

[Print This Article](#) [Print this article](#)[Close This Window](#)

US Exaggerates Relative Size of Iraq Alliance

Thu March 20, 2003 04:16 PM ET

By Jonathan Wright

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. leaders say they are proud of the alliance they have assembled against Iraq, even in comparison with the broad alliance the United States assembled for the war to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in 1991.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told a news conference on Thursday: "The coalition in this activity is larger than the coalition that existed during the Gulf War in 1991."

But the facts put out by the administration itself suggest otherwise.

In 1991 at least 33 countries sent forces to the campaign against Iraq and 16 of those provided combat ground forces, including a large number of Arab countries.

In 2003 the only fighting forces are from the United States, Britain and Australia. Ten other countries are known to have offered small numbers of noncombat forces, mostly either medical teams and specialists in decontamination, making a comparable alliance of about 13 countries.

U.S. officials have named 33 countries which support the U.S. invasion of Iraq but this includes countries which are providing overflight and basing rights and which are giving only diplomatic or political support for the invasion.

President Bush said on Wednesday that 35 countries have chosen to "share the honor" of supporting the campaign but U.S. officials could not name more than the 33.

They say some 15 other countries are cooperating with the U.S. war effort behind the scene, mostly by giving access to bases and airspace, but they do not want to be named.

In 1991 the United States and its allies did not count countries which provided overflight rights or political support because the campaign had the overwhelming support of the U.N. Security Council, which had voted 12-2 for the use of force.

LIMITED ARAB INVOLVEMENT

A small group of Arab countries -- including Jordan, Yemen, Sudan, Tunisia and Algeria -- opposed the campaign to drive Iraqis forces out of Kuwait but in the rest of the world there was overwhelming support for the military effort.

This time the United States failed to obtain U.N. Security Council authorization for the use of force. It gave up its efforts when it became clear that it could not win.

One of the biggest difference is that none of the declared members of the 2003 alliance are Arab countries, although some may be on the list of governments who prefer to act in secret, and several, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, are allowing their facilities to be used.

In 1991, all six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as Egypt, Syria and Morocco, took

In 1991 all six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as Egypt, Syria and Morocco, took part in the fighting.

Other significant absentees in 2003 are the French, who contributed 16,000 troops in 1991 but led the diplomatic drive this year to prevent a U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Canadians, who sent three warships last time, and the Pakistanis.

The United States has won some new allies among the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Some of these are countries Rumsfeld referred to as "new Europe" in contrast to the European anti-war group led by France and Germany.

These new allies are Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Uzbekistan -- almost one half of the total alliance membership.

"It's no accident that many members of this coalition recently escaped from tyranny and oppression and they understand what is at stake in bringing freedom and liberation to the Iraqi people," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer told a briefing on Thursday.

The largest contribution from any one of these countries is the 200 noncombat troops sent by Poland.

Fleischer said the governments supporting the United States represented some 1.18 billion people. That would be about one sixth of the total world population.

He said the countries have a combined GDP of approximately \$21.7 trillion. That is more than half of the world total of about \$40 trillion, because the alliance contains the two biggest economies in the world -- the United States and Japan, as well as Group of Eight members Britain and Italy.

© Copyright Reuters 2002. All rights reserved. Any copying, re-publication or re-distribution of Reuters content or of any content used on this site, including by framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without prior written consent of Reuters.

Quotes and other data are provided for your personal information only, and are not intended for trading purposes. Reuters, the members of its Group and its data providers shall not be liable for any errors or delays in the quotes or other data, or for any actions taken in reliance thereon.

© Reuters 2002. All rights reserved. Republication or redistribution of Reuters content, including by caching, framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Reuters. Reuters and the Reuters sphere logo are registered trademarks and trademarks of the Reuters group of companies around the world.



[Close This Window](#)