

# World's real hot spot

Last month I asked a senior official of Pakistani intelligence if he expected a surprise attack from India.

"In this day and age," he observed, "a nation just can't invade another without creating provocations and launching a propaganda campaign to justify the attack. The world wouldn't stand for it."

This is, however, precisely what Saddam Hussein did in Kuwait. His men just marched in and grabbed the rich U.S. protectorate. And the world, much to Saddam Hussein's surprise, certainly didn't stand for it.

As a vague afterthought, Iraq put out a feeble tale about some sort of "popular uprising" that no one believed. The Iraqi army was only in Kuwait for a short stay, promised Baghdad. Two days later, Saddam announced that Kuwait was being annexed by "brotherly Iraq."

Which goes to show, as this column has often noted, that most Arab leaders don't have the remotest grasp of western public relations. If you're going to invade Kuwait, for example, it's absolutely mandatory to do the following:

1) Create a "Popular Front for the Liberation of Kuwait." This group, based in Baghdad, tells the world about how the Kuwaiti royal family plundered the nation's vast oil wealth and either stuffed it away in Swiss banks or threw it away on the red at Monte Carlo.

2) Once the world was disgusted with Kuwaiti profligacy, Iraqis disguised as Kuwaitis would sneak into the sheikdom, seize the local TV station and announced the overthrow of the feudal regime. A prepaid crowd would appear and wave banners for foreign TV teams, saying "Long live free Kuwait" and "Union with Iraq!"

3) From a suite at the local Hilton, the new revolutionary government would call for "fraternal intervention" from Iraq to prevent a counter-revolution by Saudi agents. Then Iraq could move in.

That's how you mount a coup in the big leagues.

India is very definitely a world-class player in such power games, which brings me to the mounting tension in Kashmir. I know people don't like having to deal with two major crises at the same

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time, but, as I reported from Kashmir last month, war there seems increasingly likely. A war, let us note, that could be far bloodier and more dangerous than anything that happens in the Gulf.

As the Muslim rebellion in the Indian-held portion of Kashmir grows, India has increasingly resorted to wide-scale jailings, collective punishment and indiscriminate shootings. More than 2,000 Muslim Kashmiris have been killed this year.

At the same time, India has been voicing loud threats to invade Pakistan and "teach it a lesson" once and for all. Many Indian leaders have convinced themselves that the bitter uprisings by Sikhs in Punjab and Muslims in Kashmir are entirely due to Pakistani intrigues. They are urging that India's mighty armed forces be unleashed against Pakistan.

If war does come, it will likely be within the next six or eight weeks when cool, dry fall weather provides ideal combat conditions in both the sandy deserts along the Indo-Pakistani border and in mountainous Kashmir.

Pakistani military and intelligence experts believe that India will steadily increase pressure on Pakistan by provoking a series of border clashes along the tense Kashmir cease-fire line. After some heavy fighting, and barrages of propaganda about Pakistani "aggression," India could then launch a major attack into Pakistani Kashmir, thus provoking a general war.

This process seems to have begun. When I was up on the Kashmiri ceasefire line around Chikoti, there was already small arms fire being traded daily between Pakistani and Indian troops. In the last week, serious fighting has erupted in the same region, first at Kel on Monday and yesterday at Kupwara. Indian troops, armor and artillery are being rushed to the border, particularly into the Punch region where the two old foes fought bitterly in two previous wars for Kashmir.

What makes these border clashes particularly disturbing is that for the first time this year, both sides reportedly used mortars and artillery. Until this week, the unwritten rules of combat limited shooting to small arms. The introduction of heavy weapons and artillery is an important escalation and one that promises, if repeated, to widen the fighting. Should this happen, India and Pakistan could quickly find themselves in a major war, one that might threaten the very survival of Pakistan.

While everyone worries about wicked Saddam Hussein and his much-overrated arsenal of chemical weapons, close to one million Indian and Pakistani troops are squaring off for a very big and very ugly war. Both sides have ample stockpiles of nuclear weapons and the will to use them. This is a prospect that could make the Gulf crisis look like a tempest in an oil can.

## Punch



"It has a delicate, almost non-existent flavor."