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NBC's Tom Brokaw looks back at the Persian Gulf War as Operation Desert Shield becomes Desert Storm and America uses its high-tech advantages to take on Saddam Hussein's forces.

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**APA**


**CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**


**Transcript**

Operation Desert Storm

TOM BROKAW, anchor:

It began early on the morning of January 17th. The opening shots were fired by the USS Wisconsin, Tomahawk Cruise missiles, the first ever-used in wartime. The target, Baghdad, the heart of Iraq, less than 19 hours before, the deadline for Iraq to get out of Kuwait passed, and now the skies over Baghdad were lit up like Roman candles. NBC News correspondent Tom Aspell was there.

TOM ASPELL reporting:

Tom, here it goes, here it goes now. The sky’s just full of tracers, full of tracers now…oh, and there’s a very big explosion right off to the west of the city there. Wow, what a sight, what a sight. A lot of slack going up in the air, all these tracers crossing, lights blinking.

BROKAW: From secret bases throughout the Middle East, allied fighters and bombers prepared to take off. Suddenly, Desert Shield was Desert Storm. American forces had high tech advantages, but Saddam still had one ace up his sleeve. It soon became a household word: the SCUD. Israel was the first target as Saddam had threatened. He wanted to bring Israel into the war. The next target, Saudi Arabia, in the skies over Dhahran, the Scuds would come in, the patriots would intercept them, and they missed only once. The bombing continued on a massive scale. Allied planes would fly 110,000 combat missions before the war ended. The flyers’ job was to cut Saddam’s fighting strength in half. Five weeks after the air war began, that goal was near. The airmen had done their job, they had softened up the enemy, and while their overall mission was not finished, they knew now it was someone else’s turn. February 21st, the ground war was just 48 hours away; hope was fading for a last minute peace. At 4:00 a.m. Sunday, the waiting ended. The earth berms, huge dirt barriers had been cut open and now allied troops surged through. The attack moves forward across a 200-mile front. Two Marine divisions and the Army’s Tiger Brigade punch straight north, flanked by the Saudis and the Egyptians, the Army’s 7th and 8th corps with the French and British units charge north and then east from the positions they had reached. As the armored columns advanced through the night, the air war continued, this time almost at ground level, as they called in the Apache helicopter gun ships.
Although the ground war will go on for several days, the outcome already is clear. In the last hours of the war, and even after the ceasefire, Iraq’s republican guards tried to escape north, but it was impossible. Most of them were cut off. Everywhere across the battlefield, enemy soldiers surrendered. Looking back, it was a one sided war, a rout, but we had been led to believe that we faced a formidable enemy. In the end 140 Americans gave their lives in Operation Desert Storm. Some military sources say as many as 100,000 Iraqi’s were lost. How ironic, just as the threat of nuclear war seemed to pass into history, America and the world faced the threat of a dictator who seemed so out of place at the end of the 20th century. Saddam Hussein taught us that the world is not so civilized as we may have hoped, and we have learned in the Persian Gulf, war may still be necessary to right the wrongs that men and nations inflict upon themselves and on others. I’m Tom Brokaw, NBC News.