



FACT SHEET: DESERT STORM FIRSTS

DESERT STORM WAS THE FIRST MAJOR WAR IN A GENERATION FOR THE U.S. MILITARY. THE GULF WAR DEMONSTRATED A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT FIRSTS

First combat test of a new generation of precision weapons systems.

- Laser-guided bombs proved highly effective.
 - CNA calculated a 60% hit rate for laser-guided bombs against bridges.
 - But for unguided bombs, fewer than 1 in 14 hit bridge targets.
- Tomahawk cruise missiles had never before been used in combat.
 - CNA calculated that in the first two sorties of Tomahawks, 80% and 90% hit their targets.
 - Tomahawks became less effective as Iraq apparently began shooting them. By the third sortie, fewer than 50% reached their target.

First combat test of the Maritime Prepositioning Force.

- The 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade deployed in record time. In just 12 days, 15,000 Marines met up with tanks, helicopters and artillery offloaded from prepositioned ships and were ready for combat.
- By contrast, Marines who traveled in traditional amphibious ships took five weeks to arrive.
- CNA, assigned to analyze the offloads, identified bottlenecks that speeded up later offloads. A total of 13 prepositioned ships supplied the Marine Corps.

First combat test of the all-volunteer force since the end of the draft.

- The effectiveness of enlisted forces finally laid to rest calls to reinstate the draft.

First war to test the Total Force Concept.

- Reserve forces essential to making up a full combat force.
- Active Duty units filled most combat missions.
- Reserve units successfully filled essential rear-echelon missions such as logistics, engineering and medicine.

First conflict in history to make comprehensive use of space-based systems.

- Global Positioning System (GPS)
- Satellite communications

First war fought under joint, unified combatant commands created by Goldwater-Nichols Act.

- “The first, and most important, lesson of the Gulf War is that distinct military forces can learn to work together. The second lesson must be that all the services have much yet to learn about ‘jointness.’” Peter Perla, CNA, *Desert Storm Reconstruction Report Vol. I.*
- For example, air strikes were centrally planned by the Joint Air Component Commander, but no common communications system existed between the Air Force and Navy for transmitting air task orders. Hundreds of pages were printed out and delivered to ships daily by “Desert Duck” helicopters considerable creativity and expertise of individuals in the US military.