

Iraq: Country of conflict

Situated in the cradle of civilization, Iraq has a history marked by cultural conflicts. As the United States plans a possible invasion, we look at Iraq's history and people.

Facts and figures

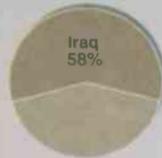
- **Capital:** Baghdad
- **Population:** 23.3 million, slightly larger than the population of Texas
- **Population density:** 139 people per square mile
- **Languages:** Arabic (official), Kurdish
- **Religion:** Iraqis are primarily Muslims (Christians and others account for only 3 percent of the population). The country has about 60 percent to 65 percent Shiite Muslims, and 32 percent to 37 percent Sunni Muslims.
- **Area:** About 167,400 square miles, slightly more than twice the size of Idaho
- **Government:** Republic
- **Leader:** President and Prime Minister Saddam Hussein
- **GDP (2001 estimate):** \$57 billion
- **Monetary unit:** Dinar
- **Crude oil reserves (2000 estimate):** 113 billion barrels
- **Industries:** Textiles, chemicals, oil refining, cement
- **Agricultural products:** Grains, including wheat, barley and rice; dates; cotton
- **Military:** Army: 424,000; navy: 2,000; air force: 30,000; air defense command (missiles): 17,000; security and border guards: 44,000
- **Missiles:** Short-range missiles of various types, including Scuds, capable of reaching Israel
- **Nuclear warheads:** Not yet
- **Terrorist links:** Sponsors dissident activity overseas and supports various terrorist groups, allowing some to maintain offices in Iraq
- **Web site:** www.iraqi-mission.org

By the numbers

ETHNIC GROUPS



LITERACY RATE



LIFE EXPECTANCY



PER CAPITA GDP



Iraq's milestones

Present-day Iraq was formerly Mesopotamia, an area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that became known as the "cradle of civilization." The region saw the rise of many cultures, including the Sumer, Akkadia and Babylonia. A look at the area's milestones, both ancient and modern:

- **3000 B.C.:** The civilization of Sumer rises in Mesopotamia. The Sumerians develop writing called cuneiform and the wheel, and build temple pyramids called ziggurats.
- **2350 B.C.:** Sumer falls to the Akkadians, led by King Sargon. Over the next 400 years, the Akkadians falter and the Amorites — based in Babylon, a city near present-day Baghdad — take control.
- **1792 B.C.:** King Hammurabi of Babylon begins his reign and expands Babylonia west and south.
- **1600 B.C.:** The Kassites conquer Babylonia. The area experiences growth even as rival groups challenge each other for control of the region.
- **600 to 539 B.C.:** The Babylonian civilization rises again.
- **539 B.C.:** Persia, under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, conquers the area.
- **334 B.C.:** Alexander the Great, ruler of Macedonia, invades and conquers. Various dynasties and civilizations will sweep over the area from the Romans to the Byzantine Empire in 627.
- **637:** After years of fighting, the Abbasids, a Muslim group, take control and establish a new capital, Baghdad. They also introduce the monotheistic faith of Islam.
- **1258:** The Mongols invade and destroy Baghdad. Governments come and go until 1533 when the Ottoman Turks conquer Baghdad and the area. They remain in control through World War I.
- **1914:** British forces invade southern Iraq during World War I. In 1917, they occupy Baghdad.
- **1921:** Prince Faisal is elected king of a new nation, Iraq. The country is still subject to British control.
- **1927:** Oil is discovered in Iraq.
- **1932:** Iraq claims its independence from Britain. It is admitted to the League of Nations. Over the next several decades, various governments are overthrown in coups.
- **1963:** The Baath Arab Socialist party overthrows Prime Minister Karim Kassem, who came to power in a 1958 coup.
- **1979:** Saddam Hussein overthrows the government and becomes president.
- **1980:** Iraq invades Iran over land ownership and religious differences.
- **1982 to 1988:** Iran counterattacks, sparking a conflict that lasts until a 1988 cease-fire.
- **1990:** Iraq invades and occupies Kuwait.
- **1991:** A U.S.-led coalition frees Kuwait and invades Iraq, destroying much of its military infrastructure. The United Nations orders weapons inspections to ensure Saddam doesn't rebuild his weapons capability.
- **1998:** U.N. weapons inspectors withdraw from Iraq, saying Saddam has prevented them from doing the necessary inspections. In December, the United States and Britain begin four days of airstrikes.
- **2002:** In January, President George W. Bush declares Iraq part of an "axis of evil." In October, the U.S. Congress grants Bush a resolution "to use the armed forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq."



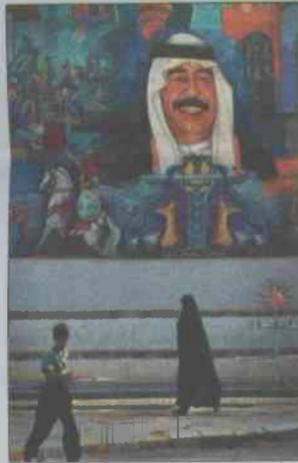
By WARREN P. STROBEL
Knight Ridder Newspapers

The relationship between the United States and Iraq has a long and complicated history, marked by shifting alliances and various military campaigns. And in the latest twist in the snarled relationship, the United States is threatening military action against Iraq. The Bush administration could use military force to topple Iraqi President Saddam Hussein if he refuses to give up suspected chemical, nuclear and biological weapons programs.

But tangled relations between the two nations began years ago. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration tilted toward Saddam and aided his regime, following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war the next year. At the time, the United States feared the spread of Iran's virulently anti-American strain of Islam.

Cooperation between the United States and Iraq continued until the eve of Iraq's invasion of the small nation of Kuwait in August 1990.

Iraqi troops were expelled from Kuwait by a United States-led coalition during Operation Desert Storm, and President George Bush and his aides believed Saddam would fall from power. Iraq's ethnic Kurds in the north and Shiite majority in the south rose up against the regime, but Saddam and his Baathist administration brutally sup-



Iraqis walk by a mural of Saddam Hussein in Saddam City, a neighborhood in Iraq's capital, Baghdad.

pressed the revolts. For the next seven years, Saddam, the United States and the United Nations played a cat-and-mouse game over U.N. weapons inspectors who were sent to Iraq. They were charged with finding and destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction within months of the Gulf War's end. Finally, in December 1998, frustra-

ed with Iraq's continued blocking of full inspections, the inspectors were pulled out and the United States began a four-day bombing campaign called Operation Desert Fox.

About the same time, President Bill Clinton made getting rid of Saddam — a so-called "regime change" — formal U.S. policy, but his administration did little to carry it out.

But that changed after the Sept. 11 attacks, when President George W. Bush and his advisers grew increasingly concerned that Saddam might give his weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups. The likelihood of that happening is a matter of intense dispute among Iraq experts.

But with the war in Afghanistan largely complete, the Bush administration has moved to confront, and if necessary, pre-empt, Saddam.

The president has said he will lead a coalition of countries in military action against the Iraqi government if it refuses to allow unfettered weapons inspections.

Few doubt the U.S. military — with weapons more potent than during the Gulf War — could overwhelm the Iraqi military, which has an aging arsenal and poor morale. But major uncertainties remain: Would Saddam unleash chemical and biological weapons on U.S. troops? Would American forces get bogged down in urban warfare?

And perhaps the largest lingering question: Who would rule Iraq after Saddam goes?

Iraq's power players

Biographical information about Saddam Hussein and his family is hard to pin down. No official biography is available for Saddam, and information about his children is spotty. But here are some facts about the family, drawn from various sources:

SADDAM HUSSEIN

■ **Full name:** Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti
 ■ **Born:** April 28, 1937, in Iraq's Tikrit District, north of Baghdad
 ■ **Family:** Married Sajida Khairalla in 1963; two sons, three daughters

■ **Education:** Student, University of Cairo law school, 1962; law degree, University of Baghdad, 1971

■ **Early years:** In 1959, Saddam participated in an assassination attempt on Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kassim. He was wounded, and lived in exile in Syria and Egypt for four years. He returned to Iraq in 1963.

■ **Political career:** Joined Baath party in 1957; acting deputy chairman, Revolutionary Command Council, 1968-69; deputy chairman, 1969-79; chairman, 1979 to present; president of Iraq, 1979 to present; prime minister, 1994 to present

UDAI SADDAM HUSSEIN

■ **Alternate spellings:** Odai, Uday
 ■ **Born:** 1964
 ■ **Business and political career:** Controls Iraqi media, including a major television network and newspaper; runs a militia group; heads Iraq's Olympic committee
 ■ **Assassination attempt:** In December 1996, an assassination attempt failed, leaving him severely wounded.

QUSAY SADDAM HUSSEIN

■ **Alternate spelling:** Qusai
 ■ **Born:** 1966
 ■ **Business and political career:** Thought to head Iraq's internal security forces, possibly the nation's Special Security Organization, which interrogates and executes political enemies and their families, and guards Iraq's chemical and biological arsenal
 ■ **Assassination attempt:** In

August 2002, Qusay was wounded in the arm during an assassination attempt.

OTHER RELATIVES

Two of Saddam's daughters married brothers, who defected in the mid-1990s and spoke of overthrowing Saddam.

They later returned to Iraq after being assured of their safety. The two men died several days after returning to Iraq in an alleged shootout.

TRIBAL LOYALTY

Tribal identity is strong in Iraq. Much of Saddam's government is made up of members of his family from Tikrit. Many of Saddam's personal protection unit, the Anm Al Khass, come from Tikrit.

Other tribes in Iraq include the Dulain, the Abu Hamdan, Zobeida and hundreds more. Previous Iraqi rulers have tried to crush the tribes, but Saddam has nurtured them, hoping to win their support.

PAGE SOURCES: KRT; CNN.COM; CURRENT BIOGRAPHY; 1981; WHO'S WHO IN THE WORLD; 1998; LOS ANGELES TIMES; U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT; WORLD ALMANAC; GLOBALSECURITY.ORG; "IRAQ: THE BRADY TRAVEL GUIDE"; ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ORIENT; AVALON PROJECT AT THE YALE LAW SCHOOL; THE MIDDLE EAST NETWORK INFORMATION CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN (HTTP://MERIC.UTEXAS.EDU/MERIC/COUNTRIES_AND_REGIONS/IRAQ/); THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE ORIENT (HTTP://CIAS.COM/E/DIRAQ.5.HTM); CIA FACTBOOK (HTTP://WWW.OCD.GOV/CIA/PUBLICATIONS/FACTBOOK/GEOS/IZ.HTM); HANMURABI'S CODE (HTTP://WWW.FORDHAM.EDU/HALSALL/ANCIENT/HAMCODE.HTM); THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON (HTTP://ICE.ENG.USF.EDU/PHAROS/WONDERS/INDEX.HTM)

— Tish Wells