

Saddam Hussein was the ruthless dictator of Iraq from 1979 until 2003.

April 28, 1937 -- December 30, 2006



Overview of Saddam Hussein:

Saddam, which means "he who confronts," was born in a village called al-Auja, outside of Tikrit in northern Iraq. Either just before or just after his birth, his father disappeared from his life. Some accounts say that his father was killed; others say he abandoned his family. Saddam's mother soon remarried a man who was illiterate, immoral, and brutal. Saddam hated living with his stepfather and as soon as his uncle Khairullah Tulfah (his mother's brother) was released from prison in 1947, Saddam insisted that he go and live with his uncle. Saddam didn't start primary school until he moved in with his uncle at age 10. At age 18, Saddam graduated from primary school and applied to military school. Joining the military had been Saddam's dream and when he wasn't able to pass the entrance exam he was devastated. (Though Saddam was never in the military, he frequently wore military-style outfits later in life.) Saddam then moved to Baghdad and started high school, but he found school boring and enjoyed politics more.

Saddam's uncle, an ardent Arab nationalist, introduced him to the world of politics. Iraq, which had been a British colony from the end of World War I until 1932, was bubbling with internal power struggles. One of the groups vying for power was the Baath Party, to which Saddam's uncle was a member.

In 1957, at age 20, Saddam joined the Baath Party. He started out as a low-ranking member of the Party responsible for leading his schoolmates in rioting. However, in 1959, he was chosen to be a member of an assassination squad. On October 7, 1959, Saddam and others attempted, but failed, to assassinate the prime minister. Wanted by the Iraqi government, Saddam was forced to flee. He lived in exile in Syria for three months and then moved to Egypt where he lived for three years.

In 1963, the Baath Party successfully overthrew the government and took power which allowed Saddam to return to Iraq from exile. While home, he married his cousin, Sajida Tulfah. However, the Baath Party was overthrown after only nine months in power and Saddam was arrested in 1964 after another coup attempt. He spent 18 months in prison, where he was tortured, before he escaped in July 1966. During the next two years Saddam became an important leader within the Baath Party. In July 1968, when the Baath Party again gained power, Saddam was made vice-president.

Over the next decade, Saddam became increasingly powerful. On July 16, 1979, the president of Iraq resigned and Saddam officially took the position.

Important Events:

- April 28, 1937 - Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti is born in a village near Tikrit, north of Baghdad.
- 1957 - Joins underground Baath Socialist Party.
- 1958 - Arrested for killing his brother-in-law, a Communist. Spends six months in prison. (The Baath and the Communist Party were rivals).
- Oct. 7, 1959 - Saddam was part of a Baath Party assassination team that ambushed Iraqi dictator Gen. Abdel-Karim Kassem in Baghdad, wounding him. Saddam, wounded in leg, fled to Syria and then to Egypt.
- Feb. 8, 1963 - Returns after Baath takes part in coup that overthrows and kills Kassem.
- July 30, 1968 - Becomes chief of internal security under President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, his cousin.
- July 16, 1979 - Takes over as president from al-Bakr, and launched a major purge of Baath members, ordering nearly two dozen executed.
- Sept. 22, 1980 - Sends troops into Iran; war lasts eight years.
- March 28, 1988 - Uses chemical weapons against Kurdish town of Halabja, killing estimated 5,000 civilians.
- Aug. 2, 1990 - Invades Kuwait, but sees his army driven out by U.S.-led coalition five months later.
- Feb. 20, 1996 - Orders killing of his two sons-in-law who had defected to Jordan but who foolishly returned to Baghdad after receiving guarantees of safety.
- Nov. 27, 2002 - Under U.N. threat of "serious consequences," allows U.N. weapons experts back into the country.
- March 17, 2003 - Gets 48-hour deadline from President George W. Bush to surrender political power in Iraq and to go into exile. The Invasion of Iraq began three days later.

- July 22, 2003 - Saddam's sons, Qusai and Odai, are killed in a gunbattle with American soldiers in northern Iraq.
- Dec. 13, 2003 - Saddam is captured while hiding in hole in ground near his birthplace of Tikrit.
- July 1, 2004 - Arraigned before judge, rejects charges of war crimes and genocide.
- Oct. 19, 2005 - Saddam goes on trial with seven co-defendants and is charged in 1982 killings of 148 Shiite Muslims. The executions of the Shiites came after an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate him in Dujail.
- March 1, 2006 - Admits ordering trial of 148 Shiites eventually executed, but insists doing so was legal.
- April 4, 2006 - Faces new criminal charges, for second trial with six others, in connection with brutal 1987-1988 crackdown on Kurds in northern Iraq.
- June 19, 2006 - Hears prosecution demand death penalty in closing arguments at Dujail trial, saying he showed "no mercy" in the killings of women and children.
- Nov. 5, 2006 - Saddam remained defiant as the tribunal in the first trial announced a guilty verdict and sentences him to hang.
- Dec. 26, 2006 - Iraq's highest court rejects appeal of conviction, saying Saddam must be hanged within 30 days.
- Dec. 30, 2006 - Saddam is executed by hanging at the age of 69.

1. Explain Saddam's childhood in two sentences:

2. What happened on March 28, 1988?

3. Who did Saddam order the killing of on February 20, 1996?

4. What country did he send troops into that started an eight year war?

5. What country did he invade, but was eventually driven out by the U.S. forces?

6. Where was Saddam Hussein found hiding?

7. What was Saddam charged with, but rejected in 2004?

8. Was Saddam found guilty or innocent? What was his sentence?

9. When did he die?
