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## Congress Debates Gulf War

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# 'We would make a mistake in going to war to kick someone's rear'

### Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.)

Mr. President, I think that we stand at a moment so grave and that the responsibility is so great upon us that we should not cavalierly be hurried into an action that may cost this country its treasure and its blood beyond what the cost may be otherwise if we stay the course for yet a little time.



. . . Right now, the gravity of the choices facing the President and the Congress requires us to assess our national interests by a totally calm and rational standard. We ought not personalize or politicize the looming conflict. To do so would cloud our judgment at a time in our lives and in our careers that demands from us absolute lucidity.

We would make a mistake in going to war to kick someone's rear. I will not use the word that has been heard around here. We all know what is meant. We should not go to war in vengeance and indignation, or through any emotional distraction that might shorten our ability rationally to judge the outcome of our actions or the ways in which that outcome might affect our long-term national interests.

### Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.)

War means death and destruction, and there are some in this Chamber who may believe that this truth is so obvious that it need not be said. I think it needs to be said over and over again.

I have observed this debate and it seems to me that all too often in the theorizing about strategy and politics, it is forgotten what war means in human terms: the terrible loss of life, broken dreams, broken lives, broken families. I will tell my colleagues something, Mr. President: The fathers and mothers of young men and women from Minnesota who are now in the Persian Gulf have not forgotten what war means in personal terms, and we must not forget either. . . .

We are the ones, as my colleagues have said so well, who will pay the largest part of the price with loss of life. What does it mean? What kind of victory will it be if we shoulder this responsibility, if the alliance fractures and if there is an explosion of anti-American fury throughout the Arab world, accompanied by widespread violence and terrorism, what kind of victory will that be?

What kind of victory will it be if our already fragile economy is fractured? Whatever happened to the war on poverty, the war against drugs, the war against illiteracy, the war to make sure our citizens do not go without adequate health care? Whatever happened to the war against the poison of the air and land and the water? What kind of victory will it be if our country, a country I love dearly, is torn apart again? What kind of victory will it be if tens of thousands of people die in the Persian Gulf, so many of them—and I need to state this point carefully because I mean no disrespect—so many of them disproportionately men and women of color, low and moderate income?

### Sen. David Boren (D-Okla.)

I cannot at this time in conscience vote to initiate a fullscale war to restore the government of Kuwait if 90% of the risks and 90% of the burdens will be borne by America, while other nations like Japan and Germany sit on the sidelines not doing their share. The lives of young Americans are the real treasure of our nation and our most precious possession. They should be put at risk only for some urgent national interest or great cause. I do not believe that restoring the Emir's government in Kuwait is vital enough to America's national interest to potentially risk thousands of lives and billions of dollars, while others have made only a token contribution to the effort. . . .

If Iraq is totally destroyed, a power vacuum will develop which will be filled at least in part by Syria and Iran. These nations could hardly be described as guardians of American interests. In addition, large numbers of civilian casualties caused by American military actions could engender strong anti-American feelings which could undermine support for pro-American Arab governments in their own countries.

### **Rep. James Traficant (D-Ohio)**

Mr. Speaker, the Pentagon ordered 16,000 human-remains pouches. Now, if all the so-called experts around here are correct that are predicting 1,000 dead Americans, then why did the Pentagon recently order 16,000 human-remains pouches?

The truth of the matter is, plain and simple, these are body bags. They have gone to a day when shovels have become entrenching tools, copper wire has become remote rotor antennas, and now body bags are human remains pouches. And let me tell you what: There are going to be a lot of dead Americans, because it is basically Americans in the front line.

The American people overwhelmingly voted for George Bush, but the American people do not want Congress to grant him the power of King George. You believe me when I tell you that. If they were informed as to what was going on in the constitutional responsibility, and they really were able to participate in a debate of constitutional law, they would 95% stand up and say, "Congress, if you capitulate to this President, attempting to seize the constitutional power of a monarch, then you are a bunch of wimps."

### **Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.)**

Mr. President, the other day I got a phone call that crystallized for me the grave question of war and peace. It was one of my oldest and very best friends, Jack Mudd, former dean of our law school at the University of Montana. . . . He asked me whether I would vote to authorize the immediate use of force in Iraq. I told him that I would not.

He then said something to me that further strengthened my resolve. He said, "Max, as you know, I served in Vietnam. But there is something else that I have never told you, and it is why I worked in your first campaign for public office back in 1974. I decided to support you because as a Vietnam veteran and based upon what I saw in Vietnam, I did not ever want my sons to die in an unnecessary war. I thought that was something you would probably never vote for."

Well, I intend to keep my faith with one of my very best friends, and with the people of Montana, and do what I think is right. I intend to vote against what I am convinced is, at this time, an unnecessary war.

### **Rep. Mary Rose Oaker (D-Ohio)**

Finally, what are the consequences of war for America and the world. Today, with deafening silence on the part of the administration we see the Soviet troops marching into Lithuania and the Baltic countries, the unrest in the Asian provinces of the Soviet Union, the civil unrest in China, the extreme tensions in the Middle East, the disparity of wealth and the poverty of the people in Africa and Central America. If war breaks out, there will be no surgical strike for Saddam Hussein, there will be a world war of untold dimension. All of our dreams for world peace will have been shattered

because of the failure to negotiate and let the sanctions work.

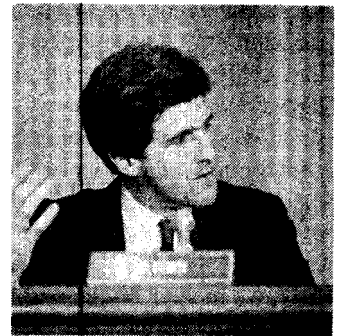
### **Rep. Tony Hall (D-Ohio)**

Once in a while, Mr. Speaker, the privilege of serving in this House can become an awesome responsibility. Once in a while, we are asked to cast a vote that is not only historical, but one that we know we will live with and remember for the rest of our lives. Soon, I'm afraid, we're going to have to cast one of those votes.

It's a pivotal vote. It's a vote that is going to affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people; soldiers and citizens, innocent victims, mothers and fathers, wives and widows.

### **Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.)**

Mr. President, I suspect that 75% or more of those who will vote for use of force desperately do not want it to be used, and a significant number will vote for it only because they want to prevent the President from being reversed. That really means that this vote to grant the use of force may very well carry—if it does—only because some will succumb to the very box the President has put us in.



The danger of that is that those who vote for use of force will create a situation where it becomes more, rather than less, likely that the force they hope will not be used will, in fact, be used. They escalate the stakes. They narrow the box further. That is a terrible way to make policy, Mr. President, but it is an even more terrible way to go to war by any account. That is called rolling-the-dice policy; big rolling the dice. Perhaps it will work. There are many who suspect it might. . . .

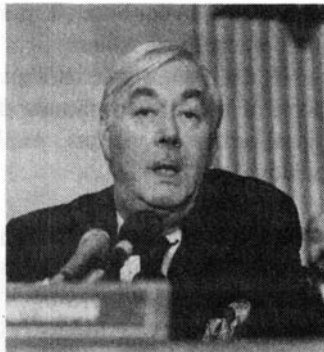
All the President would have to do at any time then, all any President would have to do, is create a box, put the Congress in the box, and then say, "I need you to close ranks around me," and he or she will unilaterally carry out whatever policy they want to in the name of unity. That argument cost us thousands of lives in Vietnam, Mr. President. Just go down to the memorial here in Washington and look at that black granite wall. I say to my colleagues that over half the names on that wall are there because too many legislators were too often too willing to just close ranks with the President.

The call we need to heed is not a call to close ranks with the President, but how about closing ranks with the troops in the Arabian desert whose fate is determined by our analysis and judgment? How about closing ranks with mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters and families across this coun-

try, whose hearts and souls are heavy with the hope that we will exercise our judgment correctly? If there is a call to close ranks, Mr. President, let it be the closing of ranks among ourselves here in this Chamber with our responsibility to make our best judgment about how we deal with human life.

### Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.)

Mr. President, that is a kind of madness where we are living in an earlier world and acting in ways that have no relevance to the situation of the moment. We are not in an international crisis in the sense that events that took place on Aug. 2 necessitate the confrontation of the largest set of armed forces



since World War II. Nothing large happened. A nasty little country invaded a littler but just as nasty country. They have their avowed virtues, I do not doubt. There has not been much virtue on display internationally in either case. . . .

Suddenly our institutions are acting as if to say, "Oh, my God, we missed World War III. Maybe we can have it now here. Not there, but here." Mr. President, that borders on the edge of the disturbed. Dr. Strangelove, where are now that we need you?

### Rep. Major Owens (D-N.Y.)

Disproportionate numbers of those who will be slaughtered in the desert will be African-Americans. Nearly one-third of our soldiers in Operation Desert Shield are African-Americans, many of them with families in districts like mine, the 12th Congressional District of Brooklyn. My district is the 10th poorest district in the nation. My district has the second-largest number of African-Americans.

Young African-American men and women are three times more likely to be in the Armed Forces and involved in this impending war in the sand as young whites are. There is a reason for this: When people cannot get jobs, they find the Army and the Navy and the other military units to be an opportunity to be utilized.

There are many very bright young people who never look for jobs, but who are recruited from high school and told that "you can go to college after you go through the military and get those advantages," and there are quite a few African-American men and women who went to military academies or they used the benefits of the ROTC, as the only way they could make it. . . .

These are the same people who are penalized when President Bush refuses to pass a civil rights bill because it has a quota. He claims there is a quota. There is some kind of ugly reverse quota operating, when one-third of the troops on the

front line are poor and African-American.

### Sen. Donald Riegle (D-Mich.)

Now, if a war starts, there are going to be an awful lot of people who die. We should not have any illusions about that. This is not going to be a clean, quick, surgical war. That is not the nature of the region, not the nature of the history, not the nature of the passions that are involved. This is a situation, I think, where we will find that, if a war ensues on that scale, initiated by us, principally conducted by us, we are going to find ourselves with a subsequent chain of events that no one can foresee, but that I think are enormously complex and dangerous and costly to our country.

War is about, as I said, people dying, and there are going to be a lot of Americans who will die in this war. . . . They are not much older than these pages sitting down here in the well of the Senate, a few years older, but they have not lived very long. If the bullets start flying, there are going to be a lot of them who are not going to live much longer. That is just the sheer, miserable fact of war. War is about fire and steel and people dying. . . .

Any of us who served during that time [the Vietnam war], who did talk to the parents who lost sons principally and some daughters in that war, and tried to make sense out of it and explain it to them, whether out in Arlington Cemetery or military hospitals, which all of us who served at that time did, and to try to find words to explain why their son either had to die or be incapacitated in some way, it was very difficult to find the words.

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## 'Give peace a chance' by going to war, say pro-war legislators

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### Sen. Charles Robb (D-Va.)

We can and should take the President to task if we disagree with him on a whole variety of matters here at home—from the budget to the rest of the domestic agenda.

But in the great issues of war and peace, I believe we ought to make every effort possible to speak with one voice, or at least with the strongest majority voice possible.

On balance, the majority of us would give the President very high marks for the way he has handled the Gulf challenge to date. Yet now that we have reached the truly critical stage, I believe it would be a fundamental mistake to give even the appearance of withdrawing our trust and support.



There is no question that the risks are great. I don't want to minimize the potential consequences if we're wrong. We can't escape responsibility for the actions we are about to authorize, and we shouldn't. We are risking thousands of American lives, and that fact weighs on the conscience of every member here—particularly on those who have known the unhumane brutality of combat firsthand. . . . Let's give peace a chance by giving the authority he believe he needs to achieve it.

### **Rep. Martin Lancaster (D-N.C.)**

Diplomatic overtures on our part have been met by arrogance, intransigence, and further threats to our allies in the region. Saddam will not change his dangerous ways unless he is convinced that he will suffer for his actions. In this regard, the U.N. resolution authorizing the use of force has sent a clear message to Saddam that the international community is totally committed to check further Iraqi aggression and to deter future use of the deadly weapons which Saddam has in his arsenal, as well as the nuclear arms he is rushing to obtain. As a Congress, we must add our voice to this international demand.

Saddam understands force. He should understand the seriousness of the U.N. resolution and the consequences he will suffer should he choose to ignore the meaning of that resolution. We can add significant weight to that message by passing this resolution.

### **Rep. Dante Fascell (D-Fla.)**

When you vote on this resolution, one way or the other, yes or no, make no mistake about your actions, you are voting to empower the President to use the awesome military force of the United States in a manner that is necessary, to secure the peace.

There is no doubt about it. There is no tomorrow about this decision. It is a decision which you must make today, not tomorrow. When you here make the decision to authorize the use of military force, you are telling the commander-in-chief to implement that authority, and make no mistake about it.

There is nothing to this argument that, "Well, he is going to implement it at his discretion." He is the commander-in-chief. He will carry it out. You are not going to tell him in the resolution how or when to actually do it, like 9 o'clock in the morning or with six tanks or whatever.

### **Rep. Richard Ray (D-Ga.)**

I would suggest to my colleagues who are raising the specter of thousands of U.S. casualties and body bags coming home that they are rendering a serious disservice to the families who have loved ones deployed in the Persian Gulf. My colleagues, I would urge that we refrain from the use of such rhetoric. Our service people and their loved ones know the risks—let us not make their lives even more uncomfortable than they already are.

### **Sen. John Warner (R-Va.)**

In this particular instance, there is a very high state of morale of our troops in the Gulf today. That has been engendered by, first and foremost, united support here at home. We have seen a mail campaign flowing across the ocean unlike anything since World War II, in terms of volume. We have seen the media, the television, daily exchanging the emotions of loved ones on both sides of the ocean. All of this at home has given a tremendous sense of security to these men and women and instilled in them a fighting spirit.

These are young people. They tend to believe what they hear and what they are told. From General Schwarzkopf on down, the officers, from four-star to gold-bar lieutenant, have instilled in them a fighting spirit. And, suddenly, here on the eve of this date of the 15th, across the ocean comes a message that the Congress of the United States is not with them.

### **Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.)**

There are, if you think about it, only two ways in which that can happen [getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait]. Either Saddam himself has to make the decision to go, or Saddam has to be overthrown by a military junta which would then make the decision to go. The fact of the matter is that Saddam himself does



not give a whit for the welfare of his own people. The fact that their per capita income will be reduced by 40% does not bother him. The fact that they will have less to eat does not bother him. He will hunker down and he will wait.

Anyway, his people will be able to feed themselves. It is a fertile country. Smuggling is going on across the Iranian, Jordanian, Syrian, and Turkish borders. He will wait. And while he waits, there is a real chance this coalition against him will crumble, and the sanctions will erode.

### **Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-La.)**

The key fact in this whole debate is that the President of the United States believes sincerely, but strongly, that he cannot bring those troops home in order to let sanctions work. There is no other way to let sanctions work and to bring troops home, massively bring troops home, 200,000, 300,000 troops, because that is what it is going to take to be able to let the sanctions work. How do I know the President believes that? Because he said so yesterday. I asked him directly and unequivocally, "Mr. President, if we convince you that sanctions can work, can you bring troops home?" and he says absolutely, unequivocally "No." So, therefore, Mr. President, I believe the decision on sanctions, for right or for wrong, was made in November. It was made by the President.