁴

The best documentation of the impacts of the Iran-Iraq war come from United Nations studies of the ecosystem of the Persian Gulf. Dr. Mustafa Tolba, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) notes that the Gulf "is 43 times more polluted than any equal area of water in the world."⁵ The Iran-Iraq war, according to UNEP, "further magnified the problem." More than half of all oil spilled in the Gulf comes from tanker transport accidents. But between 1981 and 1987, military attacks on oil tankers more than doubled the number of accidents, raising reported spills from 11 to 24. Furthermore, hundreds of ships were sunk or damaged during the war. At least 17 major wrecks are still lying in the Gulf's shallow waters, creating serious navigational hazards that could result in further spills.⁶

The gravest single environmental impact of the war was caused by an Iraqi military attack on an Iranian drilling platform. The Nowruz oil spill, where several drilling platforms with multiple wells were blown up, lasted for nearly eight months, dumping more than half a million barrels of heavy crude into the sea — almost twice as much oil as was spilled by the Exxon



“Worst case scenario: Bhopal, Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez, and Hiroshima all rolled into one”



Valdez in Alaska. The resulting slick, reached across the full 1000 km length of the Gulf. Shortly after the spill large numbers of dead birds, fish, sea turtles, seasnakes, dolphins and dugongs (an endangered marine mammal) were found washed up along extensive stretches of coastline. The spill disrupted coastal ecosystems such as sea grass beds and mangroves, and it oiled two major sea turtle nesting beaches, inhibiting these endangered species' reproductive cycles.⁷

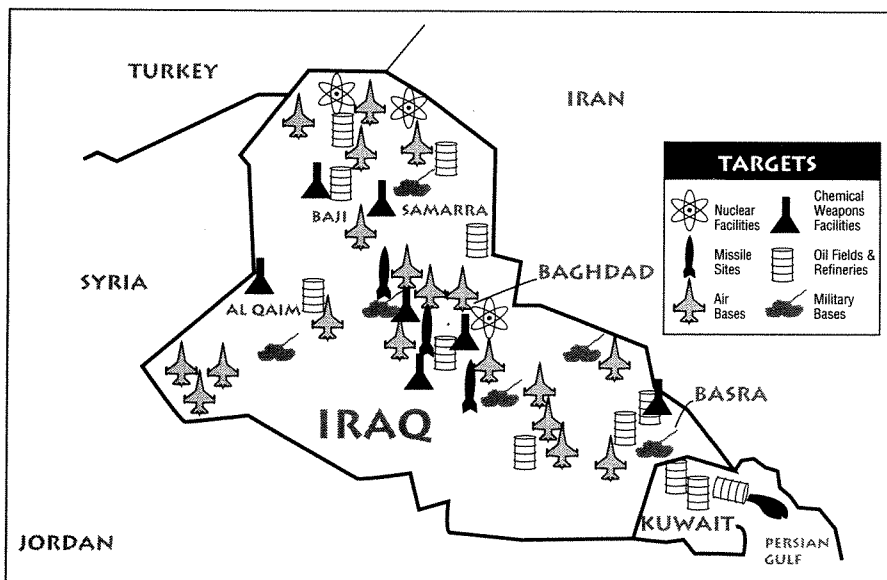
OPERATION DESERT STORM

This section outlines a series of scenarios some of which, at press time, have already begun to occur. We offer this section as a guide to help understand the potential ecological impacts of this war.



In a speech before the United Nations' Second World Climate Conference in Geneva this November, Jordan's King Hussein warned that "A war in the Gulf would not only result in devastating human death and injury, tremendous economic loss, and prolonged political confrontation between Orient and Occident, it could also lead to an "environmental catastrophe" that would be "swift, severe and devastating."⁸

It may take months or even years to determine the full impacts of allied bombing raids. However, in the first



Targets of the most intensive bombing campaign in history include chemical, biological, nuclear and oil facilities. (Not shown: Iraqi targets in Saudi Arabia and Israel).



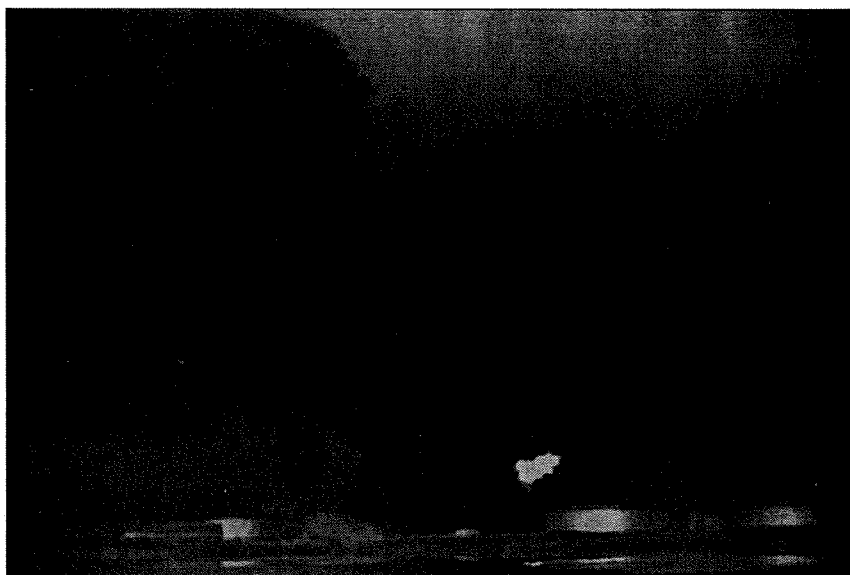
week of the war, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of the US forces in the Gulf reported that "we've gone after his nuclear capability, his chemical capability, his biological capability...I can assure that it's had a considerable setback."⁹ Examples from past accidents and incidents suggest that the bombing of Iraq, combined with the ominous threat of actual nuclear, chemical and biological warfare, in the scenarios described below, could in the worst case produce an environmental disaster that would surpass Bhopal, Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez and Hiroshima all rolled into one.

Oil: Weapon of Mass Destruction

A public debate has broken out about the extent of environmental devastation that Saddam Hussein could bring about by setting hundreds of Kuwaiti oil wells ablaze. Iraq has already ignited a few wells and a refinery, sending a black plume into the sky. If Iraq ignites all the wells, they may burn for up to one year, producing 5,000 tons of toxic smoke a day.

Some scientists, including Carl Sagan and UCLA atmospheric scientist Richard Turco compare this scenario with the eruption of Tamboro volcano in Indonesia in 1915. They charge that smoke produced by these fires could disrupt the climate over half of the Northern Hemisphere, causing crop failure. Other scientists, like Welsh chemical and environmental engineer John Cox, predict that the smoke from the fires would block sunlight and significantly lower temperatures in the Middle East also causing crop failure. Cox points to the possibility that if the smoke reached the stratosphere it could create an equatorial ozone hole. Furthermore, notes Cox, the smoke could so affect regional climates as to cause the Asian monsoons to fail, affecting more than one billion people in India and Pakistan.¹⁰

US government scientists from the Pentagon and Department of Energy deny these charges, insisting that their supercomputer simulations predict that smoke would not drift high



AP/Laurent Rebours

Burning oil wells could cause "a massive pollution event" and may affect Asia's monsoons as well as agriculture throughout much of the Northern Hemisphere.

enough into the atmosphere to either affect climatic changes or to disrupt the ozone. The tons of smoke that such fires would produce every day, would, in the words of Pentagon consultant Richard Small, be "limited" to a "massive pollution event" that would affect Southern Iran, Pakistan and Northern India. Despite this disagreement, Dr. Small's statements reveal that the US government knew well before the January 15th deadline that pursuing war instead of sanctions would likely lead to an environmental disaster that would cause serious damage to the region, and quite possibly extend beyond the geographical confines of the Middle East. Furthermore, the veracity of the Pentagon's and DOE studies has yet to be confirmed. "I'm suspicious because we know that the DOE has not dealt with us in a straightforward way with regard to energy policy in the US," says Friends of the Earth's Brent Blackwelder. "Attempts on their part to minimize adverse effects are to be expected. What's alarming is their admission of the seriousness of the 'pollution event' that would occur in this scenario."¹¹

Iraq has apparently released hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil into the Gulf and may set this oil ablaze in order to deter an amphibious assault

and to jam allied radar systems. This spill or other similar ones will, according to oil pollution expert Richard Golob "cause catastrophic damage to the marine environment," far surpassing the known effects of the Iran-Iraq war. John Grainger, of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation in Saudi Arabia, predicts "massive" wildlife "die-offs" from such spills. These spills would also clog desalination plants that provide the region and US troops with drinking water, while also adversely affecting fisheries.¹²

Chemical and Biological Warfare

Before the US began bombing its facilities, Iraq reportedly had the industrial capacity to produce as many as 700 tons of chemical warfare agents annually and has produced significant quantities in recent years. The government has reportedly stockpiled thousands of tons of mustard gas. The Iraqis also have hundreds of tons of the nerve gasses tabun and sarin. Iraq is also suspected of possessing the chemical agent phosgene which was responsible for 80% of the gas casualties during World War I. Some 125,000 tons of chemical weapons were used, killing 94,000 people and causing long-term suffering for close to a million more. Nerve gasses



were first confirmed to have been used in combat during the Iran-Iraq war. While non-persistent in the environment, they are six to twelve times as lethal as mustard gas and kill almost instantly. Even more frightening, Iraq is suspected to have significant quantities of biological weapons such as anthrax which can make an area uninhabitable for up to forty years.¹³

The United States, which still possesses the second largest chemical weapons stockpile in the world, reserves the right to retaliate in kind if attacked by chemical weapons. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney has refused to rule out the use of any weapon, stating that the US is prepared to use "the full spectrum" of weapons.¹⁴

The human and ecological impact of the US-led attacks on numerous Iraqi chemical weapons production facilities, which are located near millions of Iraqi civilians, are not yet known but could well be devastating. Iraq's main chemical weapons facility, located 25 miles north west of the holy shi'ite city of Samarra, was a prime military target bombed by allied forces in the first days of the war. Before the war broke out, the *London Guardian* analyzed the potential impacts of bombing the Samarra plant. A direct hit on a storage bunker at the Samarra factory, said the *Guardian* "would release an immense plume of toxic vapor which would disperse to kill every living thing it touched." Recent experience

with the Bhopal gas disaster suggests that in the event of a temperature inversion, a toxic cloud released by such an attack could drift up to 50 miles during the day. Given prevailing winds, such a cloud would probably not blow over Samarra and its population of 70,000, but could instead poison the Tigris river, the Samarra barrage and Lake Mileh Tharthar, all essential sources for irrigation, flood control and drinking water. At least four other chemical weapons production sites were bombed by allied forces in the first three days of the war and five others were unconfirmed targets.

If water is used to put out fires caused by the bombing of these facilities, it will leach the chemicals deep into the soil, or wash them into rivers, which will carry them downstream. Long-lasting "dead zones" will be created which will not support human or animal life.¹⁵ Clean-up efforts will be expensive and difficult and may be far beyond Iraqi resources.

Nuclear Threats

The consequences of the US attack on Iraq's three small nuclear power plants are not yet known. However, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf has stated that he has "very high confidence that those nuclear reactors have been thoroughly damaged and will not be effective for quite some number of years." The military has failed to mention the potential "collateral" environmental impact of such raids, but environmental groups are raising questions. Friends of the Earth's Brent Blackwelder told us "You've got to have a lot of bravo if you think you can bomb a reactor without risking opening the containment vessel" where the radioactive materials are held. Surgical strikes on nuclear reactors, says Blackwelder, cannot guarantee absolute pinpoint accuracy and run the risk of creating serious radioactive pollution problems.¹⁶

In the last five months of 1990, the US radically increased its nuclear weapons capability in the Gulf to 300 land-based warheads in Turkey and 700 warheads aboard US Navy surface ships and attack submarines. Accord-

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—Brent Blackwelder,
Friends of the Earth

ing to Greenpeace, "virtually all of these weapons are long-range sea-launched cruise missiles and aircraft-delivered nuclear bombs." The US outnumbered Iraq's nuclear capability 1000 to nothing.¹⁷ Greenpeace military expert William Arkin points out that while the US nuclear arsenal was developed and deployed to deter a Soviet nuclear threat, it is now being used to confront a regional Third-World power which, although it has the potential to become nuclear, is not now nuclear. If the US uses its nuclear weapons against Iraq, it would, according to Arkin, create "a disaster of unimaginable proportions." In addition to the ecological destruction and loss of human lives a nuclear attack would cause, it would also create serious political fallout. It could cause the US-built international alliance to disintegrate. And it could potentially trigger an escalated Third World nuclear arms race. A nuclear attack, says Arkin, would cripple nuclear non-proliferation efforts "by serving as a powerful signal to the Third World that the development of nuclear arsenals is in their own interest." If the US uses nuclear weapons in the Gulf, it would be setting a precedent that could lead to a series of Third World nuclear confrontations and disasters in the future.¹⁸



Bombing of chemical weapons facilities could create Bhopal-like tragedies in Iraq: Bhopal woman blinded by poison gas.

Pablo Bartholomew/Gamma Liaison



Conventional Warfare

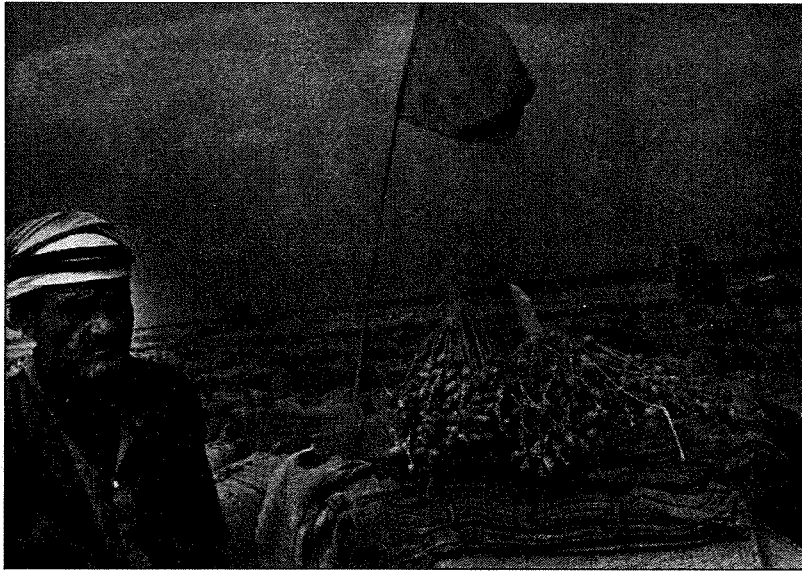
Conventional weapons have taken a devastating toll on the environment. After only six days of the Gulf war, US and allied aircraft had already flown more than 10,000 sorties—more than ten times the rate during the height of the Vietnam War and 50% more than during the most intense bombardment of German cities during World War II.¹⁹ Bombing during the Vietnam war took a devastating human and environmental toll. In this war, casualties to civilians and the environment surely parallel Vietnam, despite our government's claims that it is carrying out strictly "surgical strikes."

The US is equipped with, and possibly using, "earth penetrator" bombs that burrow up to 200 feet beneath the surface before exploding. It is also using bombs that explode and scatter shrapnel before they hit the ground, and "smart" bombs that wait hours and sometimes days to explode. Smart bombs that fail to explode can go off years later when they come in contact with metal, such as a farmer's hoe. Fifteen years after the war, a small hospital in the Vietnamese countryside still treats 15-20 new bomb victims a month. The US is also using anti-personnel cluster bombs, which scatter munitions the size of tennis balls, which then explode in a deadly spray of steel pellets if disturbed by human beings. B-52s have "carpet bombed" Kuwait, while conventional Tomahawk missiles being fired from Navy ships have the capacity, as one US General put it, to "kill an entire regiment in less than five minutes."²⁰ The areas being bombed include archeological treasures of the biblical towns of Nineveh, Ur and Babylon. As Gar Smith, editor of the Earth

Island Journal points out, "In a war, holy sites and irreplaceable historic buildings centuries old will be destroyed or damaged beyond repair."²¹

Water As a Weapon: Targeting the Environment

Twenty-three percent of Iraq's population works in agriculture, farming in the famed "cradle of western civilization"—the fertile delta between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Iraq's agricultural sector, which produces one of the world's largest date crops, also



The massive bombardment of Iraq is turning the 'breadbasket of the Gulf' into a war-torn basketcase.

grows rice, wheat, barley, livestock, poultry, milk, fruits and vegetables. All would suffer serious damage from conventional, chemical or nuclear war. As Smith writes, the US attack on Iraq will "in essence turn the 'breadbasket of the Gulf' into a war-torn basketcase."

A report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) notes that the delta's terrain "seems similar to Vietnam; reeds that flank the Shatt al Arab (the delta's mouth) for example, exceed 20 feet." The CRS observes that, as opposed to the deserts of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Iraqi troops would "find far better cover and concealment" in the delta. "Surface visibility often is measured in a few feet and vegetation

severely restricts aerial observation."²²

One solution to this Vietnam-like problem, is a Vietnam-like solution. The CRS proposes that Iraqi irrigation systems should be selected as tactical targets, noting that "Iraqi armed forces would find it difficult to move...if attacks on dikes and dams encouraged floods." The impact of this kind of "solution" on Iraqi agriculture—both high-tech agribusiness and traditional cultivators utilizing ancient irrigation systems—would be severe. And while the report does not mention them, defoliation tactics similar to those used by

the US military in Vietnam (whose slogan was "only we can prevent forests") and most recently by the US Drug Enforcement Agency in Guatemala, cannot be ruled out. Other potential targets are dams on three principle rivers in the Zagros mountains outside of Baghdad. If these dams are damaged, the capital could suffer severe flooding. Traditional, horizontal subterranean wells called

Qanat, which have collapsed during earthquakes, could also collapse during the aerial bombardments of Iraq, further destroying rural life.

Another scenario, proposed on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* by Peter Schweizer of the American Foreign Policy Council, is to shut off Iraq's two main rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, which provide the country with more than 80% of its industrial, agricultural and drinking water. While the proposal is unrealistic, it is only so because Syria sits between Iraq and Turkey on the Euphrates' course, and cutting off Syria's water would undermine the coalition the United States has built against Iraq. The proposed cut-off

Donna Binder/Impact Visuals

DOUBLE STANDARDS: US FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

"Even a dolt understands the principle. We need the oil. It's nice to talk about standing up for freedom, but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are not exactly democracies, and if their principal export were oranges, a mid-level State Department official would have issued a statement and we would have closed Washington down for August."

—A Bush advisor quoted in *Time* magazine, August 20, 1990



George Bush calls Saddam Hussein a brutal dictator. But Iraq did not reach its status as a heavily armed dictatorship in a vacuum. According to the *New York Times* "Iraq reached the heights of its power with US acquiescence and sometimes its help" including "a thriving grain trade with American farmers, cooperation with US intelligence agencies, oil sales to American refiners that helped finance its military and muted White House criticism of its human rights and war atrocities."⁶⁹

Historically, the US and other Western powers have long relied on dictators, kings and princes in the region to protect US corporate access to oil. For many years the Shah of Iran was the US favorite. Installed in a CIA-sponsored coup in 1953, his brutal dictatorship was overthrown in 1979 by a fundamentalist revolution spurred on by popular Iranian opposition to the repressive Shah. With the overthrow of the Shah, US support for Saddam Hussein grew despite the Arab nationalist rhetoric of his Ba'ath party and his repression of all domestic political opposition.⁷⁰

Saddam Hussein's first foreign aggression was Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980. With the tacit support of the United States, Iraq funded the war with sixty billion dollars from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, while acquiring weapons from France, the Soviet Union and Egypt. Iraq continued to grow in

importance to the United States as tensions between the US and Iran escalated. US support continued, even after Iraq bombed the USS Stark in 1987.⁷¹

As recently as 1990, the US Department of Commerce approved US companies' requests to sell materials to Iraq that could be used for biological and other weapons. Hewlett-Packard Co. and Tektronix Inc. sold Iraq high-tech instruments. The Centers for Disease Control sold viruses that are easily converted to biological weapons. Other US companies illegally exported chemicals used to make mustard gas.⁷²

The Bush and Reagan Administrations blocked Congressional attempts to impose economic sanctions against Iraq for using deadly chemical weapons



The US has blocked UN initiatives on issues ranging from disarmament and peace, to South Africa, to US support for the contras, to protection of the environment.



against Iranian cities and the Kurdish people. In the latest example, John Kelly, the Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs opposed such sanctions against Iraq while testifying on Capitol Hill on July 31, 1990, just days before the invasion began.⁷³

It was not until Hussein's drive for power threatened an even more trea-

sured US client, the Emir of Kuwait, that the US cut its economic and political relationship with Saddam Hussein. The Bush administration moved to impose military might in order to deal with the debacle its foreign policy helped create.

But using military force as a means to carry out foreign policy is not a new development for the US government. In the 1980's alone, the US invaded Grenada and Panama, showing little regard for the independence or self determination of smaller nations. The US has backed contra forces in Nicaragua and Angola and massively funded repressive governments like those of El Salvador and the Philippines in their wars against their own population.

The current conflict also provides an example of how arbitrary the US government is in its invocation and acknowledgement of international law. Since 1970, the United States has cast more vetoes of United Nations Security Council resolutions and rejected more resolutions from the General Assembly than any other nation. The US has blocked UN initiatives on issues ranging from disarmament and peace, to South Africa, to US support for the contras, to protection of the environment.⁷⁴

As the world gropes, in the post-Cold War period, for non-violent resolutions to political conflicts, the United Nations has a key role to play in facilitating this process. But in the current crisis, it's clear that the US is shaping UN actions to further its own foreign policy aims. US newspapers carried reports on the economic and political deals the US was making with a variety of countries to ensure their favorable votes on the UN resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq.⁷⁵ Even with a United Nations stamp of approval, war is not an effective way to resolve the conflicts in the Middle East.



SELF DETERMINATION FOR ALL?

Bush quoted the UN Charter as he sent troops to the Middle East and imposed sanctions through the UN. He claims the current war is motivated by opposition to military invasion as a solution to political problems and support for the self-determination of the Kuwaiti people. To the people of the Middle East and many in this country, his rationale seems like the greatest hypocrisy. The Reagan and Bush administrations have ignored the violent attacks of Iraq and Turkey, another US ally, on the Kurdish minority's movements for self-determination.⁷⁶ It's also instructive to compare US actions in the current crisis to US government response to Israel's far more bloody invasion of Lebanon in 1982 which left 20,000 civilians killed, tens of thousands wounded and crippled, and much of the country devastated. Israel faced no economic sanctions for its actions. The US vetoed three UN Security Council resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from Lebanon and for an international ban on arm sales to Israel while the conflict continued.⁷⁷

One of Bush's main themes in his effort to win US public support for the war, is the need to oppose the violent crimes committed by the Iraqi occupiers against the Kuwaiti people. Such violence needs to be opposed. But the sincerity of the US motivation is thrown in question by its policies elsewhere in the region. Since the beginning of the Palestinian *Intifada* (or uprising) in late 1987, more than eight hundred unarmed civilians (214 of them children under 16) have been killed by Israeli security forces.⁷⁸ The Bush administration has made virtually no response. Palestinian homes have been demolished, olive orchards have been uprooted and activists have been beaten, held without trial and deported. All but one of the colleges and universities in the West Bank and Gaza are closed by military order.⁷⁹ Since 1972, the US has vetoed 16 UN resolutions calling for self-determination for the Palestinian

people and an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.⁸⁰ Israel receives \$4 billion dollars a year from the US government. This aid has not been in any way endangered by the intransigence of the Israeli government and its refusal to respond to overtures made by the Palestine Liberation Organization, many Western European governments and even the National Council

cheap oil, this arrangement has resulted in a bonanza for the arms industries in the US, Europe and the Soviet Union. These countries sold over \$150 billion dollars of the world's most sophisticated weapons to Middle East nations between 1973 and 1984.⁸² Oil earnings have also wound up in Western banks where they have financed the growing US deficit. The governments of Kuwait



Reuters/Bettmann

The Bush administration's policy of selective outrage is not a viable strategy for bringing peace and stability to the region: Israeli soldiers and Palestinian women on the West Bank.

cil of Churches for a negotiated settlement through an international conference.⁸¹

As the outbreak of war has made clear, the Bush administration's policy of selective outrage is not a viable strategy for bringing peace and stability to the region. A policy of supporting an end to all military occupations in the region through a process of negotiation would be a far sounder contribution to a "New World Order."

No political order imposed at gunpoint can solve the ongoing social conflicts in the region. The US policy of supporting undemocratic feudal monarchies in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates has benefited the West at the expense of the majority of the Middle Eastern population. Along with guaranteeing a constant supply of


and Saudi Arabia currently have hundreds of billions of dollars invested in the European and US economies.⁸³

Meanwhile little oil revenue has been used to build sustainable, diversified Middle Eastern economies that would improve the situation of the majority of the people.⁸⁴ The result is that millions of people in the Middle East live in poverty while surrounded by rulers who live in plenty. The thrust of US policy in the Persian Gulf only recreates patterns that have backfired in the past, Iran being the best example. Policies that sacrifice support for democracy on the altar of cheap oil only plant the seeds of future turmoil.



however, is one more example of the blatant disregard that US military planners, policy makers and pundits have for social and ecological concerns in this kind of conflict. Cutting off water could cause serious ecological and agricultural disruption in Iraq and Syria, destroying crops and creating famine. ²³

IMPACTS OF A LONG-TERM US PRESENCE

 In the fall of 1990 the US military drove full-speed into the Persian Gulf desert, first to ostensibly keep Saddam Hussein off of Saudi Arabian sands, and then to blatantly prepare for the full-scale attack against Iraq. Now, the outbreak of war has virtually guarantees the establishment of permanent US or US-led multinational bases in the Persian Gulf. Very little attention has been paid to the ecological consequences of this potentially permanent basing of huge numbers of troops and equipment in the region. However, there is a growing body of information that points to a series of environmental problems, including production of military toxic waste, disruption and destruction of desert

ecosystems, and potentially damaging impacts on Middle Eastern agribusiness, traditional agriculture and nomadic grazing activities.

Toxic Troops

US military bases and activities abroad typically do not follow any environmental regulation—whether it be promulgated in the US or by the host nation. In fact, the Pentagon is in blatant violation of a 1978 Presidential order that mandates the development of a program and budget for cleaning up overseas bases. GAO reports on the environmental damage caused by US military bases abroad are classified and little concrete information exists. However, enough is known about the toxic waste produced at US bases in Western Europe for experts to recognize that it presents a serious problem. Military installations produce a deadly soup of poisons and carcinogens that includes paints, solvents, fuels, lubricants, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metals, cyanides, phenols, acids alkalis, and radioactive wastes. These contaminants cause numerous disposal problems and often affect communities living near the bases. ²⁴

The generation of toxic waste in Saudi Arabia's desert environment

At home, the US military produces more hazardous waste than the top five civilian chemical corporations combined.

promises, in some respects, to be greater than it would be in other areas of the world. According to the Congressional Research Service report, blistering heat and gritty sand in the Saudi desert requires the use of heavy-weight oil and other special lubricants on machinery, magnifying maintenance "manifold" and thus generating greater quantities of toxic waste.

The CRS report also notes that "Sanitation problems can quickly become unmanageable under the hot sun, unless proper preventative measures are enforced... Flies that feed on garbage and human waste broadcast disease." ²⁵ *The Village Voice* estimates that the US forces in the Gulf "are producing a minimum of between 10 and 12 million gallons of sewage a day," along with at least 250,000 tons of garbage a year. This solid and sewage waste, according to the Pentagon is "by agreement the responsibility of the host country." However, it is doubtful that the Saudis have the facilities to accommodate waste produced by a military city the size of Miami, and the Pentagon will not confirm whether it has signed a memorandum of environmental understanding (a frequent practice) with its host. ²⁶



Department of Defense

Military installations in Saudi Arabia are producing a deadly soup of poisons and carcinogens, including PCBs, heavy metals and radioactive wastes



Water Use: Draining Saudi Arabia

Personal water consumption for each US soldier in Saudi Arabia, including drinking, cooking, bathing, and laundry is roughly eleven gallons per day. Vehicles demand 10-12 gallons more daily. In order to quench its forces' thirst, the US military has reportedly dug new wells 1,500 feet deep to reach groundwater. It is drawing water from underground aquifers that represent 90% of Saudi water sources. It has also appropriated the water produced by 28 of Saudi Arabia's 29 desalination plants. Added pressure by the US military on the country's scarce, non-renewable water resources is increasing the rate of depletion. It has the potential to destabilize the country's internal economy, most directly affecting the least well-off Saudis, and the hundreds of thousands of impoverished foreign agricultural workers in the country. Access to safe drinking water for Saudi Arabia's rural population is already on the decline, having dropped from 87% of the population in 1980 to 68% in 1985. The US presence promises only to exacerbate the problem.²⁷

The water issue becomes all the more critical in a chemical warfare scenario. According to the Congressional Research Service, "the use of persistent agents by either side...could be disastrous, because it takes about 200,000 gallons of wash water to decontaminate one division." It is not clear where such water resources would come from, or if they would even be available in certain parts of the Saudi desert.

Desert Storm's Dust Storms

The war and the potential for major long-term military presence in Saudi Arabia pose serious threats to the region's desert ecosystems, to the nomads who live there, and to Middle Eastern agriculture. While the desert

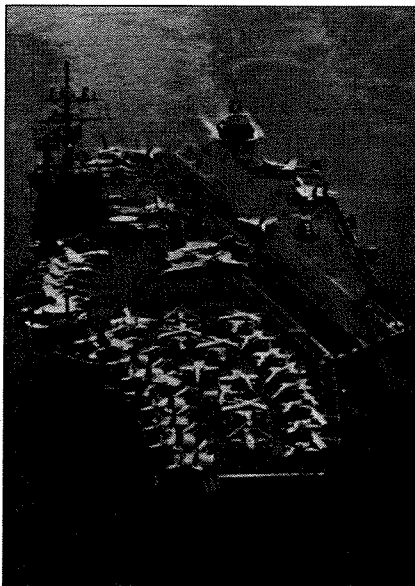


US forces are draining Saudi Arabia's water supplies and producing between 10 and 12 million gallons of sewage a day.

of Saudi Arabia may seem a barren wasteland, like the rest of the Middle East and many other desert ecosystems, it is home to a wildlife population of small mammals, including jackals, hares, sandcats, reptiles and birds.²⁸ Its soils are held in place by a living

crust of microorganisms, ephemeral plants, salt, silt and sand.

The disruption of the barren deserts and desert steppe during the war could potentially trigger massive duststorms and dust clouds. According to English Biologist J.L. Cloudsley-Thompson, during the desert campaigns of World War II large areas were disturbed, "giving rise to dust-storms when the wind velocity was only half that usually needed to cause them." As a result, the number of storms increased tenfold. Dust storms in Libya in 1941 became so thick that all military movement ceased for three days. Thompson and other desert scientists note that it takes generations for desert ecosystems to recover.²⁹ Studies of deserts in Africa and India have concluded that disruption and dust storms can reinforce dry spells and droughts by disrupting rainfall. Dust storms and drought would adversely effect agriculture in Saudi Arabia and other more fertile areas of the region, devastating local economies and deepening the hunger of the Middle East's poor.³⁰



The US has more than 1000 nuclear weapons in the Gulf.



NATIONAL SECURITY AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES: THE WAR AT HOME

"Make no mistake...to keep America militarily prepared, I will oppose the defense budget slashers who are out of tune with what America needs to keep freedom secure and safe."

—President Bush speaking to a Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in August, 1990.

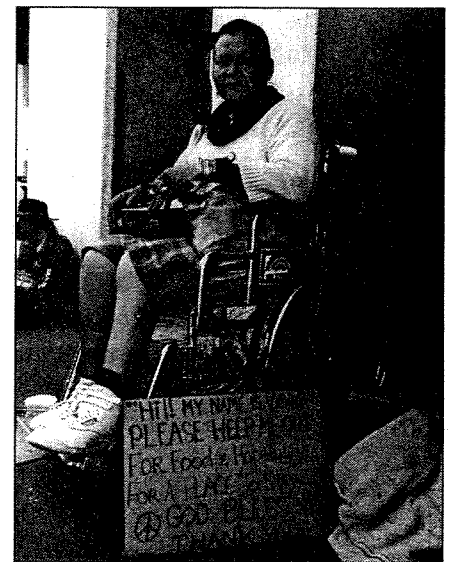
Q: *We haven't really heard you call upon Americans to conserve as part of this crisis.*

A: *I call upon Americans to conserve.*

Q: *Will you elaborate?*

A: *No.*

—President Bush responding to a reporter's questions at a Kennebunkport press conference in August 1990.



Scott Braley/Fireworks

The war provides a perfect diversion from Bush's domestic problems.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE PEACE DIVIDEND?



A little more than a year ago, the world watched euphorically as protesters pulled down the Berlin wall and the "Soviet threat" ceased to be US foreign policy's central concern. As the Cold War thawed, the US military budget came under serious and extensive questioning. The idea emerged that a peace

dividend could re-direct defense money to other sectors of the ailing US economy, including health, education, housing, mass transit, alternative energy and the environment. Operation Desert Shield, however, came to the rescue of the military and the arms industry, which were sweating nervously as the Cold War melted away.

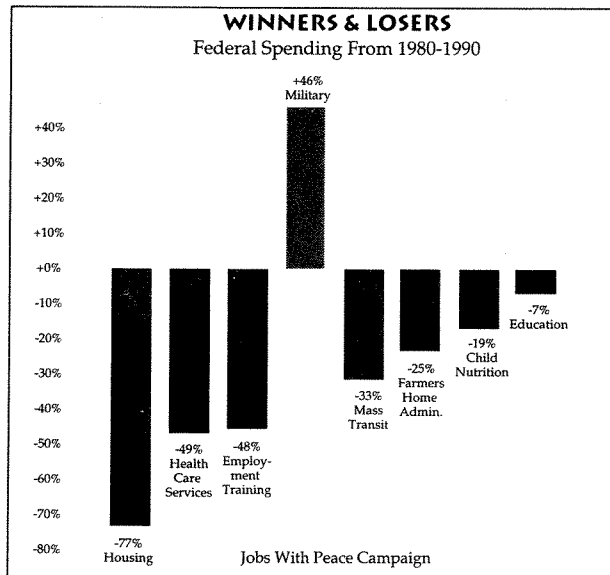
The Costs of Desert Storm

In 1989 the White House and Congress agreed to cut roughly \$50 billion a year from the Pentagon's five-year spending plan—a significant reduction of roughly one-sixth of the \$300 billion annual defense budget. Four months into the Gulf crisis however, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney told reporters that it was entirely possible that "there will have to be changes and modifications made in that plan" that would probably make budget reductions impossible. By the end of 1990, Operation Desert

Shield had already cost more than \$10 billion, and the US General Accounting Office estimated the cost for 1991, without war breaking out, at \$30 billion. Now that war has begun, the costs have increased by \$500 million to \$2 billion per day. The administration has claimed that support from abroad will offset the costs. Yet donations from Saudi Arabia, other Arab countries, Germany, Japan and South Korea will not come close to covering Desert Storm's costs. It is clear that the peace dividend has become a casualty of war.³¹

The peace dividend is disappearing not only to direct costs of the Gulf operations, but also to a wide range of unrelated military programs hiding behind the Gulf crisis. Arms programs, like the \$800 million-per-plane B-2 Bomber that had been virtually assured of rejection before the crisis began, now sail through Congress without scrutiny, despite having no applicability to military strategy in the Persian Gulf. The arms industry also got a big boost in foreign sales when the Bush administration proposed and Congress approved a \$15 billion arms deal to Saudi Arabia that has now grown to \$20 billion.³²

In effect, at this critical juncture in US history, the Bush administration is not taking advantage of the end of the Cold War to address America's grow-



With the peace dividend being spent on the military, we can expect a continuing deterioration of social and environmental programs.



ing social, economic and environmental crises. Instead, it is building a "New World Order" based on military dominance abroad and the neglect of pressing problems at home.

Disasters on the Home Front

The Gulf war has provided a perfect, if temporary, political diversion from the domestic problems that are plaguing the Bush administration. In the long term, however, it pushes the US further down the road to social, economic and ecological disaster. A huge deficit, a looming recession, the savings and loan crisis and a budget that dedicates 50% of federal income tax revenues to the military, while spending only 13% on health, education and environment combined, all spell trouble for the United States.

The US is the largest debtor nation in the world, facing a federal deficit now well in excess of one trillion dollars. A heavy contribution to the deficit comes from the Reagan-Bush free-market deregulation policies which produced the S&L crisis, whose ever-increasing total cost is now estimated at \$150 billion.³³ Furthermore, recent increases in the deficit, according to Congressional Budget Office Director Robert Reischauer, "reflect sharp increases in the price of imported oil that resulted from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait" and the US military response.³⁴

All of these policies have contributed to the current domestic recession. Combined with the US government's long-term failure to support socially equitable and environmentally sound development at home, the people of the United States are feeling the recession in the form of increasing poverty and environmental destruction.

Cutting Social Corners

As billions of US dollars pour into the Middle East, unemployment at home is on the rise as is homelessness. Estimates of the number of homeless in the US range from 250,000 to three million. Increasing homelessness parallels federal funding cuts of 77% in housing programs between 1980-1990. Medical research for pressing problems such as AIDS is grossly underfunded. During the first five months of Desert Shield



"We should create opportunities for young people of color to work for a sustainable planet rather than fight in unjustifiable wars."

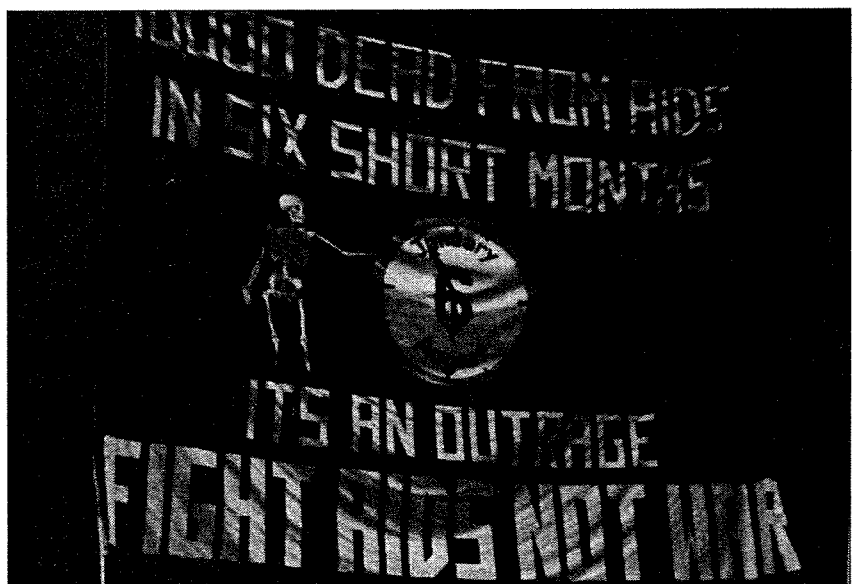
— Carl Anthony, *Urban Habitat*



the US government spent more than twice as much money on the preparations for war than it has on AIDS research in the last ten years. Yet 100,000 people have already died from the disease in the US alone and another 100,000 are expected to die in the next two years.³⁵

Funding for prisons is one of the few budget categories outside of the military that has increased, reaching \$16 billion annually. The United States has

surpassed South Africa and the Soviet Union to lead the world in incarceration rates. The percentage of African-Americans imprisoned in the US is especially high—four times higher than that of blacks in South Africa. The unemployment rate for African-Americans is double the national average. State and federal cuts in scholarships mean less opportunities for a higher education. It comes as no surprise then, that facing a war on the streets, a high possibility of winding-up in jail, and dwindling government support, that a disproportionate number of African-Americans and other people of color turn to the military for a job. African-Americans now constitute 21% of the US armed forces, while making up only 12% of the nation's population. Almost 30% of the army's combat troops in the Gulf are people of color.³⁶ One response to this problem, says African-American environmental leader Carl Anthony, would be to take the dollars the US is spending in the Gulf and devote them to "the ecological restoration of the inner cities, the clean up of toxic waste, and the education of our young people. We should be creating opportunities for young people of color to work for a sustainable planet rather than fight in unjustifiable wars."



Joshua Karliner

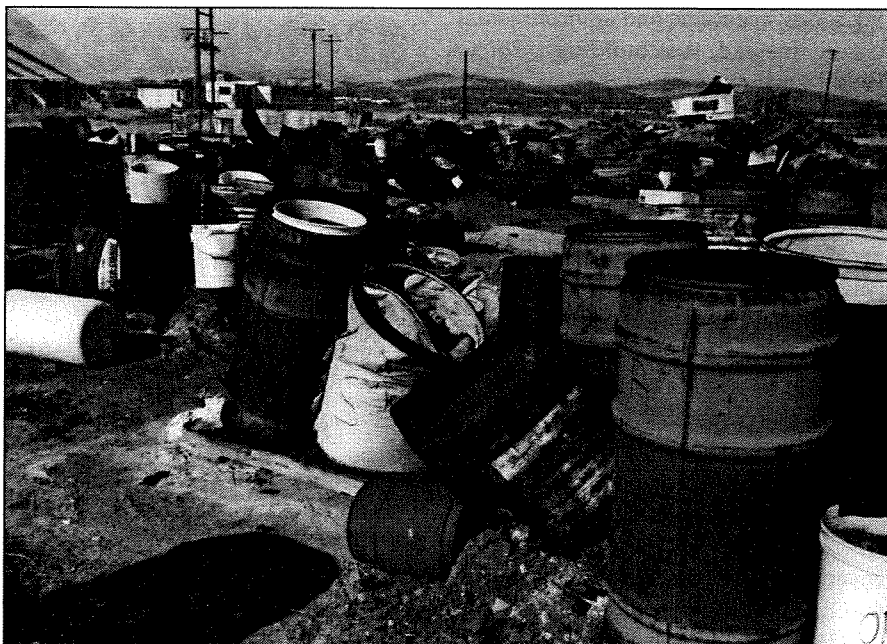
100,000 people are expected to die from AIDS in the US in the next two years, 10,000 have died since the Gulf crisis began in August, 1990.



Cutting Environmental Corners

US environmental programs are also suffering from the war economy. More than two-thirds of the government's research budget goes to the military, while energy research gets only 4% and the environment receives 2%.³⁷ The US spends far more money every day on the war than it does in a year on research for conservation and renewable alternatives for oil.³⁸ The Environmental Protection Agency receives just \$6 billion of the federal budget annually, yet a major effort to clean up the worst environmental problems in the US would, according to the National Commission for Economic Conversion and Disarmament, would cost at least \$300 billion—the military budget for just one year. For example, the EPA estimates that it would cost between \$16 billion and \$33 billion over twenty years to reduce acid-rain-causing emissions by 50%. It would cost another \$50 billion to clean up 60,000 toxic waste sites identified by the Superfund.³⁹

But the biggest polluter, and the most expensive to clean-up, is the US military itself, which produces between 400,000 and 500,000 tons of hazardous



© Zachary Singer/Greenpeace

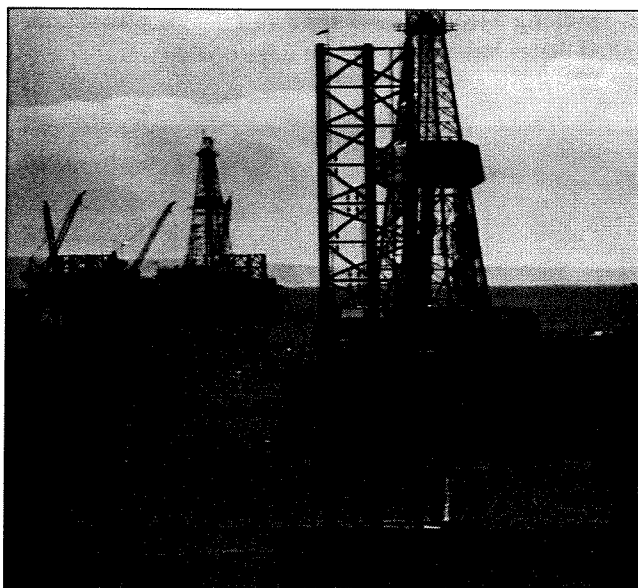
It would cost \$50 billion (less than the cost of the war) to clean up 60,000 toxic waste sites.

waste each year—more than the top five civilian chemical corporations combined. The Center for Defense Information estimates that “the total cost of bringing US military facilities into compliance with environmental laws and mending the damage they have caused could easily exceed \$150 billion.” Yet

the US Department of Energy plans to spend less than \$4 billion a year over the next five years to decontaminate nuclear weapons facilities, while the US Department of Defense requested a paltry \$518 million for the environment in fiscal year 1990—less than the estimated cost of cleaning up the Navy base sites in the San Francisco Bay Area alone and less than the cost of one Stealth bomber.⁴⁰

Nowhere is the Bush administration's environmental negligence more glaring than in its treatment of the global warming issue. Global warming may be the ultimate environmental disaster brought to us by the fossil fuel addiction which our government is going to war to satisfy. It threatens to cause catastrophe on an unprecedented scale as changed weather patterns, rising ocean levels and other effects destroy agriculture, housing and infrastructure around the world. There is little debate remaining as to whether the greenhouse effect is real. It is only a question of exactly how fast and how high the temperature will rise.

Last year the West German Parliament set a goal to reduce CO2 emissions by 32% over fifteen years⁴¹. Meanwhile, the Bush administration called for more studies of the problem and no action. As Greenpeace's Peg Stevenson notes, the government “casts polluting industries as the ‘victims’ of a hasty response to the greenhouse threat.” The reason, says Stevenson, is that “the oil and energy companies tell the administration what to do and it does it.”



© Brian Walsh/Greenpeace

Ending our addiction to oil not only will avoid future wars, but is also the first step to stopping global warming.



NATIONAL SECURITY AND OIL



From naked aggression, to broken UN resolutions, to jobs, to nuclear weapons, to Hitler, President Bush gives a new reason every week for US intervention in the Persian Gulf. Few wars are fought solely on the basis of such concerns. But underlying most wars is a struggle to control resources. This one is no exception.

President Bush's particular interest in "liberating" Kuwait lies less in keeping current oil supply lines open than in dominating access to long-term oil reserves and controlling the international economic balance of power. Before

Reagan and Bush have gutted US alternative energy programs.

the invasion and subsequent embargo, Iraq and Kuwait combined provided only 7% of the world's oil and less than 4% of US oil. ⁴² One month after the embargo, other OPEC countries had increased production to make up for the losses. The dramatic price increases in the fall of 1990 resulted not from supply problems but rather from the fear of war brought by US military intervention.

In the long term, however the US is heading toward a much more serious dependency upon Middle Eastern oil. While only 4% of the world's oil reserves are found in North America, nearly 20% lie under Iraq and Kuwait and fully 65% lie in the entire Middle East. ⁴³ Some of the US's main competitors in the world economy are already much more dependent. Japan, for example, imports 99% of its oil, 70% of it from the Persian Gulf region. ⁴⁴ Thus not only is cheap oil important to the US

"way of life," but according to Joseph Gerson of the American Friends Service Committee, "control over the flow of Middle East oil has given the US enormous power over the economies of Western Europe, Japan and the newly industrialized countries of the Pacific. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait challenged this power." In the post Cold War period and with US world economic power declining, the Gulf war has given Washington an opportunity to "reaffirm its control over the region and thus its place as the world's number one power." ⁴⁵ This is the New World Order that George Bush is talking about.

As President Bush strives to explain to the public why he is sending our troops to risk their lives for oil, he is leaving out many critical parts of the story. He has neglected to tell the American people why he is determined to keep the US economy dependent upon that oil. The National Energy Strategy, prepared by the Department of Energy (DOE) in the fall of 1990 as the troops headed for Saudi Arabia, abandons virtually all conservation and renewable energy options that could reduce our fossil fuel dependence, while suggesting increased tax subsidies that pay the oil companies to exhaust US oil supplies as fast as possible. ⁴⁶

This "Strategy" is not a new policy. For decades, many of America's critical energy choices have been made by and for corporations in the oil, automobile and nuclear industries. These decisions, while increasing our oil addiction, also seriously damaged our environment, threatened public health, weakened our economy and have now led us to war. The Energy Strategy proposals keep the US firmly on this dangerous path, becoming even more dependent on foreign oil and assuring that energy security—and therefore national security—will be synonymous with controlling the Gulf's oil supplies.

It did not have to be this way. While the Carter administration established Middle East oil as a national security priority following the Arab oil embargo in 1973, that crisis also triggered a dramatic change in the way we use energy. Carter initiated efforts to halt our growing dependence on foreign oil. We began to seek energy security not just

BURNING UP WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING FOR

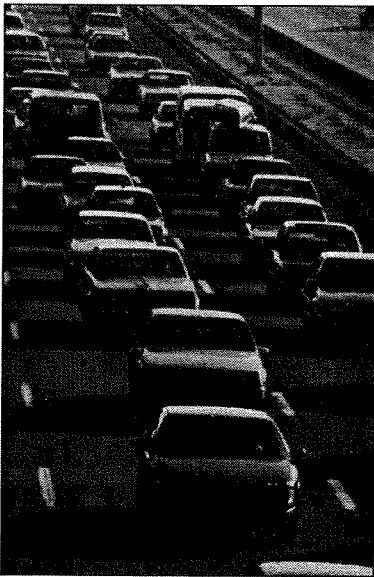
- * The US Department of Defense is the single largest consumer of oil in the world.
- * In 25 minutes, a single seater F-15 jet can burn 625 gallons of fuel, more than the average US motorist uses in a year.
- * An aircraft carrier will put away that much fuel in under 7 minutes.
- * The military consumed about 200 million barrels of oil in 1989 enough energy to run the entire US urban mass transit system for 14 years
- * During the Vietnam War oil usage rose to over 1 million barrels per day. The war against Iraq could use at least that much, meaning that we would consume far more than we imported from Iraq and Kuwait combined before the conflict began.
- * The military is far more dependent upon oil than the rest of US society, getting 79% of its energy from oil versus only 34% for the US as a whole.
- * A body bag requires 3 cups of oil to produce.

[Source: (Gar Smith, "The Military's Oil Addiction", *Earth Island Journal*, February 1991)]

with M-16s, but also with caulking guns. Given incentives both from the government and from the gas pump, millions of people from homeowners to factory managers found ways to use energy more efficiently. Many others started to use the sun to meet their energy needs. As a result, demand for more energy suddenly stopped rising. By 1986 the US was making 35% more goods and services than it had in 1973 without using any more energy. ⁴⁷

If conservation efforts of the seventies would have continued, we would need far less energy now. By this time, we would be well on our way to energy self sufficiency and much less affected by who controls Middle Eastern supplies. This hopeful scenario ended abruptly with the election of Reagan and Bush in 1980.





Deepening the Addiction

Throughout the eighties, Reagan and Bush actively strove to increase America's long standing dependence on oil. They quickly made their intentions clear when they tore the solar panels off the White House immediately upon entering office in 1981. This symbolic act kicked off an aggressive, decade-long campaign to destroy the solar and conservation industries.

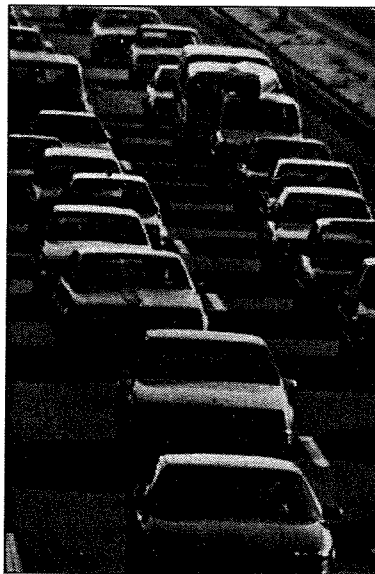
Presidents Bush and Reagan have made many choices since 1981 that led the US to intervention in the Middle East. They:

- * Slashed federal funding for research and development for conservation and solar energy technologies by 90%.⁴⁸
- * Turned Department of Energy priorities upside down so that DOE now devotes over two thirds of its budget to nuclear weapons production rather than energy development.⁴⁹
- * Cut federal funding for mass transit in half.⁵⁰
- * Granted the automobile companies' request to weaken the Congressionally established car fuel efficiency requirements in 1986, 1987, and 1989.
- * Finally, as our troops were on their way to the Gulf in the fall of 1990, Bush lobbied hard to insure the Senate's defeat of the Bryan bill, which would have mandated an increase in auto fuel efficiency to 45 mpg.

These decisions had serious repercus-

sions. By putting more efficient cars on the road, the Bryan bill would have saved 1700 million barrels of oil per year, more than twice the 775 million barrels the US gets annually from all the Arab OPEC countries.⁵¹ Through decisions like these, Reagan and Bush have succeeded in ending a decade of improved energy use.

When these policies began to take effect in the mid-eighties, progress on sustainable energy slowed to a crawl. Demand for energy began to climb again and our reliance on imported oil skyrocketed. The US now imports almost half of its oil, far more than before the first embargo.⁵² The prospect of shedding blood for oil should have



been cause to reverse this trend and begin conserving this valuable resource. Incredibly, however, while the conflict in the Gulf escalated toward war in the fall of 1990, the Bush administration, under pressure from corporate oil and nuclear interests was demanding that the DOE eliminate the few conservation initiatives that had survived in the National Energy Strategy.⁵³

WAR ON THE US ENVIRONMENT

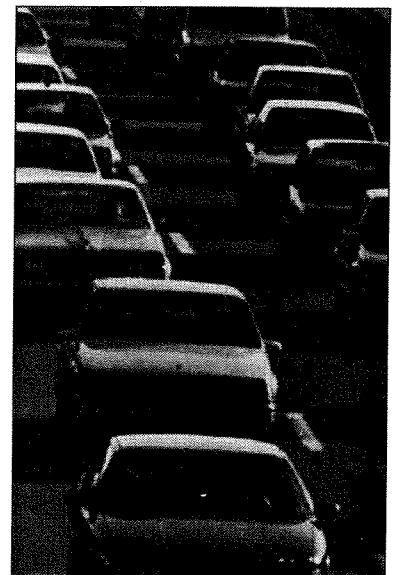


Even without war, the energy policies of the last fifty years have left a legacy of wrecked oil tankers, smog choked skies, leaking

radioactive storage barrels, and acid rain killed lakes and trees. The human toll from this destructive path has been massive, ranging from fishermen losing their livelihoods from oil spills in Alaska to increased birth defect rates in central Pennsylvania after Three Mile Island. In the US, 150 million people live in areas with air that the EPA deems unfit to breathe. The American Lung Association estimates that this leads to 120,000 deaths per year.⁵⁴

Environmental protection has become a number one concern for the majority of Americans in recent years. This new level of concern has increasingly constrained the ability of the administration and energy companies to act with willful disregard for the safety of people and the environment. It has also helped the environmental movement win some impressive victories, such as last year's offshore drilling moratorium.

Major corporations and the Bush administration have been scrambling to find ways to counteract this growing citizens' movement to protect public health and the environment. The National Energy Strategy contains a whole set of policies specially crafted to cut the public out of the review process for energy projects. The Gulf crisis serves as a convenient tool to defuse growing opposition to domestic environmental destruction.



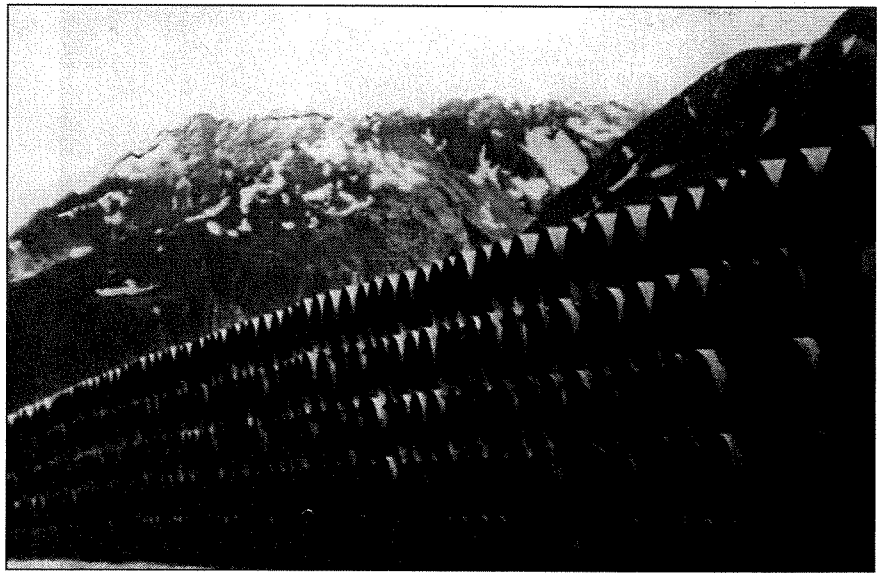
National Sacrifice Areas

In the heat of war, no area, no matter how ecologically sensitive, is immune from sacrifice in the name of national security. While in 1990 Congress extended the offshore drilling moratorium for a year, Bush has warned that "California will eventually have to open its coastal areas to expanded drilling activity to help reduce US dependence on foreign oil"⁵⁵ Under the heading "Energy Security," the National Energy Strategy calls for opposing all Congressional moratoria on offshore drilling and promotes exploration for oil in Alaska both on the coastal plain of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and throughout the Northern Slope.⁵⁶ ANWR's coastal plain represents the last 100 miles of the Arctic coastline not yet open to exploration. The native Gwich'in Athabascan Indian people depend for their subsistence and trading upon the Porcupine caribou herd which calve there. Studies have shown that, among many other environmental



© Rinehart/Greenpeace

The massive killing of wildlife in oil spills is the inevitable result of our oil fossil fuel dependent economy and of the Gulf war.



Tim Thompson

Oil corporations are using the war as an excuse to drill in wilderness areas that environmentalists have fought for decades to preserve.

impacts it will cause, oil development will totally disrupt calving, using even the greatest precautions. Thus the development would endanger a key element of Gwich'in economic self sufficiency.⁵⁷

A recently leaked internal Forest Service memorandum entitled "Proposed Strategy for Mitigating Persian Gulf Situation," suggests that the Service weaken the environmental review process for drilling on public land, reduce the role of public comment and appeal in granting permits and generally give drilling "the same urgency and management attention as fire."⁵⁸ This strategy includes permitting Chevron & Fina Oil to drill for gas in the Badger Two Medicine Region of the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Montana, despite 8 years of public opposition and hearings. Adjacent to a Blackfoot Indian reservation, Glacier National Park and the Great Bear Wilderness Area, the 133,000 acre Badger-Two Medicine region is prime habitat for endangered grizzly bear, elk and many other animals. Tribal elders say that it is the last holy place left to the Blackfoot Indians. Drilling for gas in the area is as insulting as "an oil well in St. Patrick's cathedral" states Tiny Man Heavy Runner, a Blackfoot chief. The elders describe development in the region as an attack on the Blackfoot religion, making sacred rites impossible, undermining

their culture, and endangering their efforts to save Blackfoot youth from alcoholism and drug abuse.

Both of these cases amount not only to environmental disasters, but also to a blatant disregard for the sovereign rights of native nations. Once again the US government is breaking the promises of treaties that protected hunting and gathering rights and is denying constitutionally guaranteed religious protection to indigenous peoples.

Ironically, although national security is used as an excuse for these actions, little is likely to be gained in real energy security. There is only a 6% chance of finding an oil field in the ANWR coastal plain large enough to provide the US with even 200 days of its oil consumption.⁵⁹ The Forest Service estimates that chances of finding a commercially viable well in the Badger region are less than one-half-of-one-percent.

Reviving the Nuclear Dinosaur

The Gulf war also endangers the environmental movement's successful battle against nuclear power. Bush's National Energy Strategy includes several proposals for building more plants and increasing the life of existing ones, primarily by cutting off public debate on the safety and environmental impact of projects. Just as they have attempted





The nuclear industry is using the war to attempt to erode the movement's gains.

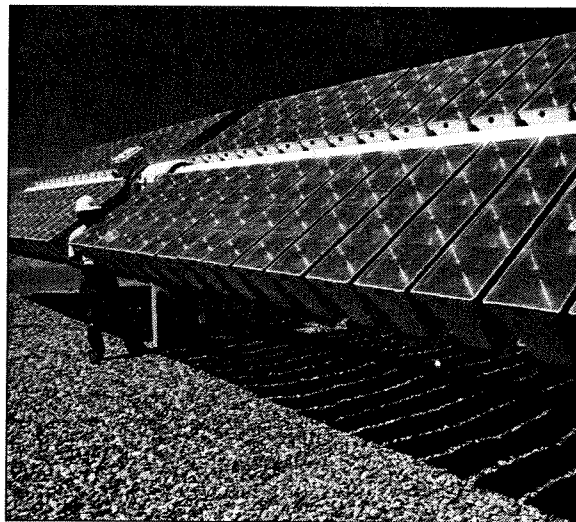
to use the global warming crisis, the nuclear industry is using this war to try to resurrect its failing business.

Shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait, the New York Times published an advertisement entitled the "Kiss of Death" which depicts a cobra with scales made of oil barrels saying 'foreign oil' upon them. It proposes that "the more we use nuclear energy, instead of imported oil, to generate our electricity, the less we have to depend on uncertain foreign oil supplies." The ad's claim is false. Nuclear power can do very little to replace oil. In 1990, less than 5% of our electricity was made from oil; less than 1% from foreign oil.⁶⁰

Despite four decades of heavy government subsidies, nuclear power still provides less energy than renewable alternatives. No new designs have proven that they can avert repeats of the disaster at Three Mile Island. The specter of Chernobyl, where the death toll continues to mount, still looms on the horizon. Finally, there is still no known way to safely store the highly radioactive waste for even thirty years, much less for the thousands that it will remain toxic.

Shaking the Oil Addiction

The fight for oil, on native lands or in the Middle East, need not be fought. Our demand for energy is not fate, but choice. The US has barely tapped the potential for improving efficiency. A glimpse of that potential: Since the first oil crisis in 1973, California improved its energy efficiency 30% more than the rest of the nation.⁶¹ West Germany and Japan are beating the US in the world



The fight for oil, on native lands or in the Middle East, need not be fought. The US has barely tapped the potential for alternatives and efficiency.

economy in part because they've learned to use energy twice as efficiently.⁶²

Despite waning governmental support, conservation measures have provided seven times more new energy supply since 1973 than all efforts to build new power plants and drill new wells combined.⁶³ There are many technologies available to improve energy efficiency, most of which cost far less than developing new energy supplies. Compact fluorescent light bulbs already on the market only require one quarter of the electricity used by standard bulbs. Several major automobile manufacturers have developed prototypes that get from 60 to over 100 miles per gallon but so far the companies have refused to build them.⁶⁴

Once efficiency has reduced the quantity of oil we need, renewable sources of energy can eventually replace the rest. One million buildings in the US already use solar energy to provide heat, cooling and light.⁶⁵ A 350 megawatt solar power plant in California is now providing electricity at a price competitive with subsidized nuclear power.⁶⁶ Wind generators equivalent in total to two nuclear plants are providing electricity at 5-8 cents per kilowatt hour and the best wind sites have yet to be tapped.⁶⁷

The technology is available; the issue is one of political will. The Department of Energy and the corporations can choose to continue to promote expensive, wasteful and polluting ways of heating and lighting our buildings, of getting us to work, and of producing goods. Or they can choose to develop cheaper, more efficient and environmentally safer ways. The US government can continue to base our national security doctrine on controlling oil resources in the Middle East, sending our sons and daughters off to kill and be killed for oil, or it can choose real security by relying on sources of energy that don't depend on controlling other countries' resources.



ENVIRONMENTALISTS FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD



As the Cold War came to an end, an unprecedented opportunity arose for the world community to build a New World Order of global security based on peace, justice and environmental sanity. But despite public support for such fundamental change, including primarily peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe and a huge public Earth Day outcry for the environment, it became apparent almost from the outset that George Bush's New World Order would be based on business as usual. As military analyst Michael Klare writes "All the US military chiefs have agreed on one fundamental point: the US and its closest allies are becoming increasingly dependent on markets and raw materials located in volatile areas of the Third World, and so military action is essential to protect these vital interests."⁶⁸

US national security in a true new world order should not be identified with military intervention to control access to Third World resources. Yet the Persian Gulf War defines the new order in just that way. The US inspired and led intervention in the Gulf gives our government the opportunity to control the resource that the economies of Germany and Japan—the principle US economic rivals—depend upon for survival. The war thus positions the US to continue to play a dominant role on the world's political and economic stage, despite an ever-deteriorating economy and quality of life at home. At a moment when the United States had an opportunity to develop real security by cutting military spending and promoting energy independence, environmental clean-up and social renewal, our government has chosen instead to tie the

nation to policies of military intervention to control the world's oil resources.

The results of such choices are tragic. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of people are dying in the Persian Gulf. More will suffer for years after. The environment is being devastated.



Joshua Karliner

The future will bring more wars in what will be an ever-more destabilized Middle East characterized by a probable permanent US presence and increasing anti-US violence. As Greenpeace has stated: "Operation Desert Storm could become a disturbing preview of future world events. Should countries of the South challenge Northern countries' control over world resources, the resulting conflicts could easily substitute for and outstrip tensions created by the Cold War."

The best way to avoid such wars

and conflicts would be for the US to avoid staking its interests on resource extraction in foreign lands, whether it be for oil, water, soil or minerals. Rather, the US should seek to improve efficiency and promote ecologically sustainable use of local resources. This needs to be combined with respect for the rights of Third World nations to fully control and benefit from their own natural resources, and support for them to use these resources in an ecologically sound way. These are the foundations of a lasting and just global security. They can only be built if we begin to combat the racist attitudes that blind the US public to the human casualties our government inflicts in countries like Vietnam and Iraq in the name of national security. We also need to combat racism at home whether it be the demonization of the Arab-American community in response to this war, or the institutionalized racism that has forced so many people of color into the military.

In the face of war, environmentalists must join hands with peace, religious, women's, and gay and lesbian organizations, with the homeless, with people of color, with the families of people in the military, and with everyone else who is struggling to return the hope and dream of peace, justice and a healthy environment to our ailing planet. Environmentalists must join in building a movement that actively opposes the war and works for peace in the Middle East. We also must address the roots of this war and work for social, economic and environmental justice in the United States.



ENVIRONMENTALISTS' PLATFORM FOR PEACE IN THE PERSIAN GULF

- ☯ Use negotiations not war to settle international disputes.
 - * Demand an immediate end to the US-led offensive military action. Support a UN mediated ceasefire, an end to the war and bring all the US troops home.
 - * Demand an end to all occupations in the Middle East, including the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.
 - * Call for an international conference to resolve all outstanding conflicts in the region.
 - * Stop all arms sales to the Middle East.
 - * Oppose the establishment of permanent US bases in the Middle East.
- ☯ Advocate a sustainable world order based on peace and guaranteeing the rights of peoples and nations to self-determination, including the right to control their own resources and determine their own form of government.
 - * Oppose US government policies that provide military protection and aid for the oil companies and reactionary Middle East governments.
 - * Oppose the US government's continuing role as world policeman. Demand an end to wars aimed at controlling other nations' and peoples' resources for the benefit of US corporations.
- ☯ Stop the environmental devastation caused by war.
 - * Environmental considerations should be a vital component of the US debate on the war in the Gulf at the national and grassroots levels.
 - * The UN General Assembly and Security Council should consider issues of ecological security in their debate on the war in the Gulf.
 - * The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) should conduct a study of the environmental impacts of the war.
- ☯ Implement energy efficiency and conservation strategies. Begin now to create a future without fossil fuels. Provide access to affordable, environmentally sound energy to all people.
 - * Develop a comprehensive national program to cut energy demand. Start by raising automobile fuel efficiency standards to a minimum goal of 45 MPG by the year 2000.
 - * Eliminate taxes, regulations, and subsidies which favor non-renewable resources.
 - * Develop a comprehensive plan to steadily replace coal, oil, gas and nuclear energy with efficient alternative energy resources. Dramatically increase direct federal support for development and use of renewable energy sources.
 - * The US government should provide foreign aid that assists Third World countries in building economies based on efficient, renewable energy sources.
- ☯ Protect the domestic environment from new exploitation in search of oil and other energy resources.
 - * Make environmental protection a top priority in all energy decisions and processes.
 - * Cease all oil and gas drilling in off-shore areas, in Alaska and in wilderness areas in the continental United States.
 - * Respect the demands of Native Americans for sovereignty and protection of wilderness and environments in which they live, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Badger-Two Medicine Region.
- ☯ Change US reliance on a military-based economy. Drastically cut the US military budget.
 - * Congress should cut the US military budget and create a real peace dividend to solve the critical problems of homelessness, lack of affordable medical care, inadequate education, and drugs.
 - * Create a peace dividend for the environment. National resources need to go into solving the pesticide, water, garbage and energy problems of the US in an ecologically sound way.
 - * Begin a process of economic conversion, redirecting military industries and bases to socially useful and civilian endeavors.
 - *The military should pay for its own toxic waste clean-up. Demand that national security should not be used to hide destruction of the environment.



James Perez/Greenpeace





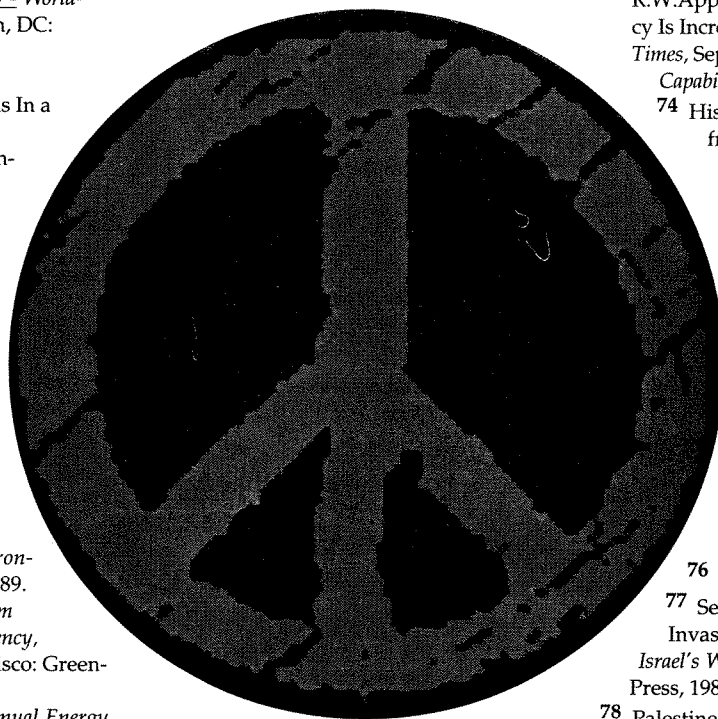
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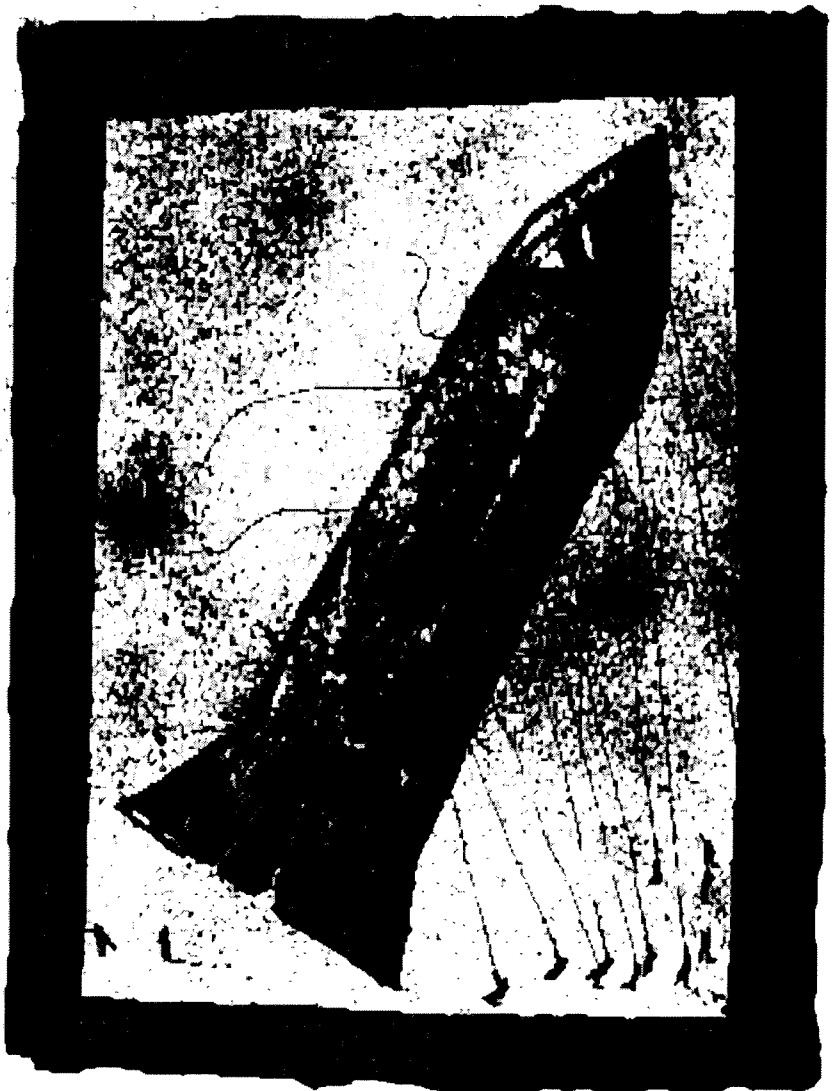
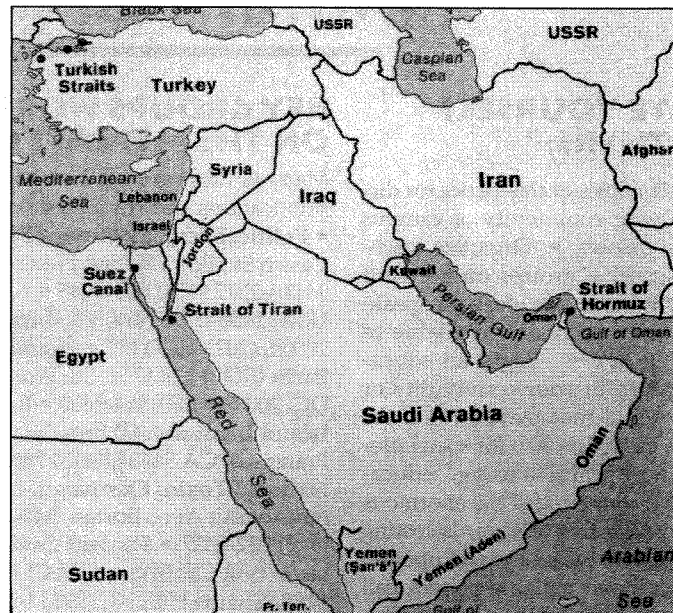
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**ABOUT THE POLITICAL
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The Bay Area Political Ecology Group (PEG) is a new, all-volunteer organization that has grown out of the Environmental Project on Central America (EPOCA) and the Attention Shoppers affinity group. The PEG is a group of grassroots activists carrying out education and action to address the common roots of domestic and international environmental destruction, militarism, and social justice.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS:

- Order bulk copies of this paper for distribution in your community or campus (see coupon below) • Organize teach-ins and discussion groups on the Gulf war (call or write us for ideas on speakers if they aren't already available in your community) • Begin an educational campaign in your community or on your campus that makes the links between the lack of money for social programs like healthcare, housing, education and environment, and the enormous amount of money that this war is costing
- Write letters to the editor and opinion pieces for local and national papers, call into talk shows • Hold press conferences calling attention to the environmental impacts of the war • Read the alternative press to stay up-to-date on the war • Pressure the media to allow anti-war voices to be heard

TAKE ACTION:

- Get out in the streets. Demonstrate, vigil, banner, do direct action to show your opposition to this war * Call for a meeting of environmentalists in your community and build an alliance around stopping the war • Plan environmentalist contingents for local events being organized by the peace movement • Target appropriate corporations in your community which are environmentally dangerous and are connected to the war machine, (oil companies, military contractors, etc), and plan a campaign against them • Start a letter writing campaign to your representatives in Congress demanding an immediate cease-fire (see "Environmentalists' Platform" on page 20) • Pressure the United Nations and the Congress to carry out Environmental Impact studies and hearings on the war • Take a stand against racist attacks on Arab-Americans in your community • Promote energy conservation and ecologically sound alternatives in your community and demand that our government stop subsidizing destructive, non-renewable energy technologies • Build permanent alliances in your community that will exist long after this war ends to demand an end to all US wars, and a dismantling of the military economy that fuels these battles and destroys our environment.

KEY GROUPS WORKING ON THE MIDEAST CRISIS:

Many of these groups have excellent publications and resources available.

- **Political Ecology Group (PEG)**, 519 Castro St., Box 111, San Francisco, CA 94114-2577 (415) 861-5045
- **Greenpeace USA**, 1436 U St. NW, Washington, DC, 20009, (202)-462-1177
- **Friends of the Earth (FOE)** 218 D St. SE, Washington, DC, 20003, (202)-544-2600
- **Earth Island Institute**, 300 Broadway #28, San Francisco, CA 94133, (415) 788-3666
- **National Toxics Campaign**, 1168 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA, 02134 (617) 232-0327
- **Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC)** P.O. Box 1168, Chapel Hill, NC, 27514-1168, (919)-967-4600
- **Global Exchange**, 2141 Mission St., #202, San Francisco, CA, 94110, (415)-255-7296
- **Pledge of Resistance National Resource Center** 4228 Telegraph Ave., Oakland CA, 94609, (415)-655-1181
- **Sane/Freeze**, 1819 H St. NW, #1000, Washington, DC, 20006, (202) 862-9740
- **Middle East Research and Information Project**, 1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC,

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- **American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee** 4201 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Suite 500, Washington D.C. 20008, (202)-244-2990
- * **Palestine Solidarity Committee** P.O. Box 372, Peck Slip Station, New York, New York 10272, (212)-227-1435
- * **Latinos Against US Intervention in the Gulf** 910 Riverside Drive, #6G, New York, New York 10032, (212)-927-9065
- * **Arms Control Research Center (ARC)**, 942 Market Street, Suite 202, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415)-397-1452
- **National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East**, P.O. Box 3009, Church St. Station, New York, NY, 10007, (212)-727-3069
- **National Coalition to Stop US Intervention in the Middle East**, 36 W. 12th St., Sixth Floor, New York, NY, 10003, (212)-777-1246
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