

Gulf States Lend Support

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While officially against the war, most Gulf states are providing various levels of assistance to US troops in the region.

Washington last week ordered 60,000 more troops to the Gulf, bringing the total allied fighting force in and around the Gulf to more than 300,000. Despite anti-war sentiments, authorities are providing basing rights and other support for the US forces, as follows:

BAHRAIN.

Headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet. Although local media highlight the close relationship between Bahrain and its "strategic allies" in the West, government spokesmen deny that Bahraini territory will be used in any military action against Iraq.

Bahrain initially supported a call by the United Arab Emirates for Saddam Hussein's removal from power, but later backed the summit's "total rejection of any attack on Iraq".

KUWAIT.

Headquarters of V Corps, the US Army force commanded by Lt. Gen. Scott Wallace that will invade Iraq from the southern front. Kuwait also hosts the 101st Airborne Division. The 101st, with backup from nearly 300 helicopters and 3,800 trucks, is key to a rapid war that will see the near-simultaneous use of massive air bombardment and rapid ground attacks. In all, some 160,000 US troops are currently on Kuwaiti soil.

Germany has almost 100 troops specialized in nuclear, chemical and biological warfare deployed in Kuwait, backed by specialized armoured vehicles that serve as laboratories on wheels. The troops were increased from 60 to 90 at the end of February. Germany says the troops are part of the international war on terrorism - not related to a possible war in Iraq.

QATAR.

Hosts the United States' Central Command operations and the HQ of the invasion commander, Gen. Tommy Franks. An air base near the capital, Doha, will serve as a launching pad for air strikes.

SAUDI ARABIA.

Saudi Arabia was the launch pad for war on Iraq in 1991 and since then the US has had base facilities and troops stationed at Prince Sultan air base at al-Kharj, south of the capital, Riyadh. Fearing retaliation from Islamic fundamentalists linked to Osama bin Laden, Saudi Arabia's public position is that it opposes war against Iraq and Saudi soil will not be used as a springboard for attacks on Iraq.

But US officials have said Saudi Arabia is ready to allow US forces to make greater use of Saudi facilities than it can acknowledge publicly. The officials have said the kingdom will permit refuelling, surveillance and battlefield radar aircraft to use Saudi airfields.

The Washington Post reported that the US and Saudi Arabia have a "tacit agreement" that will allow the US to conduct bombing missions from Saudi soil as long as no public announcement is made. Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal denied the report.

There are no details of the exact number of US forces in Saudi Arabia. However, the Washington-based Saudi Information Agency has said several hundred US soldiers have arrived at Arar airport, only 15

kilometers from the Iraqi border, together with Galaxy aircraft carrying heavy equipment "apparently to be used in an eventual war against Iraq".

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES.

UAE President Zayed ibn Sultan an Nahayan generated a proposal, floated at the recent Arab summit in Egypt, for Saddam Hussein to leave power voluntarily. The UAE does not host US troops.

Location: Iraqi Kurdistan
Iraq

Focus: Iraq

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