



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 29, 2012

General Norman Schwarzkopf, Desert Storm Commander, Dead at 78

Norman Schwarzkopf, the U.S. Army general who led American and coalition troops into Iraq in 1991 under the context of putting a stop to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, has died at 78. Schwarzkopf died December 27 in Tampa, Florida, of complications from pneumonia.

An obscure officer before the conflict in the Middle East, Schwarzkopf "became a household name while he oversaw the buildup of 700,000 coalition troops, including more than 540,000 U.S. forces, after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990," reported [CNN](#). The brief conflict, which would become known in history as the Persian Gulf War, consisted essentially of a nearly six-week air campaign against Iraq that commenced on January 17, 1991, followed up by a 100-hour ground offensive that successfully pushed Hussein's forces out of Kuwait.



The mini-war — which was launched under the auspices of the United Nations, without the constitutionally required congressional declaration of war — succeeded in giving the United States a high-profile victory over a minor dictator which the press beefed up into an ominous threat to Middle East security. It also provided the context that then-President George H.W. Bush needed to pursue what he referred to as the "new world order." On September 11, 1990, [Bush told a joint session of Congress](#) that the Persian Gulf crisis would offer "a rare opportunity" to move closer to a "new world order ... a new era freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, east and west, north and south, can prosper and live in harmony." How would such an era be achieved? In the same address, Bush approvingly observed that "we're now in sight of a United Nations that performs as envisioned by its founders" and that "the United Nations is backing up its words with action."

The conflict also left the door open for the elder Bush's son to continue the pursuit of the "new world order," as a decade later President George W. Bush once again sent troops into the Middle East, a campaign that continues to morph into new and potentially unending "peacekeeping" ventures.

General Schwarzkopf, whom the media would lionize as "Stormin' Norman," was the early face of that new world order campaign, as he oversaw the month and a half bombing run and ground assault that led to Hussein's hasty retreat. Schwarzkopf cut an heroic and bold figure to an American public skeptical about the need for their nation's involvement in large-scale military adventure. Sizing up his Iraqi enemy, the general told a roomful of reporters anxious for soundbites: "As far as Saddam Hussein



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being a great military strategist, he is neither a strategist, nor is he schooled in the operational arts, nor is he a tactician, nor is he a general, nor is he a soldier.”

Looking back on the military campaign he headed, Schwarzkopf told CNN’s Larry King in 1992 that he and his staff had hoped there would have been no need to follow up the bombing assault with a ground invasion. “Once the war started, we were hoping that ... they’d come to their senses and stop right then.... After 38 days, we got to a point where we could launch the ground war and, by that time, they hadn’t withdrawn.”

Some military observers had criticized Schwarzkopf for not continuing his campaign all the way to Baghdad to take out Saddam — something U.S. troops did a decade later when they ultimately captured the Iraqi dictator. Schwarzkopf later explained in his 1992 autobiography *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*: “Had the United States and the United Kingdom gone on alone to capture Baghdad, under the provisions of the Geneva and Hague conventions we would have been considered occupying powers and therefore would have been responsible for all the costs of maintaining or restoring government, education and other services for the people of Iraq.”

He added, with unintended prophetic clarity that had “we taken all of Iraq, we would have been like a dinosaur in the tar pit — we would still be there, and we, not the United Nations, would be bearing the costs of that occupation.”

CNN reported that Schwarzkopf ultimately supported “the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, though he later criticized the Pentagon for what he called mistakes that included sending undertrained Reserve and National Guard troops into combat.”

After his retirement some political operatives attempted to capitalize on his hero image, pressing him to run for the U.S. Senate. Schwarzkopf turned down the opportunity, insisting that he would make a “lousy politician.”

Born in 1934, H. Norman Schwarzkopf was named after his father, a West Point graduate who served in World War I before heading up the New Jersey state police and, famously, leading the investigation into the kidnapping and death of Charles Lindbergh’s infant son. The younger Schwarzkopf recalled that “the day I was born, my father said ... ‘That boy is going to West Point.’ And that’s the only thing I ever heard my entire young life.”

After graduating from West Point, Schwarzkopf served two tours in Vietnam, where he was awarded three Silver Stars. In 1983, he also led troops during the U.S. invasion of Grenada.

On his early military service Schwarzkopf wrote: “I prided myself on being unflappable even in the most chaotic of circumstances. That guise lasted until Vietnam, where I realized that I was dealing with human lives and if one were lost, it could never be replaced. I quickly learned that there was nothing wrong with being emotional.”

In 1992 he told CNN’s Larry King that “I hate war. Absolutely, I hate war. Good generalship is a realization that ... you’ve got to try and figure out how to accomplish your mission with a minimum loss of human life.”

After his Desert Storm command, reported Fox News, Schwarzkopf “was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II and honored with decorations from France, Britain, Belgium, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain.”

Looking back on his life, Schwarzkopf said that “I may have made my reputation as a general in the



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Army and I'm very proud of that. But I've always felt that I was more than one-dimensional. I'd like to think I'm a caring human being."

Photo of Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf: AP Images



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