

WORDS

- **attack** = strike
- **attempt** = try
- **capital** = an important city of a country, where the government is
- **chemical weapon** = something poisonous, mostly a gas, that is used in war
- **cover** = spread over
- **crops** = a plant like wheat, rice that is grown by farmers and used as food
- **desert** = land that is very hot and dry
- **even though** = while
- **follower** = someone who believes in a system and helps the leader who teaches it
- **freedom** = liberty; the feeling of being free
- **government** = the people who rule a country
- **independence** = self-government, freedom, liberty
- **launch** = start
- **make up** = consist of
- **plain** = a large area of flat, dry land
- **population** = the people who live in a country
- **represent** = stand for
- **separate** = different
- **Shiite** = a person who belongs to the Shia group of Muslims
- **tip** = end
- **wipe out** = to destroy or remove completely

Iraq is one of the most talked about countries in the Middle East. It lies at the north-western **tip** of the Persian Gulf. Its neighbours are Iran to the east, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the south, Jordan and Syria to the west and Turkey to the north. Its **capital** is Baghdad.



Most of the country is a dry flat **plain** formed by the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Farmers can grow **crops** with the water they get from these two rivers. A sandy, hilly **desert covers** the south-western and western parts of the country.

PEOPLE

Iraq has a **population** of about 25 million. The country is made up of many different people with **separate** cultures, histories and religions.

• SHIA ARABS

About 55 % of the country's population belong to this group. **Shiites** live in southern Iraq and most of them were against Saddam Hussein and his **government**.

• SUNNI ARABS

Sunni Arabs were the most powerful group in the country, **even though** they **represent** only 20 % of the population. They live mostly in Central Iraq. Saddam Hussein and most of his **followers** came from this group.

• KURDS

Kurds are mainly Sunni Muslims that live in the northern part of the country and **make up** about 20 % of the Iraqi population. They have always tried to get **freedom** and **independence** from the rest of the country. Saddam Hussein and his government **attempted** to **wipe out** the Kurds because of this. In 1988 he **launched** an **attack** on the Kurds using **chemical weapons** and killing thousands of them.



WORDS

- **ally** = a country that helps another country fight in a war
- **charge** =accuse , to say that someone may have committed a crime
- **destroy** = to damage something so that it no longer exists
- **decade** = ten years
- **determined** =to really want to do something, you do not let anyone stop you
- **develop** = to grow slowly
- **drive out** = to force someone to leave
- **empire** = a group of countries that are controlled by one ruler
- **execute** = to officially kill someone
- **force** =make someone do something
- **found- founded** = create, make
- **guilty** = if you have done something that is a crime
- **independent** = not owned or controlled by something or someone
- **influence** = power, control
- **invade** = to enter a country or town and take control of it by fighting
- **join** = to become a member of
- **locate** = where something can be found
- **mainly** =mostly
- **manage to** = to do something that is difficult to do
- **Muslim** = someone whose religion is Islam
- **overthrow** = to remove a leader
- **plain** = a large area of flat, dry land
- **remain** = stay
- **remove** = to get him out
- **retire** = to stop working because you are too old
- **revolutionary** = radical, with new ideas
- **rule** = govern
- **sentence** = when the judge gives you a punishment
- **support** = help
- **trade** = the buying and selling of things
- **trial** = when you appear before a court and a judge and jury decides if you have done something wrong or illegal
- **troops** = soldiers
- **warrior** = a word that was used in the past for a soldier or fighter who was very brave

HISTORY

The world’s oldest civilisation **developed** about 6000 years ago along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in a region which we know as Mesopotamia.

In 637 Arab **Muslims** took over the area. They **founded** Baghdad as their capital, which, by the year 800 had grown into a city of more than one million people and had also become a centre of **trade** and culture.

In 1258 Mongol **warriors** from Central Asia came to Mesopotamia and **destroyed** much of the Arab **empire**. Up to the 1800s the **plain** between the two rivers was **ruled** by the Ottoman empire which was **located** in today’s Turkey.

During World War I British **troops** took control of the area and in 1932 Iraq became a free, **independent** nation. In the **decades** that followed many different governments **ruled** the country until Saddam Hussein took over power in 1979.

SADDAM HUSSEIN

Saddam Hussein was born in 1937 in a village near Tikrit in northern Iraq. He **joined** the Ba’ath Party, which was a **revolutionary** group that wanted to **overthrow** the government.



In the 1960s and 70s Saddam Hussein slowly got more and more **influence** in his party . In 1979 he **forced** Iraq’s president to **retire** and took over the job himself. Hussein ruled as a brutal dictator with a powerful army that **supported** him. Even though he himself became extremely rich, **mainly** through the oil that was sold, much of the population **remained** poor. Those who were against him were put into prison and often murdered.

In 1980 Saddam Hussein started a war with neighbouring Iran. The United States and many western European countries **supported** him because they thought that Iran would become too powerful in the region.

Things changed in 1990 when Saddam **invaded** another neighbouring country, Kuwait, because he wanted control of the small country’s oilfields . During the war that followed the United States and its **allies drove** the dictator’s soldiers **out** of Kuwait but Hussein himself stayed in power in Baghdad.

When the Iraq War started in 2003 the Americans and other countries were **determined** to **remove** Saddam Hussein from power. During the invasion he **managed to** escape but a few months later US soldiers found him in a small village near his home town.

In October 2004 Saddam Hussein was put on **trial** for murder, **charged** with the killing of 148 people in 1988. In 2006 he was found **guilty** and **sentenced** to death. Iraq's dictator was **executed** by hanging on December 30, 2006.

- **9/11** = the short phrase that is used for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America
- **agree** = to say yes to something
- **agreement** = when two people or countries decide or promise to do something
- **ally** = a country that helps another country fight in a war
- **alongside** = together with
- **attack** = strike
- **biological weapon** = viruses or other bacteria that can kill soldiers in a war
- **celebrate** = to be happy about something
- **close** = near
- **deadline** = a time by which you have to do something
- **declare** = to say officially
- **demand** = to ask for something because you have the right to do it
- **desperately** = very much
- **destroy** = to damage something so that it no longer exists
- **force** = to make someone do something
- **gain** = get, reach
- **ground troops** = soldiers that fight on the ground and not at sea or in the air
- **including** = as well as, together with
- **in the course of** = as time went on
- **law and order** = a situation in which everything in a country is under control and there is no crime
- **obey** = to do what someone tells you to do or to follow a law
- **palace** = the official home of a very famous person, or of a president, king or queen
- **power** = control, strength
- **refuse** = to say no
- **repeatedly** = over and over again
- **responsible** = to blame for
- **restore** = bring back
- **support** = here: to be for something
- **suspicious** = to think that someone might do something that is wrong or illegal
- **take control of** = take over government
- **target** = an object, person or place that you chose for an attack
- **temporary** = only for a short time
- **threaten** = warn, make threats
- **weapons inspector** = a scientist who is sent into a country to check if it has special weapons that are forbidden
- **weapons of mass destruction** = chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, which are very powerful and can kill many people and destroy large areas

THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

On August 2, 1990 Iraqi forces **took control** of its tiny southern neighbour Kuwait, a country with a lot of oil that Iraq **desperately** wanted. After the United Nations had **repeatedly demanded** that Iraq's army get out of Kuwait, a group of countries, led by the United States, **attacked** Iraq. Many Arab states, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia fought **alongside** the Americans because they were afraid the dictator would take control of the whole region.

A month later the war was over. Saddam Hussein and his army lost and were **forced** out of Kuwait. **In the course of** the war most of Baghdad was destroyed by bombs.

IRAQ WAR

After the Gulf War of 1991 Iraq **agreed** to **destroy** all **biological** and **chemical weapons** that it had, as well as the buildings in which they were produced. Some experts even thought that Iraq was **close** to making a nuclear bomb.

During the 1990s Iraq did not fully **obey** this **agreement**. In 1998 the government **refused** to allow international **weapons inspectors** into the country to check out the situation.

After the **9/11** attacks on America, US President George Bush grew even more **suspicious** of Iraq because he thought that there was a link between Iraq and Al Qaeda, the group **responsible** for the attacks.

After the US had **threatened** to attack Iraq Bush set a 48-hour **deadline** for Saddam Hussein and his sons to leave the country.

On March 20, 2003, the United States, Great Britain and other states started **attacks** by bombing **targets** in Baghdad. **Ground troops** entered the country from the south and marched towards Baghdad.

In early April the **allied soldiers** **gained** control of the capital's airport and days later **took over** the presidential **palace** and other government buildings. Saddam Hussein managed to escape and the Americans **declared** that he was no longer in **power**.

Not everyone **supported** the Americans in this war. Many European nations, **including** France and Germany, as well as the superpowers Russia and China, thought that the Americans were wrong. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world protested against the war.

After the war, the Americans stayed in Iraq, tried to **restore law and order** and set up a **temporary** government. They also started looking for **weapons of mass destruction**, but, up to today, haven't found any.

Many Iraqis **celebrated** the fall of Saddam Hussein's government. At last they were free in their own country, but they also thought the Americans should get out and leave them alone.



Ground troops attacked Iraq from the south

WORDS

- **ally** = a country that helps another country fight in a war
- **civilian** = anyone who does not belong to the army , navy , air force etc..
- **choose** =elect
- **decade** = ten years
- **election** =when people vote to choose someone for a high position
- **especially**=above all, more than ever
- **even though** =while
- **foreign** = from another country
- **in control** = to have the power
- **high-ranking** = to have a high position in a government or another organisation
- **kidnap** = to take someone somewhere and demand money in order to release him/her
- **official** =someone who has a high position in a state or organization
- **police force** = the police organization of a country or area
- **politician** =someone who works in politics or who is a member of parliament or the government
- **pull out** = get out, leave a place
- **soldier** = a member of a country's army who is trained to fight
- **support** = help
- **target** = an object ,person or place that you chose for an attack
- **troops** = soldiers
- **undecided** = not to know what to do, to be unsure
- **withdraw** = to move back

IRAQ TODAY

The situation in Iraq today is very unclear. Thousands of **foreign troops** are still in the country, most of them Americans. **Even though** the war officially ended in May 2003 fighting is still going on, **especially** between Sunni Arabs, who ruled the country for a long time and Shia Arabs, who are **in control** now and also **supported** by the USA.

Over the past years a few thousand American and British **soldiers** have died in daily attacks. Buildings and other **targets** have been bombed by Sunni and terrorist groups, that want the Americans to leave. **High ranking** government **officials** have been killed and hundreds of Iraqi and **foreign civilians** have been **kidnapped**.

In 2005 the Iraqi people were allowed to **choose** their own leaders in the first free **election** in **decades**. Americans have been training Iraqis and showing them how to build up their own **police force** and army. They have also tried to keep the country safe.

For a long time the United States was **undecided** on what to do next in Iraq. Many **politicians** in the USA said that it should **pull** its soldiers **out** of Iraq. In June 2009, only months after Barack Obama became president , American soldiers **withdrew** from Iraq's towns and cities. President Obama has promised to bring home all US soldiers by 2011.



Bombers on their way to targets in Baghdad



Statue of Saddam Hussein is pulled down as allied soldiers take control of the Iraqi capital