

The Gulf War: False Claims of Victory

In the early days of Operation Desert Storm, the Iraqi regime issued a stream of false claims of military successes. The target audience for this lie was non-elite Muslim publics, including Iraqis, and the Iraqis used on-the-record statements, bogus stories, and sympathetic journalists to disseminate their story. Examples of specific claims – all false – include:

- The United States embassy in Mauritania reported that Iraq's embassy in that country released a black-and-white video of what it claimed was captured coalition military personnel, only three days after the beginning of the air campaign. **The large number of “prisoners” in the video and the speed with which it was produced and released in Mauritania marked it immediately as a forgery.**³¹
- During the conflict, Iraq claimed to have downed more than 200 coalition planes and “scores” of cruise missiles, and to have recovered one unexploded cruise missile, which would be reused. Iraq also claimed to have destroyed an aircraft carrier. **In fact, 37 coalition planes were lost in the conflict and no aircraft carriers were destroyed.**
- Western soldiers killed during the Gulf War were being “evacuated from Saudi Arabia to Djibouti in British planes and in a second step...to the island of Crete, where they are secretly buried.” **Not true.**
– *Algerian Press Service, January 29, 1991*
- Iraqi missiles have hit the Israeli Defense Ministry and have turned Tel Aviv into a “ghost town.” **While Iraq did attack Israel with SCUD missiles, the damage caused was not extensive.**
– *Iraqi News Agency, January 20, 1991, citing a “British correspondent”*
- Iraq has killed 6000 allied troops (claim made just four days after the coalition air campaign began). **In fact, 148 U.S. troops were killed in the whole conflict.**
– *Inqilab (Bangladesh), January 20, 1991*