

PRESS DIGESTGulf Coverage

The US call-up of 40,000 reservists makes the lead in most of the broadsheets, while the tabloids focus on the plight of the hostages and your reaction to it. Soviet unhelpfulness, over the Security Council resolution and military advisers, is well reported. There are problems for Mitterrand.

Sun says the Britain is to send its first combat troops to the Gulf -- 600 soldiers to beef up defences for fighters

Crucial Soviet military advisers to Iraq will continue to help Saddam's war effort. Pentagon says critical Soviet military shipments reached Baghdad five days after invasion of Kuwait  
Telegraph

Soviets delay drafting of UN resolution on use of force to back embargo. US signals that unilateral action is imminent Telegraph

Soviet diplomats plan to sabotage UN-backed military blockade  
Today

Today says Israeli intelligence predicts war within 48 hours

King Hussein warns "The world is going mad" as we approach the brink of an eruption Sun

King Hussein to visit Arab leaders in desperate search for peace  
Times

Bush calls up reserves as tension increases over deadline for closure of embassies in Kuwait Times

Similar stories in Guardian and Financial Times

French Defence Minister Chevenement suggests soft line with Saddam. PM Rocard gives him 48 hours to retract or resign as France places itself squarely in Anglo-US camp Times

Iraq offer to release French and Japanese hostages fails to break EC and US determination to stay in Kuwait embassies Guardian

Saddam further isolated as Jordan closes its border with Iraq to stop influx of foreigners Independent

Sanctions beginning to have their effect in Baghdad as rationing come into operation Independent

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Gulf crisis threatens to reach flashpoint as our man in Kuwait is ordered to defy a siege of his embassy by Saddam's troops. FCO insist he would only leave with a gun at his back Express

Government information machine is moving to defuse fears about the hostages. Clear attempt by FCO to display aura of calm and control, with need to avoid panic Independent

Mirror says you are determined to send one message: It's business as usual. Both you and Bush are keen not to raise the world's political temperature. You are determined that Saddam won't get any comfort from wrecking your schedules. Many expected you to speak the language of war. They were disappointed. Gone is the gung-ho language of the Falklands

Government fails to produce evidence to justify your unprecedented attack on Red Cross Independent

Oil prices breach \$30 a barrel level FT

Iraq govt planning advertising campaign in Britain to present Saddam's point of view on the Gulf FT

"Saddam's helpless hostages" is the Mail's headline over a picture of the two children seized at gunpoint. You again scathingly denounce the Iraqis: "It is a scandal"

You react furiously to the Iraqi seizure of Britons Today

William Waldegrave in angry row with Iraqis at Geneva arms conference, saying they should abandon attempts to get nuclear weapons parts Telegraph

Daily Star says that if war breaks out British officers could find themselves fighting against old classmates from Sandhurst

Kinnock breaks his silence with a firm endorsement of your tough stance Mail

Kinnock backs you with his strongest-ever support Mirror

Petrol set to rocket by fifteen pence a gallon Mirror

Star calls for boycott of the big five oil giants who have cynically cashed in on the Gulf Crisis

Yemen halts unloading of Iraq tanker, and says others will not be allowed to unload without UN consultation Telegraph

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US armed forces buy British "doom suits" to protect themselves from chemical attack Times

Jesse Jackson seeks TV coup in Baghdad Times

Gulf Support Group tones down criticism of FCO after Douglas Hurd pledges financial and moral support Telegraph

Senior Israeli official urges US to take decisive military action against Saddam Telegraph

Reaganite rightwingers take carping attitude to Bush decision to commit forces to Gulf Independent

Kuwait resistance small and poorly-equipped but growing in strength Independent

Chemical strike power of Iraqi missiles has been over-estimated, say Saudi and US officials Independent

Other News

EC seeking emergency powers to implement Community law in East Germany as looming economic crisis forces early unification date Guardian

Trade deficit in surprising rise to £1.4 billion as exports and imports fall. "Not very encouraging" says an analyst, but the pound strengthens Times

Another big rise in educational standards claimed as GCSE results improve for third year running Telegraph

Fears that global warming would raise sea levels and melt icecaps are not supported by available evidence, says Scott Polar Institute man Times

De Klerk appeals for peace as death toll soars in township violence Times

Cancer victim Mandy Turner dies at 21. Your tributes to her are recollected Telegraph

BR's safety record faces renewed criticism as single-track crash injures 25 Telegraph

EDITORIALS

The Daily Telegraph says that you were right both to urge prompt action from the ICRC on behalf of the hostages and to refuse to bargain with Saddam over their safety. However, caution should not go as far as tying western hands in dealing with Saddam; to hold back from military action would be to succumb to blackmail.

The Times says that Sir Crispin Tickell, our UN representative, is to retire on his 60th birthday - this Saturday. Exceptions to the retirement date should be "more common" at the FCO; Sir Crispin has manfully applied the appropriate British scorn to the misbehaviour of Iraq.

In a leader called the "logic of war", the Times also says that the world's best prospect of escaping a conflict with Saddam is to prepare coolly for his defeat.

The Guardian says that patience is still the best course; the breathing space should give the UN sanctions a "last chance" to work. The paper points out that those who object to total sanctions as they hurt ordinary Iraqis should remember that hunger is more open to remedy than the results of war.

On a different subject, the Guardian says that the National Audit Office has previously been an excellent watchdog, but is now ineffective. The problem is that the number of homeless families has doubled since you came to power as a result of "ineffective and uneconomic" policies.

Meanwhile The Independent looks at the coverage the Gulf crisis is getting compared to the Falklands. There are two issues, says a leader: One, what the Government does to issue information about a potential or actual armed conflict. The other is what arrangements it makes for the Press to cover it. Pointing out that the Government has refused to recall parliament, the leader goes on to say that the public wants to know if it is being well served by those who are "our servants", but too often have the arrogance to behave as if it is none of our business. This stems from a "lofty contempt" for the public's right to know what's happening around the inner circle of your politicians and mandarins.

The Independent also calls for a "wind fall" profits tax on oil companies to prevent petrol profiteering.

The Financial Times stresses the need for European security cooperation following Tuesday's ministerial meeting of the Western European Union. The WEU has "encouraged, shamed or compelled" several European governments into doing more to support the UN embargo than they might have done on their own. On this occasion, says the leader, the WEU has proved an "essential forum".

The Today newspaper says that it is easy to lose sight of what the Gulf crisis is all about. The paper quotes you saying that the root of the trouble is Saddam marching into another country and taking it by force. The paper says that Saddam is managing to drive a wedge between the nations, and takes as evidence the fact that Switzerland and Sweden are to close their Kuwaiti embassies. Saddam will only be defeated if nations stand united, says the leader.

The Daily Mail says that the Leader of the Opposition giving support to your stand at this time is to his credit. The paper also attacks the oil companies and their protestations that they are not profiteering. The paper says that the same international effort going into fighting Saddam should not go into syphoning out the panic in petrol price rises.

The Daily Express says it can understand how worried relatives of the hostages must be. However, media coverage of the plight of those families betrays an "odd sense of news values". Broadcasters must be careful not to play the role of Saddam's quislings, and our leaders are right to take a broader view of the crisis.

The Daily Mirror echoes the "united we stand" theme, praising the leader of the opposition for being as robust as you or President Bush, and pointing out that he did not try to win a personal or party advantage from the crisis in Iraq.

Lastly, the Sun joins the anti-oil company lobby. The oil giants are as slippery as a pint of polish, it says, and argues that if the companies will not cut their prices, the Government must impose an excess profit tax. "The nation will be watching," it concludes.