

Middle Eastern Conflicts

Enduring Understanding: Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the world's attention no longer focuses on the tension between superpowers. Although problems rooted in the Middle East have captured the world's attention consistently than the majority of current issues, other concerns have moved to the forefront as well. To understand the modern world, you should explain the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf War, the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Middle Eastern Conflicts

The Middle East is a region of the world that is in constant turmoil and conflict. At the end of World War II, with the creation of Israel, tensions and conflicts in the Middle East increased. The conflicts come from religious differences and issues of territory. This region owns and controls the greatest supply of oil (fossil fuels) in the world. The United States is the most dependent nation on that energy source. The United Nations and the United States have been involved in the support of Israel because of the concern that issues in this region of the world impact the global world.



Section Review

1. Why did tensions increase in the Middle East after World War II?
2. What region owns and controls the greatest supply of oil in the world?
3. What nation is the most dependent on oil?

Persian Gulf War

The **Persian Gulf War** began as a result of Iraq's invasion of its oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait on August 2, 1990. **Saddam Hussein**, dictator of Iraq, ordered the invasion based on the claims that Kuwait was rightfully Iraq's territory and that Kuwait's overproduction of oil was hurting the Iraqi economy. The United Nations responded by demanding that Hussein remove his troops from Kuwait. Many



nations of the UN imposed trade embargoes on Iraq. A coalition of forces from 32 member nations of the UN, led by the United States, took further action. On August 7, the United States sent troops to Saudi Arabia to protect its oil fields from possible Iraqi invasion. In November the UN set a deadline of January 15, 1991 for Hussein to remove all of his troops from Kuwait. When Hussein refused to meet this deadline coalition troops began **Operation Desert Storm**. Under the leadership of the United States, coalition troops entered Kuwait and began attacking Iraqi troops and military installations with an assault of air raids followed by ground support. Hussein launched missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia to distract the coalition forces. Despite Hussein's efforts, the coalition forces surrounded Iraqi forces quickly. Most of the Iraqi forces surrendered or fled. United States **President George H. W. Bush** declared a ceasefire on February 28, 1991. Although Kuwait regained its freedom, destruction from Iraqi troops in Kuwait was extensive due to orders from Saddam Hussein to set Kuwait's oil fields on fire as they retreated. Iraq also suffered major destruction, but Saddam Hussein remained in power.

Section Review

4. What caused the Persian Gulf War?
5. Who was the leader of Iraq?
6. Which country did Iraq invade? Why?
7. What did the United Nations demand of Iraq?
8. What was the result of the Persian Gulf War?

September 11, 2001

Eleven years after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States was attacked by Al Qaeda. **Al Qaeda** (terrorist organization) was led by **Osama bin Laden**, who planned the attacks on America. Al Qaeda accepted responsibility for the attacks. The attacks were in response to the conflicts in the Middle East that they believed were caused by Western ideas and influence within the region. Al Qaeda demanded the removal of all Western influence from the Middle East. Along with the United States, India, Britain, Spain and Japan have all been targets of Al Qaeda.



Osama Bin Laden



On the morning September 11, 2001 Al Qaeda terrorists boarded four different passenger planes departing from Boston, Massachusetts, Washington DC., and Newark, New Jersey. The terrorists waited until the planes were in the air before hijacking them, using knives to get into the cockpit area. The terrorists killed the pilots and began flying the planes themselves. Two out of the four planes that were hijacked were flown to New York City and



into the north and south towers of the World Trade Center. All passengers and hijackers on both flights were killed. Over two thousand civilians and hundreds of rescue workers died. The site the World Trade Center collapse became known as "**Ground Zero**". While the attack in New York City was happening there was also a plane that was hijacked and flown into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. One hundred and twenty five workers inside the Pentagon were killed. Four

Al Qaeda terrorists hijacked a fourth plane. Unlike the other three, the terrorists did not achieve their goal of flying the plane into a building or heavily populated area. Through cell phone communication while traveling on **United Flight 93**, passengers had become aware of what had happened with the other three previously hijacked planes. Passengers quickly formulated a plan to foil the hijackers by regaining control of the plane. In the struggle, control of the plane was lost and the plane crashed in an empty field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The hijackers and all passengers on board were killed, but no other damages or casualties resulted. Although the intended destination of the flight cannot be confirmed the trained hijacking pilot had redirected the plane toward the east coast. Based on the direction of the route prior to the crash the target is generally presumed to be a strategic site in Washington D.C.

Section Review

9. On which day was the United States attacked by terrorists?
10. What was the name of the terrorist organization that accepted responsibility for the attacks?
11. Who was the leader of the terrorist organization?
12. What occurred onboard United Flight 93?

Response to September 11

After September 11, United States **President George W. Bush** declared a “**global war on terrorism**”. Bush announced that terrorist organizations would be hunted by the United States government and that cooperation from other countries would be expected. Since Al Qaeda had announced its organization was responsible for September 11, they became the first target. The US demanded that Afghanistan, which was led by Al Qaeda-supported **Taliban** government, turn over any terrorists in their country. The Taliban government refused. President Bush ordered the invasion of Afghanistan in order to search for terrorists. The U.S. took the Taliban out of power and set up a democratic government in Afghanistan, which was led by American-appointed President Hamid Karzai. Elections were held in 2004. The Taliban and Al Qaeda have continued to attack American troops and the new government. Osama bin Laden, who was the leader of Al Qaeda, was shot and killed in May 2011 by U.S. Special Forces. He was killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan.



Section Review

13. What did President George W. Bush announce regarding terrorist organizations?
14. What group controlled the government of Afghanistan?
15. Which terrorist organization did the Taliban support?
16. When and where was Osama bin Laden killed?

The War on Terrorism

The U.S. conducted worldwide investigations as part of the War on Terror, but focused on the Middle East. The U.S. believed Iraq might possess and supply terrorists with **weapons of mass destruction** (WMDs). The U.S. appealed to the United Nations asking them to investigate Iraq. It was believed that the leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, would sell the nuclear weapons to terrorists groups in the Middle East, which could potentially harm the U.S. In November of 2002, the United Nations released the results of their investigation. They found

no evidence of WMDs in Iraq. Because the U.S. considered Hussein to be a possible source of support and supplies for terrorists, the Bush Administration decided to invade Iraq in March of 2003. The U.S. government occupied Iraq and eventually took control of the government when Saddam Hussein went into hiding. After Hussein was captured, the U.S. set up a transitional government in Iraq. The first elections in Iraq were held in 2005. Hussein was tried for murder and was found guilty. He was hanged on December 30, 2006. Fighting continued in Iraq even after Hussein was executed. This fighting continued in Iraq until December 2011, when the US began withdrawing its troops.



Section Review

17. Which European country supported the US?
18. Who was the leader of Iraq?
19. What did the US fear Saddam Hussein would do?
20. Which organization sent a special team to investigate the weapons claims against Iraq?
21. What was the result of the UN investigation in Iraq?
22. When was Iraq invaded?
23. When was Hussein captured?

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