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'4000 ARABS ARRIVE TO CARRY OUT SUICIDE ATTACKS'

# Coalition forces keep up assault on Baghdad

**BAGHDAD, MARCH 30.** Massive explosions rocked Baghdad again this afternoon as U.S. and British warplanes kept up their air assault on the Iraqi capital and its surroundings. U.S. armoured units massed south of Baghdad were finalising plans for a decisive thrust towards the capital within a week.

In Kuwait, a man in civilian clothes drove a pickup truck into a group of soldiers standing outside a store at the desert base of Camp Udairi today, injuring six, even as an official in southern Iraq said 4,000 Arab volunteers had arrived in Iraq, eager to carry out suicide attacks against the U.S. and British forces.

British officers in southern Iraq said a general from the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's army had been captured and was being pressed to provide strategic information.

An extremely loud series of blasts was heard coming from the southern edge of Baghdad and the roar of the numerous warplanes could be heard from the ground. Iraqi anti-aircraft gunners did not open fire.

The coalition says that in addition to the Information Ministry, communications and phone centres, paramilitary training grounds and other key regime sites in Baghdad, it has been bombing Republican Guard formations outside the city.

The 20,000-strong Third Infantry Division, the heavy armoured force spearheading the invasion, has concentrated near the Euphrates valley town of Najaf, 150 km south of Baghdad, where many of its troops have been waiting for a week. "We are finalising plans for a continued move towards Baghdad," Major John Altman, intelligence officer for the division's First Brigade, said adding that he expected it to begin "within a week". Maj. Altman declined to go into the specifics of the plan, such as the routes the U.S. troops would take.

But coalition warplanes were already softening up Iraqi positions in preparation for the long-awaited offensive even as ground forces tightened up security procedures after a suicide bombing against U.S. troops on



Iraqis carry an injured employee from the al-Salhiya telecommunications centre after it was hit by a missile during a coalition air raid on Baghdad on Sunday. The raid took place as journalists were on a tour organised by the Information Ministry. — AFP

Saturday, he said.

## 'Beginning of jihad'

The Iraqi Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, contended at a briefing on Sunday that several Iraqi civilians had been shot dead in their cars by coalition soldiers to wreak vengeance for the suicide attack.

Lt. Gen. Hazem al-Rawi, a senior Iraqi defence official, said the suicide attack marked "the beginning of a long path of jihad for Iraqis and Arabs against the invaders."

Iraq's state television reported that the Najaf suicide bomber — identified as Ali Jaafar al-Noamani, a non-commissioned officer having several children — was posthumously promoted as colonel and awarded two medals by Mr. Hussein. His family was reportedly awarded the equivalent of \$34,000.

Iraq's Vice-President, Taha Yassin Ramadan, indicated that the attack was part of a coordinated effort to thwart the invasion force and he raised the spectre of terrorism on U.S. or

British soil. "The day will come when a single martyrdom operation will kill 5,000 enemies," Mr. Ramadan said. "We will use any means to kill our enemy in our land and we will follow the enemy into its land. This is just the beginning."

Residents in Basra, Iraq's second largest city, said Mr. Hussein's grip remained as tight as ever over a week into a virtual siege there by U.S. and British troops. "Nothing has really changed in Basra. The Government is in full control. They still completely rule," said Abu Jawad, standing near British tanks at a checkpoint outside the southern city. "People see this as an occupation. If the Government gives us weapons, we will fight the Americans and the British," he said.

Basra, home to around 1.5 million people, has been bombed by fighter planes and come under shell fire since the U.S. and British troops invaded Iraq 11 days ago to topple Mr. Hussein.

The attacks appear only to be enraging civilians, who are rallying around the Iraqi President

even though they live in fear of his secret police.

Western tanks today controlled roads around the city but had not penetrated the centre where, residents say, life goes on as normal under the firm rule of Saddam loyalists.

According to the inhabitants, police are deployed throughout the urban area and traffic police keep cars flowing as clouds of smoke drift over the city, shells explode and gunfire crackles. Even some restaurants remain open, serving fish and lamb in this city overlooking the green water flowing from the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The ruling Baath party headquarters has been shelled but Mr. Hussein's supporters have resumed their activities in other buildings. — AFP, Reuters, AP

More reports on  
Pages 12, 14

003



Iraqis search for their belongings in a house hit by a coalition air strike in Baghdad's al-Azaamiyeh neighbourhood on Sunday. — AFP

IRAQ CAMPAIGN / 'PROGRESS REMARKABLE'

## Strategy on track, no supply shortage: Franks

By Atul Aneja

**AS SAYLIYAH (QATAR), MARCH 30.** In a robust defence in the face of mounting criticism, the U.S. Central Command Chief, Tommy Franks, has said that the coalition war plan in Iraq was fully on track and his frontline troops were not short of supplies.

At a press briefing, Gen. Franks said that there was no change in the military plan.

The plan had the flexibility to fine-tune tactics, without losing focus on seeking the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and unseating the regime of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

The progress of the war blueprint so far was not only 'acceptable', but 'remarkable', he said. But Gen. Franks was non-committal when asked whether the war could extend into the summer. "I simply do not know."

The General addressed the growing criticism in the U.S. media about the conduct of the campaign. Contrary to media reports, he said the military

planners had not erred in judging the size of the force. He denied that there was a sudden surge in troop demand from his side in the light of the stiff skirmishes with the Iraqi forces recently. On the contrary, the induction of additional troops in the battle zone as was envisaged in the coming days was the result of the unfolding military plan.

This troop build-up would continue until the Central Command made a decision that no more troops were required, Gen. Franks said.

Asked to comment on a forthcoming article in the *New Yorker* which blames the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, for imposing his judgment on the military command in the war-planning process, Gen. Franks said that the military plan that had been devised was the result of a collective effort and was unique.

"Those who seek to drive a wedge among us may not be able to succeed." Visible indications that the Iraqis were beginning to torch the oil fields in Southern Iraq had triggered the

coalition's decision to launch the military campaign immediately, he said.

The U.S. commander pointed out that in making that decision, he had been influenced by the difficulties that had been encountered in capping the oil fires lit by Mr. Hussein's forces in Kuwait during the first Persian Gulf War in 1991.

The unscathed capture of the Southern Iraqi oil fields, he stressed, has been one of the major achievements of the ongoing war. A "very capable" force was also being deployed in northern Iraq, not far from the oil fields of Mosul and Kirkuk. Besides, a 'massive' terrorist training camp had been busted in northern Iraq, he said.

The U.S. forces were addressing the threat posed by Iraqi irregular forces that had entrenched in the centre of key Iraqi cities such as Najaf and Nasiriyah, Gen. Franks said.

The Iraqi response to the U.S. military pressure had been increasingly acquiring 'terroristic' overtones as witnessed in the suicide bomb attack in Najaf on Saturday.

WAM  
Dagran  
SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS 4 U.S. SOLDIERS

# U.S.-led forces gearing for all-out assault on Baghdad

**BAGHDAD, MARCH 29.** Wailing and sobbing, black-clad mourners gathered on Saturday for a funeral procession amid the wreckage of a Baghdad marketplace where Iraqi officials say dozens of civilians died in a coalition bombing. Elsewhere, the Iraqi Information Ministry building was damaged but not destroyed in a pre-dawn U.S. missile attack.

A suicide bomber in a taxi killed four American soldiers at a checkpoint in south-central Iraq. American troops in the region pushed north to battle Iraqi paramilitary forces who have been hampering their advance to Baghdad, while other units paused for fuel supplies as they prepared for an all-out assault on the Iraqi capital.

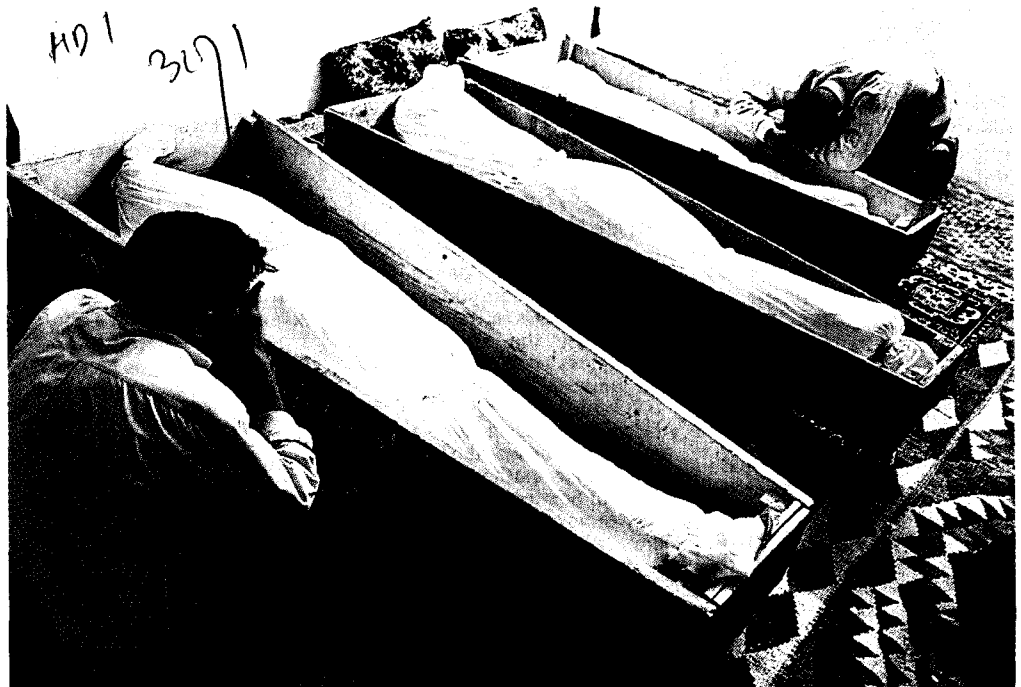
In Basra, Iraq's besieged second-largest city where British troops have encountered heavy resistance, U.S. warplanes fired laser-guided missiles and destroyed a building where some 200 Iraqi paramilitary fighters were believed to be meeting on Friday evening.

A British soldier was killed after armoured vehicles came under attack in a possible "friendly fire" incident in southern Iraq, defence officials today said in London. Five other soldiers were injured.

Authorities in Kuwait said Iraq fired a missile of its own that damaged a popular shopping mall and injured two persons in Kuwait City.

Planes were screaming over the capital, Baghdad, drawing anti-aircraft fire, and the blazes started by authorities to conceal targets seemed to be burning furiously, sending darker-than-usual clouds over the city on an otherwise clear day. Despite the fires and intermittent explosions, Saturday saw the heaviest traffic on the streets of Baghdad since the war broke out. Many shops were open in the commercial districts and thousands of residents were on the streets.

At the Al-Nasr market in the working-class district of al-Shoala, crowds of mourners wailed amid bloodstains and piles of wreckage. Blood-soaked children's slippers sat on the street not far from a crater blasted into the ground. At the scene of the Friday bombing, women were sobbing outside homes



Members of a family grieving for their kin killed when a bomb landed in a busy market in Baghdad's al-Shoala district on Friday. — AP

where some of the victims lived. Men cried and hugged each other as a funeral procession passed through the market.

Witnesses said the bombing occurred around 6 p.m. when the market was at its busiest. They said they saw an aircraft flying high overhead just before the blast. "Why do they make mistakes like these if they have the technology?" asked Abdel-Hadi Adai, who said he lost his 27-year-old brother-in-law. "There are no military installations anywhere near here."

The U.S. Central Command in Qatar, which has denied that

coalition forces target civilian neighbourhoods, said it was looking into the incident.

The Iraqi Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed Sakhaf, told reporters that 68 people were killed and 107 wounded in Baghdad alone between Friday evening and Saturday morning. In addition, 74 people were killed and 244 wounded across the rest of the country, he said. "These are cowardly air raids," he told Lebanon's Al-Hayat LBC satellite television.

In one incident, Mr. Sakhaf said, coalition forces fired a cluster bomb at an ambulance

carrying a wounded man to hospital. The wounded man, the driver and a nurse were killed. "We thank the superpower (America) and we congratulate this hated (Tony) Blair. Now they are bombing ambulances," he said.

"We are encouraging several groups, lawyers, professors of international law in order to present a lawsuit against those war criminals."

Mr. Sakhaf rejected a new U.N. Security Council resolution adopted unanimously on Friday renewing the seven-year-old oil-for-food programme under the sole charge of the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

"Only Iraq can administer this programme," he said. "They have made a mockery of the (1995) resolution" which paved the way for the launch of the programme on which an estimated 60 per cent of Iraqis now depend for food and medicine, the Minister said.

"Any measure which does not involve the Iraqi Government cannot be implemented on the ground." — AP, AFP

More reports on Page 14

## 'More suicide attacks will follow'

**BAGHDAD, MARCH 29.** Iraq's Vice-President today threatened more suicide bombings against coalition troops, saying the suicide bomber who killed four U.S. soldiers outside Najaf was a non-commissioned army officer.

Addressing a news conference, Taha Yassin Ramadan identified the bomber as Ali Jaafar al-Noamani, a father of several children. A detailed statement on the bombing would be issued later, he said. "This is just the beginning."

Asked whether suicide bombings will now become a policy of the Iraqi military, Mr. Ramadan said: "It will be routine military policy. We will use any means to kill our enemy in our land and we will follow the enemy into its land." — AP



## WAR BRIEFS

## Ban on satellite phones

Central Iraq, March 30 (Reuters): US military commanders in Iraq have banned the use of certain satellite phones carried by journalists attached to their units, apparently fearing the signal could give away their location to Iraqi forces.

Several Reuters reporters with US forces in Iraq today said they had been told to switch their Thuraya satellite phones off. "Officers have ordered me to hand my phone in and I am giving it to one of the officers," correspondent Matthew Green said. "They say it's for security, that the Iraqis can use it to triangulate the signal and fire missiles," Green said.

Questioned on the new rules, Major Gen. Victor Renault said: "We want to make sure nothing gets out that may tip the hand of the Iraqis."

## UK soldiers

As Sayliya Camp (Qatar), (Reuters): British authorities today said two of their soldiers were sent home from Kuwait on the eve of war in Iraq, but declined to comment on a report that they could face a court martial. A military spokesman denied that the two had been flown back to Britain for refusing to fight, saying the incident took place before the 11-day-old US-led invasion of Iraq began. The *Sunday Times* said a private and an air technician from 16 Air Assault Brigade were sent home to their barracks in Colchester, southern England.

## Iraq grave

Washington (Reuters): US military forensic experts are investigating whether a shallow grave discovered at the Iraqi town of Nasiriyah contains the remains of American troops killed by Iraqi forces, officials said yesterday. "We're not sure who it is at this point," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, vice-director, operations for the military's Joint Staff, told a Pentagon briefing. He said forensic investigators and mortuary affairs personnel are probing the site in an attempt to identify the remains.

## Turkish protest

Mardin (Turkey), (Reuters): Turks hurled stones at a convoy of trucks carrying US military equipment today, the second such attack in two days, the Anatolian news agency said. Witnesses saw around 40 trucks leave an industrial site rented by US forces near the southeastern town of Mardin today, towards ports and airbases on the Mediterranean coast. The convoy was pelted with stones as it passed through the outskirts of the city of Sanliurfa. Villagers bombarded US soldiers with eggs and stones near the same city yesterday when they arrived to recover pieces of a Tomahawk cruise missile, which came down in the area on Friday.

## Pope plea

Vatican City (Reuters): Pope John Paul, making a fresh appeal for an end to the war in Iraq, today said the conflict was undermining humanity's hope for a better future. The 82-year-old Roman Catholic leader, who is firmly opposed to the conflict, asked for prayers for peace during his weekly address to pilgrims and tourists in St Peter's Square. Yesterday the pope said he hoped the human tragedy of the war would not set Christians and Muslims against each other and spark "a religious catastrophe".

## Desert sand gets in Bush eyes

## Rumsfeld at receiving end

Washington, March 30 (Reuters): US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld's influence in crafting the plan for the Iraq war is facing scrutiny as it becomes apparent the campaign will not be as quick or easy as some US leaders had predicted.

Some retired top officers are voicing in public an opinion harboured in private by some current military officers — that Rumsfeld's bold vision of a sleeker, high-tech military prompted him to take unnecessary risks in the size and nature of the force sent to topple Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Retired army Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who commanded an infantry division in the Gulf War before overseeing anti-drug policies under former President Bill Clinton, said: "At the end of the day the question arises: why would you do this operation with inadequate power? Because you don't have time to get them there? But we did. Because you don't have the forces? But we did. Because you're trying to save money on a military operation that will be \$200 billion before it's done?"

"Or is it because you have such a strong ideological view and you're so confident in your views that you disregard the vehement military advice from, particularly army generals who you don't think are very bright." Rumsfeld has clashed with some top officers, particularly in the army, during a two-year tenure as defence secretary. He has sought to reimpose strict civilian leadership over a uniformed military that some conservatives believed had run the show at the Pentagon during the Clinton administration.

The flashpoint has been his quest to bring what he calls "transformation" to the military. He has a vision of a military liberated from its Cold War past, with smaller, swifter forces,

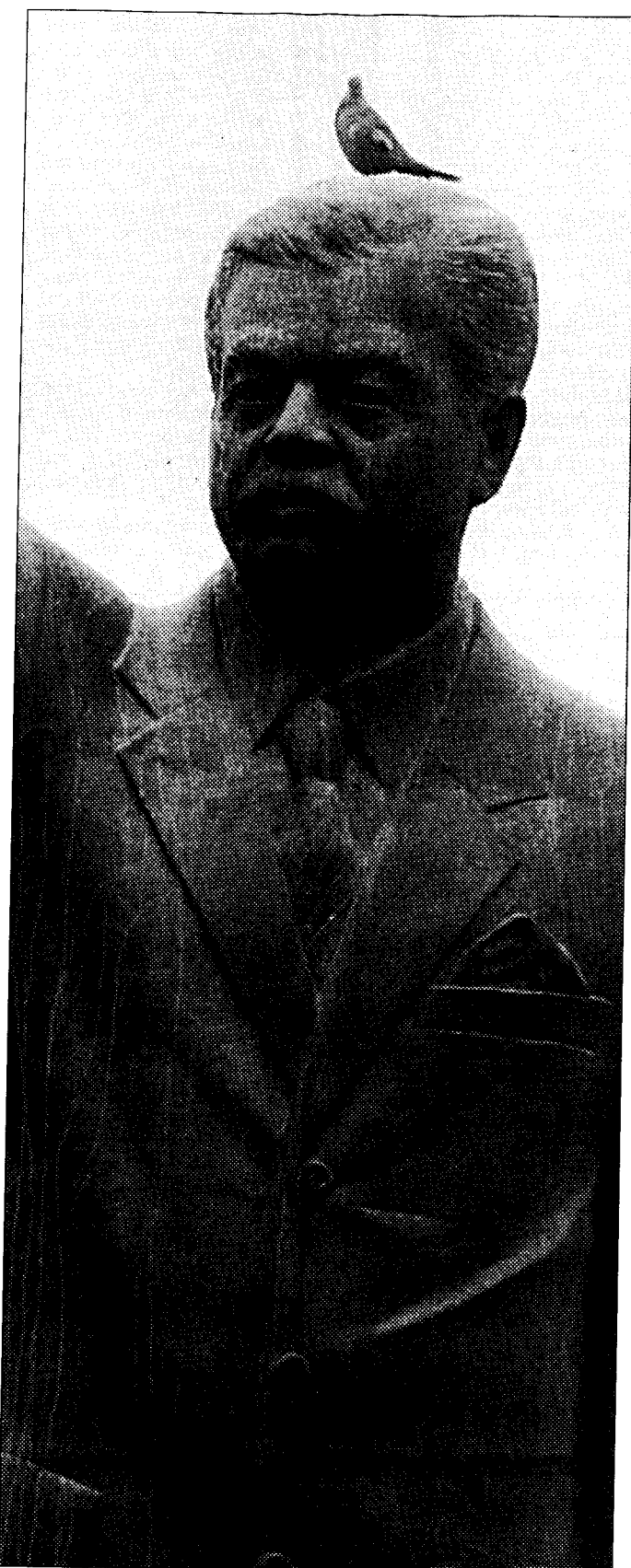
high-tech weapons, air power and special operations. In developing a war plan to use in Iraq, Rumsfeld rejected the advice of many top officers that he field a force more in line with the half-million troops used in the 1991 Gulf War. Rumsfeld favoured a much smaller force. Analysts said Rumsfeld and war commander Gen. Tommy Franks reached a middle ground, fielding a force about half the size of the 1991 one.

"Rumsfeld cut in half what the army said it needed for the war. He has the view the army is too big, too heavy, too cumbersome," analyst Lawrence Korb of the Council on Foreign Relations, who served as assistant secretary of defence in the Reagan administration, said.

Rumsfeld said this morning that he believed the war plan was an excellent one, that it was in its early phase and that his armchair critics did not know what the war plan was. He said Franks was doing a "truly outstanding job."

"He's had a lot of success," Rumsfeld said, noting that the US-led coalition had captured southern oil fields and a port and that there had been no massive humanitarian crisis or droves of refugees. He said many of his critics had expected the kind of air war that led off the Gulf War but after months of diplomacy and a last 48-hour ultimatum for Saddam, the decision was to go for tactical surprise by starting the ground war first.

Rumsfeld said the war plan had the backing of all members of the joint chiefs of staff and the White House. He said although some 300,000 US and British troops were now in the region compared with 500,000 troops sent to the 1991 Gulf war, many of the earlier force were not used and the Iraqi army was "35 to 40 per cent as capable as it was back in 1991."



A pigeon sits on a statue of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's al-Fardous square. (AFP)

R.W. APPLE JR.

Washington, March 30: Though the scion of a family steeped in politics and public service, George W. Bush remains a young president who came to the White House with relatively limited knowledge of the world and its ills. Yet for two years he has ridden high in public esteem, thanks to confident leadership after September 11 and a surer political touch than his detractors give him credit for.

Is his luck about to turn in the winds and sands of Iraq? It is quite true, as administration officials say with metronomic regularity, that coalition forces have scored singular successes in the early days of the war, and it is too early to rule out a speedy conclusion. But there have been military surprises and diplomatic shortfalls.

With every passing day, it is more evident that the failure to obtain permission from Turkey for American troops to cross its territory and open a northern front constituted a diplomatic debacle.

With every passing day, it is more evident that the allies made two gross military misjudgements in concluding that coalition forces could safely bypass Basra and Nasiriyah and that Shias in southern Iraq would rise up against Saddam Hussein.

Already, the commander of American ground forces in the war zone has conceded that the war that they are fighting is not the one they and their officers had foreseen. "Shock and awe" neither shocked nor awed.

Other potential perils lie ahead. The war could last so long that the American public loses patience, having been conditioned by predictions from American officials (to quote one of them, Vice-President Dick Cheney) that Saddam's government would prove to be "a house of cards."

This has not happened yet; the polls indicate that nearly three of four Americans remain unshaken in their support of Bush's war policies, despite surprises on the battlefield. The White House believes that public patience, often fickle in recent years, was fortified by 9/11.

Street-by-street fighting in the rubble of Baghdad and other cities — an eventuality that American strategists have long sought to avoid — now looks more likely. Saddam's aides have promised savage resistance. If it materialises, it could produce large coalition casualties, challenging American resolve, and equally large Iraqi civilian casualties, with dire consequences for the coalition's attempt to picture itself as a liberator. A heart-rending picture of a wounded two-year-old was widely published yesterday after a Baghdad market was ripped apart by an explosion Iraqi officials attributed to a coalition bomb.

Saddam Hussein could escape, denying the war effort a definitive totem of victory. It sounds improbable, given the terrifying array of force available to the coalition, but other notorious figures remain at large despite intensive man-hunts, including the wartime Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and al-Qaida mastermind, Osama bin Laden. The hunt for weapons of mass destruction could prove futile — that would make the war look like a wild-goose chase.

Of course, all that is a worst case prognosis. As the war in Afghanistan showed, hard military sloggery can give way suddenly to victory. But will victory in Iraq take the shape the US so badly needs?

Saddam seems to have decided that he can turn this war into Vietnam Redux. Already he is seen as less of an ogre and more of a defender of Islamic honour across the Arab world.

For the moment, Bush seems secure. People like him. None of his possible Democratic opponents loom as a major threat, not so far. Still, for presidents, especially for wartime leaders, political capital can drain quickly from the White House account.

After the guns fall silent, voters' eyes turn elsewhere, often to social and economic needs. It happened to Winston Churchill late in World War II, and as this president remembers better than most, it happened to his father, too.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

## Ground pause for air blitz

Baghdad, March 30 (Reuters): US aircraft kept up relentless pressure on Iraqi positions in and around Baghdad on Sunday as American military leaders fended off growing criticism of their war plans and insisted the campaign was still on course.

Faced with much stronger than expected opposition from regular and irregular forces loyal to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, US troops dug in south of Baghdad, apparently in no rush to assault the Iraqi capital until air strikes and artillery had ground down its defenders.

Round-the-clock air strikes hammered Baghdad as the US military sought to break the elite Republican Guard units entrenched in the sprawling city's outskirts.

In Washington, the US military said it had bombed the main training site for Iraqi Fedayeen paramilitary forces in eastern Baghdad, a presidential palace, an intelligence complex and surface-to-air missile sites.

The US military said 10 to 15 troops were injured today when a truck drove into a group of soldiers just outside a US military base in Kuwait. The identity of the attacker was not immediately known but the incident followed a suicide attack inside Iraq on Saturday in which four US soldiers died.

British Royal Marine commandos captured an Iraqi general and killed another senior officer in clashes with Iraqi paramilitary units south of Basra on Sunday, a British military spokesman said.

But British troops have still not tried to capture the southern city of 1.5 million, where more than a week of fighting has disrupted food and electricity supplies and forced many civilians to flee the city.

Officially, the US has lost at least 36 dead and 103 injured with 17 listed as missing since the war began. Britain has lost 23 dead. There is no accurate account of Iraqi military or civilian casualties.

Gen. Richard Myers, head of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the campaign was going to plan, with American and British forces already in control of 40 per cent of Iraq, but he gave a clear signal that there would be no swift ground assault on the Iraqi capital. The aim before going in, he said, was to isolate the Iraqi leadership and cut it off from the rest of the country.

US commander General Tommy Franks, who is bringing an extra 1,00,000 troops to the Gulf in April, insisted there was no "operational pause" in the invasion.

But US officers and soldiers in units south of Baghdad told Reuters they had orders to dig in for at least two weeks to give air power and artillery a chance to

## After a good laugh, the joke is on America

K.P. NAVAR

Washington, March 30: If anyone thought that the golden age of political jokes ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East bloc, think again. The war in Iraq has revived them all over again.

In the early days of the US attack on Iraq, when the euphoria over America's sway over Baghdad's skies brought hopes of an early capitulation by Saddam Hussein's forces, war jokes spanned in drawing rooms and other venues of social chatter here. The most popular one came after US television networks showed pictures of Iraqi soldiers surrendering with raised hands in Safwan, close to the border with Kuwait.

"Have you heard about the

Iraqi army's new exercise programme?"

"No. What is it?"

The first American replies: "Raise your hands above your head and keep them there."

Another one is about the "shock and awe" air campaign over Baghdad, which left civilians and non-military structures intact, at least in the first few days of the war.

The joke goes: "How do Iraqis play bingo in these days of war?"

The answer: "F-16, B-52, B-1", obviously trying to guess the American planes which have dropped the latest bombs.

Foreigners or those opposed to the war may find the jokes insensitive and inappropriate, but they reflected the popular belief here in the Bush administration's propaganda that

Iraq would be a walkover with its population rising in revolt to welcome the Americans. It also reflected a childlike faith in the administration's contention that precision bombing would leave civilians untouched. Both perceptions are slowly changing in the second week of fighting.

When Scud missiles started flying in the direction of Kuwait, only to be intercepted by US Patriot missiles, there was amusement here both about the notorious inaccuracy of Scuds and the poor quality of Iraq's missile launchers. One cartoon showed a camel sitting on the sand near Iraq's border with Kuwait. Loaded on to the animal's mouth was a Scud missile.

Standing behind the camel was an Iraqi soldier with a

huge hammer about to strike the camel on its back. The caption for the cartoon read: "Scud missile launcher". With one missile hitting Kuwait yesterday, many days after the US-led forces established their supremacy over southern Iraq, the cartoonist may have second thoughts.

Much to the distaste of Americans, a rare defence of Saddam in the western hemisphere has come from Brazilian football coach Jorge Vieira. Vieira coached Iraq's national football team to qualify for their first and only World Cup finals in Mexico in 1986. Interviews with the coach are being lapped up here. In one such interview, Vieira said he and the Iraqi President first talked through an interpreter. But one day Saddam dispensed

with the interpreter and started talking to the coach in Spanish. "I asked him why he had not talked in Spanish to me from the beginning. He said he first wanted to know me... He told jokes, a lot of jokes. He is a human being like any other."

Betting on Saddam's future is big business as well. Especially on Internet wager sites. Tradesports.com, where contracts on future events are clients betted the day after the first air raids on Baghdad, favouring the chance that Saddam would not be in office by March end. At the beginning of this month, those who bought contracts on such a proposition were just 20 per cent. The idea was posted at the site in September. Since then, it has sold contracts for \$1 million.



Clowns outside the US embassy in Mexico City demanding an end to the war in Iraq. (APPTI)

## BRITISH SOLDIERS PAY FOR HEAVY-HANDED AMERICANS' SINS IN SOUTHERN IRAQ

## Vietnam habit dies hard

Umm Qasr, March 30 (Reuters): Fresh graffiti on a building in this port town in southern Iraq reads "Down with USA" — painted over the original "Down with Iraq" slogan from before the US-led invasion.

Residents here say the change, in the predominantly Shia south noted for its opposition to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, has been fuelled by US troops' rough handling of civilians which now poses problems for their British allies.

During the Vietnam war a popular response to the mantra of winning over the civilian population was "grab them by the balls, and their hearts and minds will follow". That appears to be the tactics of the forces leading the war in Iraq, except it is US forces who are attacking Iraq's underbelly and British troops being left to make friends after.

The southern Shias also remember how the US urged them in 1991 to rise up against Saddam's largely Sunni leadership only to abandon them to brutal suppression of their revolt. The suspicions are not being allayed by the attitude of many of the US troops here.

A regular complaint heard in the vast swathe of southern Iraq already under occupation is that US forces — mostly at the front of advances through the country — are rude and hostile to civilians caught up in the conflict.

"Are they fighting us or are they fighting Saddam?" asked teacher Mohammed Salik when questioned on what he thought of the US servicemen he had encountered.

US forces who took the port of Umm Qasr won

few friends among the civilian population and some British troops now charged with setting up a transitional authority complain they are having to undo damage caused by the Americans.

One British officer being given an escort by Marines to his headquarters expressed alarm when they let loose with a volley of rifle fire at a house on the outskirts of the town.

"They said they had been sniped at from there a few days ago so they like to give them a warning every now and then," he said. "That is something we would never condone," he said. "You aren't going to make any friends doing that."

A US special forces officer in Umm Qasr said it was difficult to contain the exuberance of men doing the actual fighting and sometimes they could overstep the mark. "You got to realise these guys are single-minded in their training. In the military it is look after yourself and your buddies. Full stop," he said.

That role is being left to the British forces who, in the main, are taking up positions once US troops move through. The British have generally been polite and helpful where possible. Soldiers chat amiably with civilians even though neither party has a clue what the other is saying.

"I think it is a question of training," one British officer said. "American soldiers have all the benefits of technology and unbelievable training. But British soldiers tend to have a more human approach. Perhaps it is because we are used to things like Northern Ireland where we are treated by many as an occupying army."



An Iraqi woman watches a British commando in Umm Qasr. (Reuters)



# PAUSE BEFORE PUSH

## US military planners revise strategy and delay Baghdad assault on a day Iraqi suicide bomber kills 4 soldiers

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Baghdad, March 29

HARRIED BY Iraqi fighters and hobbled by supply shortages, the US has ordered a pause of four to six days in the northward push towards Baghdad.

The "operational pause" came just hours before the Iraqis made their most dramatic attack on the allies — a suicide bomber blowing up four American soldiers at a checkpoint just north of Najaf.

American officers said the pause in the ground war meant that advances would be put on hold while the military tried to sort out logistics problems caused by long supply lines from Kuwait.

Serial ambushes by Saddam Hussein's Fidayeen militias in towns along the advance lines has made running supply convoys a problem, particularly from the southern city of An Nasiriyah northwards.

In one frontline US infantry unit, soldiers have had their rations cut to one "meal ready to eat" packet a day from the normal three until supply trucks can get through.

US officers said that use of fuel-guzzling armoured vehicles had been restricted to save diesel. Articles like batteries for radios are also limited and soldiers and Marines have been told to conserve the ones they have.

"We have almost out-run our logistics lines," an officer said at a US unit at the northernmost stretch of the advance in central Iraq.

The allies' missiles and planes would, however, continue to pound Baghdad and the Republican Guards defending the city during the pause, officers said.

In Saturday's bombing, US Tomahawk missiles damaged but failed to destroy the information ministry building in the



CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: A child, injured in air raids, recovers at a Baghdad hospital on Saturday.

Iraqi capital. In anticipation of aerial attacks, ministry workers had moved computers, printers, TVs and video-editing equipment into warehouses. But many of the satellite dishes on the roof — used by foreign TV crews — were damaged.

As the war threatened to stretch into weeks, President Bush sought to marshal the na-

tion's resolve to withstand more casualties, saying further sacrifice must be expected with the US troops "now fighting the most desperate units" of the Iraqi army.

Hours earlier, the Iraqis had launched their first suicide attack on the coalition troops. A taxi stopped close to a checkpoint manned by the US army's

1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, and the driver waved for help. Four soldiers approached the car, and it exploded.

Iraqi television crowded over the "blessed" attack and threatened more. It named the attacker — Ali Hammadi al-Namami — and said President Saddam Hussein had awarded him two posthumous medals. Iraqi Vice-

President Taha Yassin Ramadan identified the bomber as a non-commissioned Iraqi army officer and said suicide attacks will now be "routine military policy".

"We will use any means to kill our enemy in our land and we will follow the enemy into its land," Ramadan said. "This is just the beginning. You'll hear more pleasant news later."

Iraqi dissidents and Arab media have claimed that Saddam has opened a training camp for Arab volunteers willing to carry out suicide bombings against the US forces in Iraq.

Terror mastermind Osama bin Laden also urged Iraqis last month, in an audio tape aired on Arabic television, to use the tactic against the Americans.

Baghdad had another moderate success when, avoiding detection by the US defence system, an Iraqi missile for the first time hit Kuwait, damaged a seaside shopping mall and injured two persons.

The only place where the Iraqis didn't seem to be fighting back was northern Iraq, where US forces and Kurdish fighters have opened a new front and continued to advance southwards.

The allies claimed that their warplanes, firing laser-guided missiles, had destroyed a two-storey building in Basra where some 200 Iraqi paramilitary fighters were believed to be meeting. But the US Central Command in Qatar had no information on what happened to the building's occupants after the attack.

Iraqi state television on Saturday again showed pictures of Saddam Hussein, chairing a meeting of his ministers and senior aides. The television announcer said the footage was shot on Saturday.

Full coverage on Pages 14 & 15

# Will the Iraq war kill globalisation?

The test of whether multilateral co-operation can be put back on track, and reconciled with America's war against terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, may come with Iraq's reconstruction, says **Brigitte Granville**



THE UN AND NATO are widely perceived as damaged, if not broken, by their failure to agree on what to do about Iraq. Will these cracks in the international political system now wound the world's economic architecture, and

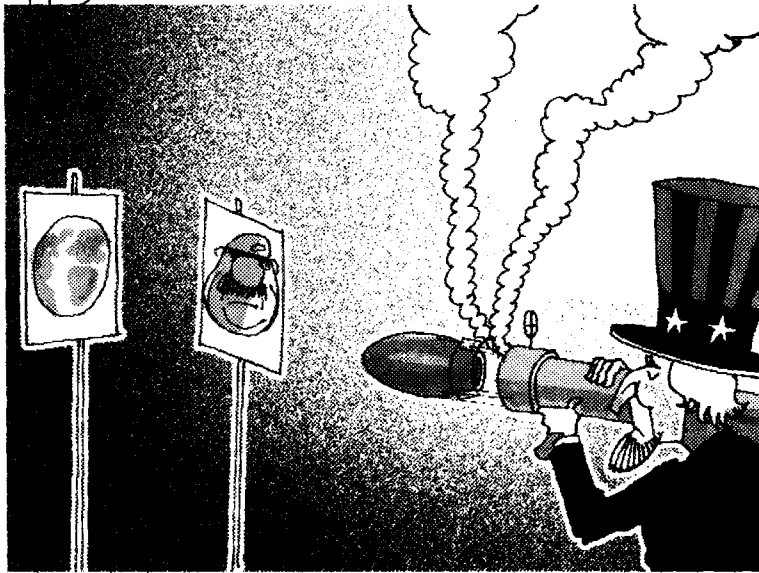
with it globalisation, as well?

International economic agreements have never been easy to make. Reaching consensus among the World Trade Organisation's 145 members, where one dissent can cause utter disarray, was difficult even before the world's governments divided into pro- and anti-American camps. Indeed, multilateral trade agreements were being eclipsed by bilateral deals, such as between the EU and various developing countries, long before the divisions over Iraq appeared.

Of course, the problem goes deeper and not everything that touches globalisation has turned dark. Immigration controls, for example, have been relaxed in several European countries (notably Germany) due to declining populations and educational shortcomings. But bad economic times are rarely moments when governments push bold international economic proposals.

Economic fragility among the world's leading economies is the biggest stumbling block. The US and the EU have few fiscal and monetary levers left to combat weak performance. Short-term interest rates in the US, at 1.25%, are at a 40-year low. Congress has pared \$100 billion from the Bush administration's 10-year \$726 billion tax cut plan, and the US's projected 10-year \$2 trillion budget deficit will grow as the Iraq war's costs mount, with President Bush submitting a supplemental request for \$80 billion (0.8% of GDP) in extra military spending this year.

Such spending risks absorb productive resources that could be employed more efficiently elsewhere. This was demon-



MANJUL

strated by the rapid growth of output and incomes that followed the arrival of the so-called "peace dividend" which came with the Cold War's end. Moreover, others (Arab countries, Germany, and Japan) will not cover America's military costs, as in the 1991 Gulf War. We are now back to the more usual situation where war is financed by government debt, which burdens future generations unless it is eroded by inflation.

In the Eurozone, the scope for fiscal stimulus (lower taxes and/or higher public spending) was constrained until war blew a hole in the Stability Pact, which caps member budget deficits at 3% of GDP. The limit will now be relaxed due to the "exceptional" circumstances implied by the Iraq war — providing relief, ironically, to the war's main European opponents, France and Germany. But the European Central Bank remains reluctant to ease monetary policy.

In Japan, there seems little hope that the world's second-largest economy can extricate itself from its home-made defla-

tion trap to generate the demand needed to offset economic weakness elsewhere in the world. Four years of deflation and a drawn-out banking crisis offer little prospect of economic stimulus. Higher oil prices and lower trade turnover aggravate the problem.

**B**UT high oil prices threaten the health of the entire \$45 trillion world economy. Oil prices have flirted with their highest level since the Gulf War and will go higher if Iraq's oil infrastructure (or that of neighbouring countries) is damaged. The adverse effects on growth will be felt everywhere, but nowhere more, perhaps, than in the energy-dependent South Korea and China. Although China's official growth rate reached 8% in 2002, its high budget deficit and large stock of non-performing loans (about 40% of GDP) mean that it cannot afford any slowdown if it is to keep people employed, especially in rural areas.

Some poor economies will be directly damaged by the loss of the Iraq market,

which accounts for roughly 40% of Vietnam's tea exports and 20% of its rice exports. For others, weakness in the world's big economies may be compounded by political risks.

Turkey has suffered from rising oil prices, falling tourism income (its second-largest source of foreign exchange), and declining foreign investment. Now the Erdogan government's lukewarm support for US policy on Iraq exposes Turkey to doubts about America's commitment to its economic well being, and global markets may question its ability to service its \$100 billion public-sector debt in 2003 and 2004.

The test of whether multilateral co-operation can be put back on track, and reconciled with America's war against terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, may come with Iraq's reconstruction. With the costs of ousting Saddam Hussein and occupying Iraq likely to run at anywhere from \$100 to \$600 billion over the next decade, the US will want to "internationalise" Iraq's reconstruction. Iraq's \$20 billion annual oil revenues cannot meet such costs. Indeed, those revenues will scarcely cover the costs of rebuilding basic infrastructure, feeding and housing displaced populations, and paying for the country's civil administration.

After the ouster of the Taliban last year, the \$4.5 billion of reconstruction aid pledged to Afghanistan's new government demonstrated that a multilateral approach to reconstruction is possible. But the poisoned atmosphere that followed the UN debates on Iraq may prevent the US from getting its way here. Already, French President Jacques Chirac has promised to veto any Security Council resolution on reconstruction that seeks to justify the war. If the world economy is to recover, the diplomatic failures and name-calling must end.

*(The author is the Head of the International Economics Program at the Royal Institute for International Affairs, London)*

(C): Project Syndicate March 2003

# POUNDED BY 4,600 POUNDS

Fri 29/3 W Am (1)

## Bunker-busters blast Baghdad; US may wait for citizens' revolt

Baghdad, March 28

THE ALLIES on Friday dropped their biggest bombs so far on Baghdad, striking two communications centres with 4,600-lb "bunker-busters", and followed it up with more strikes that killed about 60 people, mostly civilians.

The assault came amid hints that the allies might not launch a ground assault on Baghdad but mount a siege, step up bombing and wait for a citizens' revolt.

A US B-2 bomber dropped the two earth-shattering bunker-busters, which destroyed a seven-storey telephone exchange, damaged another and knocked out many telephone lines.

The air raids also targeted a marketplace in the city's Shula locality, killing at least 51 civilians, al-Jazeera and Dubai-based al-Arabiya television channels reported. Another strike destroyed the Baath Party headquarters, killing eight people, including several civilians, eyewitnesses said.

The allies signalled a change in strategy. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told a congressional committee in Washington that allied troops might repeat the Basra tactic in Baghdad — lay a siege rather than invade, and hope that citizens would rebel against the government.

Some commanders spoke of a possible alternative: fly more troops into Iraq and regroup for a delayed attack on Baghdad from all sides. Another 120,000 troops are already on their way to Iraq to bolster the 90,000 now



**CAN'T HELP SMILING:** An Iraqi child receives humanitarian aid from British Marines at Umm Qasr on Friday.

battling in the country.

A British defence source explained that the coalition forces can encircle Baghdad in days but lack the "overwhelming force" needed to wage street warfare.

"The key thing is that US forces do not want to get involved in downtown fighting," he said. "It's all about applying pressure with the result of the regime falling. Basra is very interesting to watch as a precursor, an example of how Baghdad will be tough to crack."

British forces, who have encircled Basra, are "nowhere near" capturing Basra, UK military spokesman Col. Chris Vernon said, adding that the allies had underestimated the level of re-

sistance by Saddam's forces.

The US army's senior ground commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. William S. Wallace of V Corps, echoed him: "The enemy we're fighting is different from the one we'd war-gamed against."

The allies suffered reverses on Friday, with four US Marines reported missing after a fierce fire-fight in An Nasiriyah.

Iraq claimed to have captured three US spies and showed them on television. The three men, all Iraqis, said they were paid by the CIA to identify targets for US planes and missiles and scout locations where raids had already occurred.

Full coverage on Pages 14 & 15



**WAR GAMES:** A US Marine from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit plays cards at a desert base in south Iraq.



# U.N. inspectors, others leave Iraq

By Atul Aneja

40-11  
19/3  
**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MARCH 18.** With a United States-led war against Iraq on the horizon, U.N. weapons inspectors left Baghdad today, joining diplomats, journalists and other foreigners in a scramble out of the country.

The pullout of the U.N. inspectors began within hours of the U.S. President, George W. Bush's 48-hour ultimatum to the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, and his two sons to leave the country. The U.S. and British troops deployed in the region have reportedly been put on a four-hour notice today.

With the phase of inspections formally sealed on Tuesday, Iraq was bracing for an imminent air attack by U.S. forces. Unlike the first Gulf War, the U.S. may not go for a lengthy air campaign now, military analysts say.

After intense bombing and missile attacks in the first 48-hours of the campaign, U.S. ground forces are likely to make a quick dash towards Baghdad. Simultaneously, British and U.S. forces were expected to establish their hold over the Iraqi oil

fields around Basra in the south as well as Mosul and Kirkuk in the north.

Fifty-six inspectors took the first special flight out of Baghdad following orders by the U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, on Monday. The rest out of a total of 150-member U.N. staff and other relief workers left the country later in the day. Faced with a deepening crisis, U.N. workers, have been gradually leaving Iraq over the past several weeks.

Diplomats from Germany, the Czech Republic, China, Bahrain, Pakistan and Britain are also moving out of Iraq and neighbouring Kuwait. Britain has asked its nationals to leave Bahrain, the headquarters of the U.S. fifth fleet, that will play a key role in coordinating air attacks from U.S. warships deployed in the Persian Gulf. While there was no direct response from Mr. Hussein to Mr. Bush's 48-hour ultimatum, his son Uday Hussein reacted sharply to the assertion. In a statement distributed by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, he said that Mr. Bush was "unstable" and that the U.S. leader "should give up power in America with his family."

He also warned that a U.S.-led attack

would force Iraq to broaden the war against the U.S.

Any attack on Iraq, he said, would leave "the wives and mothers of those who fight us constantly crying ... They should not believe there is a single safe spot for them inside Iraq or outside Iraq."

Before Mr. Bush spoke, Mr. Hussein had warned that the U.S. forces would find an Iraqi fighter ready to die for his country "behind every rock, tree and wall."

He acknowledged that Iraq had once possessed weapons of mass destruction to defend itself from Iran and Israel, but insisted it no longer had them.

"When Saddam Hussein says he has no weapons of mass destruction, he means what he says," Uday stressed.

Meanwhile, the Arab League has also rejected Mr. Bush's 48-hour deadline. "The Arab League cannot accept such a final warning," the spokesman of the pan-Arab organisation, Hisham Youssef, told reporters in Cairo. While the leading Arab countries took stock of the Bush declaration, the

U.S. has opened fresh talks with Turkey to facilitate the opening of a second front against Iraq.

19 MAR 2003

THE HINDU



U.S.-led coalition firefighters grapple to extinguish an oil blaze at a plant in southern Iraq, in this photo released on Saturday. — AP

## U.S. bunker-busters may not be 'effective'

BERLIN, MARCH 29. The U.S. "bunker-busting" bombs will not destroy the Iraqi President, Saddam's underground hiding place buried deep beneath one of his Baghdad palaces, the architect who designed it said on Friday.

Karl Esser, a German security consultant who planned the bunker situated beneath one of the presidential palaces, said only a direct hit from a nuclear bomb was capable of crushing the dictator's alleged hiding place.

"It could withstand the shock wave of a nuclear bomb the size of the Hiroshima one detonating 250 metres away," said Mr. Esser, adding that the ceiling was capable of withstanding the direct impact of a 500lb bomb.

The 2,150 square-yard bunker has three-ton Swiss-made doors, 5ft-thick walls, a two-yards thick steel-reinforced concrete ceiling, two escape tunnels — one of which leads 200 yards to the Tigris river — and can house 50 people.

"Ground troops could get in by taking out the doors with bazookas and explosives," added Mr. Esser who recalled showing the 'friendly' dictator around the newly-built complex. "He was satisfied. He was totally friendly. He was wearing civilian clothes and looked like an ordinary civil servant."

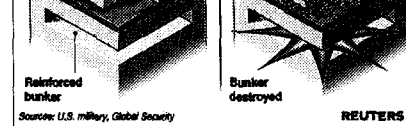
The bunker was constructed at a cost of £96 millions in the early Eighties by the German firm Boswau and Knauer — which also built bunkers for Hitler — dur-

### HOW THE U.S. TRIED TO KILL SADDAM

Rumors continue to circulate that Saddam Hussein may have been injured or even killed in Thursday's missile attack on a site in southern Baghdad that intelligence indicated had a reinforced bunker.

**BGM-109 "Tomahawk"**  
Three dozen new Tomahawk cruise missiles clear away structures above ground.  
Length: 6.00m  
Weight: 1,900kg  
Explosive: 450kg

**EBBU-27 "Bunker-Buster"**  
Four enhanced "bunker-buster" (laser and internally guided) bombs are launched from two F-117A stealth fighters.  
Length: 4.24m  
Weight: 863.5kg  
Explosive: 450kg



Schematic diagrams explaining how the U.S. forces combined two types of weapon to penetrate an underground bunker in Baghdad.

ing a time when western companies were legally supplying Mr. Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war.

The budget set aside for the bunker was exceeded by around £45 millions after Mr. Hussein ordered extra luxury touches such as gold switches, expensive tiling, a spa bath and built-in wardrobes.

Along with children's rooms, guards' quarters and a kitchen stocked with a

year's supply of freeze-dried food, the bunker palace, which is 96ft below ground, has an extensive audio library, a conference room with video-link up facilities and a water-recycling facility.

Among the more vital features are a water tank, air filter, electricity generator, a 30-square yard command centre and an electromagnetic pulse protection system to shield electrical circuits from the force of a blast. Access to the subterranean refuge is believed to be via a lift hidden beneath the palace's swimming pool.

Mr. Esser, whose company worked for a German government-sponsored civil protection body, supplied equipment for the bunker. His assessment — backed up by that of a former Yugoslav army officer who also helped to build the bunkers — throws doubt on whether America's bunker-busting bombs are as efficacious as the Pentagon has suggested.

According to CNN, U.S. B52 bombers dropped their first "bunker-buster" on Baghdad on Friday.

It is unclear as to whether Mr. Hussein is in his bunker or whether he is even still alive. Asked if the knowledge that he had constructed a hiding place for a dictator who has been compared to Hitler ever kept him awake at night, Mr. Esser said: "It's not just one person getting protection, it's several people, it's the palace staff as well. I just see it as an achievement of bunker technology." — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2003

## IRAQ / U.S. TROOPS AWAIT REINFORCEMENTS

# Spotlight on Ba'ath cadre

By Atul Aneja

AS SAYLIYAH (QATAR), MARCH 29. Awaiting the arrival of reinforcements before launching a full scale ground attack on Baghdad, the U.S. and British forces have intensified their assault on the Iraqi paramilitary forces and are taking steps to deny Iraq any support from neighbouring Syria and Iran. The U.S. Central Command officials here denied any 'pause' in the Anglo-American military operations in Iraq, but acknowledged that developments in the battlefield might be forcing a modification in their military tactics. In an indication that the Anglo-American forces had begun to pay special military attention to the Iraqi Ba'ath party cadres and the *Fidayeen* paramilitary machinery, Central Command officials confirmed that coalition aircraft had attacked the Ba'ath party headquarters in Basra overnight.

Without elaborating on the number of casualties, Victor Renuart, of the U.S. Air Force, who briefed the media here, said that nearly 200 senior Ba'ath party activists belonging to its 'planning' cell were inside the building at the time of the raid. British and U.S. officials have accused "death squads" of the *Fidayeen* units, masterminded by the Ba'ath party for curbing a mass uprising against the regime of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, in Basra. They have also held the units responsible for the guerilla attacks on advancing U.S. troops and supply columns that have headed in the direction of Baghdad.

In yet another indication that the U.S. forces were being hampered by unconventional warfare, Major General Renuart confirmed that five U.S. troops were killed at a checkpoint near Najaf on account of an Iraqi suicide attack in the last 24 hours. U.S. forces, he said, had also warded off an Iraqi assault mounted by its elite Medina division against the coalition forces around the city of Najaf.

Around 50 Republican guard soldiers were killed in the battle, in which 30 U.S. Apache "tank-busting" helicopters participated.

Anticipating that the bigger battles for Baghdad may have been postponed, the U.S. and Brit-



A soldier stands guard near the wreckage of an AH-64 Apache Longbow which crashed after take off in Iraq late on Friday. — AFP

ish forces have recorded partial success in consolidating their hold over captured territory in Southern Iraq. The large Basra refinery has been fully 'secured', but the British hold over the entire Faw peninsula still appears incomplete. Gen. Renuart acknowledged that it was possible that the Iraqi missile attack on a Kuwaiti shopping centre in the early hours on Saturday might have been launched from the Faw peninsula.

Anticipating fierce combat in the coming days, the coalition leadership has begun to look seriously at ways to deny the Iraqi regime, support from neighbouring Syria and Iran.

Coalition aircraft operating in the Iraqi western desert zone have reportedly hit an oil pipeline that can carry Iraqi oil from the Kirkuk and Mosul fields to Syria's Mediterranean oil terminal of Banias.

Washington to receive an award. Officially, his office has said that it would be insensitive for the Prime Minister to come and pick up an award when the U.S. is at war. But this came only days after the American Ambassador criticised Canada for not joining the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq. At the United Nations, Canada was one of the very first to call for an small extension of deadline for weapons inspections but with the new resolution carrying the threat of the use of force unlike many others who were against any automaticity over the use of force.

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## Syrian actions hostile: Rumsfeld

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 29. The United States Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, has warned Syria and Iran not to complicate American and coalition war efforts in Iraq — comments that have caused some concern that the U.S. could get involved in additional fire-fights along Iraq's borders.

The call to Damascus and Teheran not to meddle in coalition war efforts came during the course of a press conference at the Pentagon, where for the most part, he was trying to play down a perception that coalition forces are not proceeding according to plan.

The top civilian official in the Pentagon maintained that Washington had information that shipments of "military supplies and material and equipment" have been seen crossing from Syria into Iraq and with the obvious intent of assisting the forces of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

"These deliveries pose a direct threat to the lives of coalition forces. We consider such trafficking as hostile acts and will hold the Syrian Government accountable for such shipments", Mr. Rumsfeld said without getting into the issue of whether the U.S. will militarily retaliate against Syria.

Such activity "... vastly complicates our situation" was all he would say. Mr. Rumsfeld also addressed the allegation that Iran has deployed hundreds of soldiers of the Badr brigade on the border with Iraq.

He argued that these soldiers, who have "not yet" been hostile

to coalition troops, would be seen as "combatants".

The Badr brigade is composed of Iran-based Iraqi exiles from the Shia branch of the Islamic faith. "The entrance into Iraq by military forces, intelligence personnel or proxies not under the direct operational

### Charge refuted

DAMASCUS (SYRIA), MARCH 29. Syria on Friday denied the U.S. claims that it was sending military equipment to Baghdad, saying the accusation was an American attempt to cover its crimes against civilians in Iraq while Iran dismissed as propaganda the U.S. warnings not to meddle in the war in neighbouring Iraq.

An official at the Syrian Foreign Ministry said Mr. Rumsfeld's charge was an attempt to "justify his troops' failure" in Iraq. Iran said, "The Badr Brigade's decisions have nothing to do with Iran, they are independent, like any other Iraqi opposition group." — AP/Reuters.

control of Gen. Franks will be taken as a potential threat to coalition forces", the Defence Secretary said.

"It seems to be that Gen. Franks and the coalition countries are busy. They've got a complicated task. We would prefer it not be made any more difficult by any of the neighbours", the top Bush Cabinet official remarked.

While both Syria and Iran have rejected the substance of Mr. Rumsfeld's remarks, there is the apprehension here that against the backdrop of heightened rhetoric and hostile posturings, the theatre of operations may get expanded if Washington decides to challenge some of the alleged shipments coming out of Syria or if coalition forces do not wish to see the Badr brigade involved in the operations.

Aside from the warning issued to Syria and Iran, senior administration officials on Friday were brushing aside the notion that the U.S. and its allies are somehow slipping in terms of meeting a deadline, and in the process getting into a quagmire in Iraq.

"The President believes... that we are making very good progress on the war. It is on track and he is very satisfied with the results", the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said.

The spokesman further argued that those in charge of drawing up battle plans had "always... planned for a battle that could be long, that could be hard, it could be difficult. That's always been part-and-parcel of the planning". Meanwhile, Mr. Bush, spoke about the "steady advance" towards Baghdad and has again stressed war crimes will not be tolerated and those responsible will be hunted down.

"Every atrocity has confirmed the justice and urgency of our cause. Against this enemy we will accept no outcome but complete and final victory", Mr. Bush said.

## Govt. underestimated Iraqi resistance, feels U.S. public

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 29. At a time when the Bush administration is going out of its way in telling the American public that the war in Iraq is proceeding according to plans, a majority of the people think that the United States "underestimated" the resistance from the Iraqi Army. And significantly, about 82 per cent in a recent poll have maintained that a significant number of casualties will result — up from 37 per cent in the opening days of the war in Iraq. However, in

spite of the apprehensions, about seven in 10 Americans back the war effort.

According to a poll conducted by CBS News, 55 per cent of Americans believe that the U.S. underestimated Iraqi resistance; and two-thirds in this poll say that the war will last months. About 62 per cent in this same poll believe that removing the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, from power is worth the costs of the war, including the loss of lives. But nearly 30 per cent have said that they feel nervous about the conflict.

In another survey done by CNN/Time

just over half said the war against Iraq has been successful; 8 per cent said it was not; and 37 per cent maintained that it was somewhere in between. The Bush administration appears to be bending over backwards to impress a sceptical American and overseas audience that in a span of just about a week, coalition forces have had several successes. But Washington is also facing a barrage of direct and indirect criticism for its war efforts.

The Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretien, has cancelled a private visit to

Washington to receive an award. Officially, his office has said that it would be insensitive for the Prime Minister to come and pick up an award when the U.S. is at war. But this came only days after the American Ambassador criticised Canada for not joining the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq. At the United Nations, Canada was one of the very first to call for an small extension of deadline for weapons inspections but with the new resolution carrying the threat of the use of force unlike many others who were against any automaticity over the use of force.

## Health, water job for UNICEF

WASHINGTON, MARCH 29. The United States said that it had awarded an \$8-million, one-year grant to the United Nations' children's agency to supply health, water and sanitation to Iraq.

The grant to the UN Children's Fund was awarded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). "The United States,

through this partnership and the awarding of this grant, is seeking to use the experience of UNICEF to ensure that the people of Iraq have clean water and adequate sanitation facilities to protect human health and prevent disease," said the USAID administrator, in a statement. The grant would pay for UNICEF to provide basic health services to the most vulnerable

populations, especially women and children. "Child nutrition is a major concern as almost one-third of all children in the south and central regions of the country are suffering from malnutrition and the child mortality rates have more than doubled in the last decade," the USAID said. — AFP

U.N. OKAYS OIL-FOR-FOOD PROGRAMME FOR IRAQ

W. Arin  
9/20/03  
HP-1

# Baghdad reels under heavy bombardment

29/3

**IN SOUTH-CENTRAL IRAQ, MARCH 28.**

American Marines clashed repeatedly with Iraqi forces in south-central Iraq on Friday during a push north toward Baghdad that has been slower and more frustrating than planners foresaw. British forces outside Basra tried to rescue thousands of civilians as Iraqi paramilitary forces fired on people fleeing the key southern city.

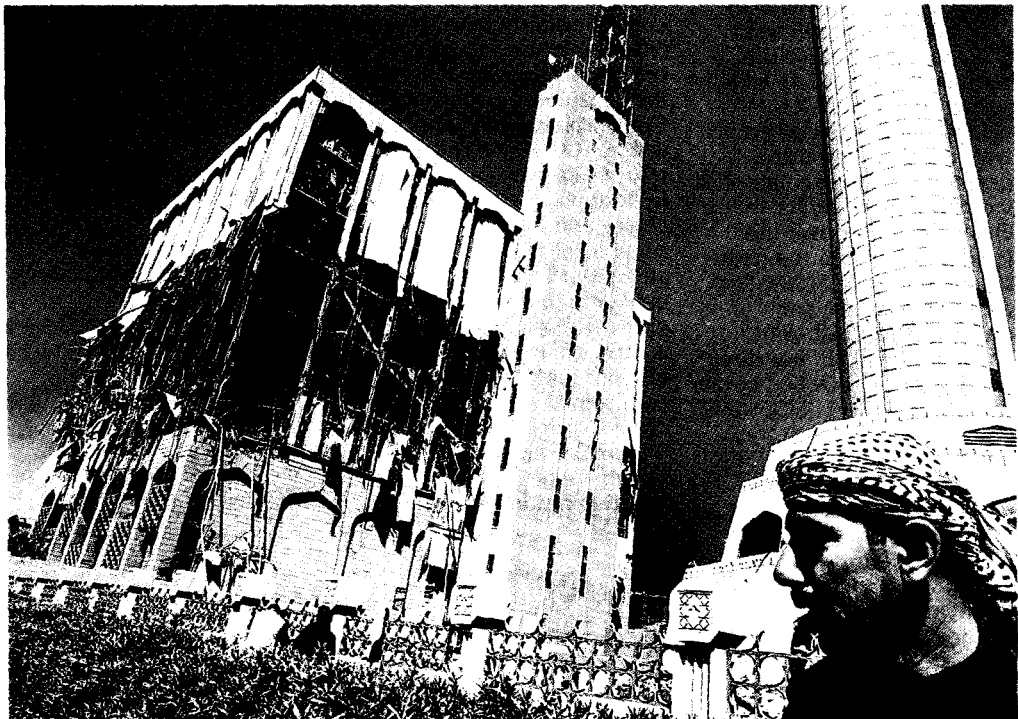
Explosions rocked Baghdad on Friday and a towering column of churning orange smoke rose over the skyline in some of the mightiest bombardment of the Iraqi capital in days. Iraqi officials said at least seven people were killed, and news reports said eight more died on Friday afternoon.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution to allow the resumption of humanitarian aid programme for Iraq that uses Baghdad's oil revenues to get in medical supplies and food. The resolution aims to hasten delivery of aid by giving the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, control for 45 days over the oil-for-food programme, which had provided food to 60 per cent of Iraq's 22 million people but was halted last week before war erupted.

Throughout Friday, American Marines battled pockets of Iraqi resistance in and around the south-central town of An Nasiriyah. Explosions from tank fire, artillery and rockets fired by Cobra helicopters reverberated as Marines battled to clear the main supply route to Baghdad.

At least one American was reported killed in the fighting and two other Marines were killed after they were accidentally run over by one of their vehicles as they slept.

British forces have ringed Basra — Iraq's second-largest, with a population of 1.3 million



The Telecommunication Centre in Baghdad after it was hit by a U.S. missile on Friday. — AFP

— in hopes of eliminating units still loyal to Saddam Hussein and opening the way for badly needed humanitarian aid.

The bombings in Baghdad — led by two 2,115-kg satellite-guided “bunker-busting” bombs — were aimed at disrupting communications between Mr. Hussein's leadership and his military, U.S. officials said. Bombardments of the ruling Baath Party headquarters on Friday afternoon killed eight more people, Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television and Al Manar of Lebanon reported.

The U.S. Army's senior ground commander in Iraq, William S. Wallace of V Corps, said unexpected tactics by Iraqi fighters and stretched supply lines were slowing down the campaign.

Vincent Brooks, at the daily

briefing at the U.S. Central Command in Qatar, insisted U.S. war planners had not underestimated Iraqi fighting capabilities but acknowledged that battlefield commanders may be seeing a “more precise” reality of resistance than headquarters sees. He accused the Iraqis of using “terrorist death squads” who changed in and out of civilian clothes.

“The enemy must come inside Baghdad, and that will be its grave,” said the Defence Minister, Sultan Hashim Ahmed. “We feel that this war must be prolonged so the enemy pays a high price.”

Seven people were killed and 92 others wounded in the strikes on Baghdad, the Iraqi Information Minister, Mohammed al-Sahhaf, said. The air strikes hit at or near the In-

formation and Planning Ministries and at telephone installations — “as if Government buildings are empty of human beings and there are no civilians in them,” the Minister said. He also rejected allied contentions that Iraq planned to use chemical weapons.

## U.S. 'spies' shown on TV

Meanwhile, Iraqi state television showed interviews with three men it said were captured and accused of spying for the U.S. The three Iraqis said they had been providing information to the U.S., particularly the CIA in return for financial benefits. Nine days into the war, Pentagon officials said close to 90,000 U.S. troops were in Iraq, with 100,000 to 120,000 more on the way. — AP

More reports on Page 14

THE HINDU

29 MAR 2003



# Operation Iraqi freedom?

By T. Sreedhar

10-10 27/3

Mr. Arun  
D. Gow

**A**S THE U.S. war on Iraq, 'Operation Iraqi Freedom,' enters the second week, some unexpected developments have taken place. The week-long military operations have proved some of the U.S. assumptions incorrect. Foremost among them is the supposition that the Iraqi people would invite the U.S. forces in with open arms and look to them as liberators from the "oppressive" regime of their President, Saddam Hussein. Instead, fierce battles are being fought in almost every important town. Even the U.S. military commanders are admitting that they are surprised at the stiff resistance being offered by their adversary. Any military man can tell that the support of the local population is absolutely essential for any armed operation to succeed.

Though many commentators have harped on the ethnic composition of Iraq — Shias, Sunnis and Kurds — saying that Mr. Hussein, belonging to the Sunni sect of Islam, which constitutes around 20 per cent of the Iraqi population, is hated, there is little evidence of this so far. They ignored the fact that even during the height of the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988, when a spiritual leader of the stature of Ayatollah Khomeini appealed to the Shiites in Iraq to revolt against the regime in Baghdad they did not heed the appeal.

At that time, as well as now, the world witnessed a sudden resurgence of Iraqi nationalism. The spectre of Iraqis living in Jordan rushing to Baghdad to fight the invading allied army on March 19-20 showed how nationalistic passions had been aroused. The Iraqis did not fail to tell the media that they disliked Mr. Hussein but that did not mean they would let some outsider "invade our country."

Second, the U.S. assumed that an armed force that was completely de-

stroyed in the 1991 Gulf War, coupled with the U.N. sanctions that followed, would not be able to offer any substantial resistance. The premise was not factually incorrect. But the U.S. and its allies still lost three helicopters and two fighter aircraft during the week.

The Iraqis also captured a few

the areas in and around Baghdad to neutralise any opposition will start once the forces are assembled on the outskirts of Baghdad. In such a situation, the Iraqi civilian casualties are bound to be high, an eventuality the U.S. wanted to avoid right from the beginning of the war. For, as and when the Americans occupy Bagh-

mass destruction. The U.S. field commanders, understandably, are on high alert against the use of chemical weapons by Iraq as and when the battle for Baghdad starts. The asymmetric warfare being carried out by the U.S. has legitimised many responses. Iraq, in fighting an adversary that is many times powerful, can adopt any means, including guerrilla warfare and terrorism and violence. Not realising this, the U.S. has underestimated the capabilities of the "fidayeen" (suicide) attackers created by Mr. Hussein, post-Operation Desert Storm. If we go by the Israeli experience with the Palestinians, the "fidayeen" attacks are inevitable as long as the U.S. forces stay in Iraq.

At another level, contrary to what many Western commentators anticipated before the war, there is no mass exodus of people from Iraq to the neighbouring countries such as Jordan and Syria. Voluntary organisations, along with the U.N., are waiting in these countries to receive the refugees. The exodus might not have taken place for fear of reprisal by the ruling Baath Party cadres. But some believe that it has not happened because life is not as difficult as anticipated. There is still water and electricity in some of the important towns and cities. Only when basic necessities are denied will people be forced to move out.

The war is not going according to the Americans' script. The manner in which the U.S.-led war on terrorism, Operation Enduring Freedom, has been going on for the last 18 months, is, in all probability, likely to be repeated in Operation Iraq's Freedom. Whether Mr. Hussein and his entourage can escape like Osama bin Laden is difficult to predict at this point of time. The Americans, will, of course, capture Baghdad. But what then?

(The Writer is a Visiting Professor, School of International Studies, JNU.)

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***The war is not going according to the Americans' script... They will, of course, capture Baghdad. But what then?***

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American soldiers. According to an unofficial count, the number of Americans killed and wounded in action has reached three digits.

All this damage was not inflicted on the invading army by the Iraqis alone. The weather played a role. The sandstorms exposed the limits to which technology can decide the course of a war. The much talked about precision of America's weapons was affected by suspended particles. It is also becoming increasingly clear that to maintain the supply lines to the troops moving towards Baghdad, the U.S. military commanders need more men. If the much-feared street-to-street fighting takes place for the capture of Baghdad, the U.S. may have to mobilise more infantry.

The Iraqis' strategy to counter the U.S. advances is becoming increasingly clear. They must impose unacceptable casualties on the invading army, by whatever means they can adopt, to mobilise American domestic opinion against the war. Therefore, the coming two weeks are crucial.

Third, since the adversary has inflicted unacceptable damage, the U.S., with its air superiority, has started aerial bombing with its B-52 bombers. According to many observers, the U.S. carpet-bombing of

Bagdad, they will be looked upon as an occupation army and not as a liberating force. The present trend shows that intense carpet-bombing by the U.S. is unavoidable in the battle for Baghdad; and a beginning has been made with the March 26 bombing of a marketplace.

If the Iraqis move in to places of worship such as mosques and start attacking the invading army how the U.S. military planners will react has to be seen. The solution will be far more tricky if the Iraqis adopt these tactics in places such as Nazaf and Karbela, the two holy places of Shiite Muslims.

A cursory look at the U.S. print and electronic media shows that they have been carried away by patriotic fervour and are not reporting objectively. There is a sea change compared to 1991, when the CNN reported the developments on a minute-to-minute basis to the entire world. One noticed a subtle change in the reporting at the time of war on terrorism; but now it is blatant. The gurus of freedom of press can no longer preach this concept to the rest of the world.

Even after one week of fighting and the capture of some important towns, the invading army has not come out with any credible evidence of Iraq possessing any weapons of

THE HINDU

29 MAR 2003

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2003

10-10

## PREVENT AN IMMINENT DISASTER

AFTER SEVEN DAYS of devastating bombardment, Iraq has begun to show the scars of a war that is a blot on humanity. The civilian population, already deprived of the basic needs by a decade of suppressive rule and debilitating sanctions, faces an imminent disaster that could easily lead to epidemics and starvation in the desert regions. The images coming out of the capital Baghdad and the southern region of Basra in the last two days attest to the threat of a very real humanitarian calamity about to happen. If the carnage left by the two cruise missiles that struck a residential area in a Baghdad neighbourhood on Wednesday testifies to the tragic consequences on the civilian population, the dismaying scenes of scramble for food witnessed in Umm Qasr in the south reveal the desperation of a population in total deprivation. As the war has progressed in the past week, it is clear that before the resistance in cities like Basra and Baghdad is broken, the number of civilian victims of war and want will multiply. If such a disastrous outcome is to be averted, the Security Council which in its majority echoes the voice of the international community must call a halt to the war and authorise the launch of relief measures on a commensurate scale. There may be no time to lose in a situation where no party apparently cares to observe the requirements of international humanitarian law by doing everything in its power to shield the civilian population from the war's grim consequences.

To understand the intolerable conditions in Iraq, it would suffice to quote from the statement of the U.N. Secretary-General made before the Security Council on the eve of the war on March 19. Kofi Annan reported that Iraq's vital infrastructure, devastated by two decades of wars and conflict, no longer meets the needs of the most basic requirements for

clean water, health and education. "Already, Iraq's most vulnerable citizens — the elderly, women and children and the disadvantaged — are denied basic health care for lack of medicine and medical equipment. Already, nearly one million Iraqi children suffer from chronic malnutrition. Iraqis are heavily dependent on the food ration, which is handed out each month to every family. For more than 60 per cent of the population this ration is the main source of income. Yet, many families have to sell part of the ration to buy clothes or other essentials for their children." Warning that things could only start to get worse, Mr. Annan underlined the responsibility of the belligerents to protect civilians in a conflict.

The Indian Government, which has pursued a policy of excessive caution, must respond to the emerging situation and immediately explore ways in which to offer humanitarian relief to the civilian population. The World Food Programme of the U.N. has appealed for funds to finance a massive programme of relief. Drinking water and medicine are two other essentials. As every third world nation knows, diseases like cholera are a very real threat in a parched land where scorching heat is part of everyday living. One positive element in this gloomy setting is that over the past half a century and more, relief agencies have acquired enough expertise to reach supplies to the needy when conditions are safe — for them and for the civilians. The Bush administration, which launched the campaign based on the doctrine of a war without civilian victims or its own losses, must cease all actions that hold the danger of a humanitarian disaster. It is time Washington admitted that what has been happening in southern Iraq and indeed in the neighbourhood of Baghdad in the past week has demonstrated the meaninglessness of this doctrine.

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INDO

U.S., BRITAIN DELIBERATELY TARGETING CIVILIANS, SAYS IRAQ

# U.S. paratroopers open northern front; Baghdad pounded again

**IRBIL (IRAQ), MARCH 27.** Kurdish militiamen and U.S. special operations troops linked up with more than 1,000 U.S. Army paratroopers today to secure the area around a strategic air strip, as the first large coalition ground force in northern Iraq began opening another front against Saddam Hussein's regime.

To the south, columns of U.S. Army troops and tanks fought off Iraqi resistance on the slow trek towards Baghdad, even as powerful explosions rocked the capital and more blasts shook the city's outskirts, with the U.S.-led war marking a week.

The Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade, including elite Army Rangers, jumped out of low-flying C-17 transport planes under cover of darkness and secured a snow-dusted airfield, which will be used to bring in supplies and support personnel.

The airdrop — one of the biggest paratroop drops in decades — was a dramatic entry for ground troops into a region where only small groups of U.S. special forces have been operating.

With the skies finally clear after two days of sandstorms and good weather forecast for the next few days, U.S. commanders said allied forces would step up attacks.

At a news briefing in Qatar, U.S. Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks said several American units battled successfully against Iraqi forces on Thursday, destroying vehicles and inflicting casualties. Some Marines were injured in fighting near An Nasiriyah.

Thirty-six persons were killed and 215 others injured during airstrikes on Baghdad on Wednesday, the Iraqi Health Minister, Omeed Medhat Mubarak, said.

He put the total number of civilian casualties since the war began at more than 4,000, including 350 dead.

He accused the U.S. and Britain of deliberately targeting civilians. "Neither the Bush administration nor their bombs are 'smart.'"

In Moscow, Iraq's Ambassador, Abbas Khalaf, quoting fresh reports from Baghdad, claimed that nearly 700 American and British troops have been killed in the past seven days of fighting.

In the last 24 hours, over 500 American and British troops were killed in fierce fighting in An-Najaf and Karbala, he said.

Brig. Brooks said that it was possible that an Iraqi missile was responsible for Wednesday's marketplace explosion that killed 14 civilians.

Near An Nasiriyah, more than 30 U.S. Marines were injured, two seriously, in an "accidental" exchange of fire between American units, according to reporters for French and British media.

Two groups of Marines were dispatched during the night to repel an Iraqi contingent, but ended up firing at each other.

In central Iraq, U.S. forces moved closer to Baghdad on several routes; one of the Army columns was 16 km long. Battles with Iraqi troops flared in several areas.

Outside Karbala, southwest of Baghdad, small groups of Iraqi armoured personnel carriers approached American positions but were hit by U.S. warplanes.

In southern Iraq, British forces destroyed 14 Iraqi tanks that tried to break out of the besieged southern city of Basra on Thursday, Group Capt. Al Lockwood said. Humanitarian aid was expected through Umm Qasr, but British officials reluctantly postponed the start of a sea-borne relief operation after discovering Iraqi mines in the shipping channel leading to the recently-captured port.

In Washington, officials said that the war could last months and more U.S. reinforcements might be needed to ensure a victory.

Foul weather, long and unsafe supply lines and an enemy that has refused to yield to American military force had led to a "broad reassessment" of the situation by some top U.S. Generals, the *Washington Post*



U.S. paratroopers take positions near an airstrip in the Kurdistan Democratic Party-controlled town of Harir in northern Iraq on Thursday. — AFP

today quoted senior defence officials as saying.

Military commanders were talking of a "longer, harder war than had been expected just a

week ago", the officials said adding that some of them saw the possibility of requirement of more and more U.S. forces for a "drawn-out fight".

Many of the top Army commanders were favouring a pause in ground operations and securing the Army's supply lines while ensuring the resupply of force after days of sandstorm and battle damage.

However, a Pentagon spokesman yesterday rejected "the pessimistic assessment" and said the war was going according to the plan.

"The plan has moved almost exactly with expectations... it's right on the mark," the *Post* quoted Army Major General Stanley McChrystal as saying.

## U.S. targeted at U.N.

At the United Nations Security Council, the U.S.-led military action came in for severe criticism with several members questioning its legality and Baghdad calling it a "barbaric aggression", leading to thousands of casualties.

"Iraq, a founding member of the United Nations, is being subjected to a criminal, barbaric American-British military aggression," the Iraqi Ambassador to the U.N., Mohammed Aldouri, said and demanded that the

Council deal with it first.

Addressing the emergency Council session, he asked the U.N. to condemn the military action, hold the U.S. and its allies responsible for it and take action to end it. He also had some harsh words for the Council which, he said, had been discussing the issue of humanitarian aid rather than dealing with the aggression. — AP, Reuters, PTI

More reports on Page 14

## WAR UPDATE



A specimen stamp dedicated to peace to be issued by the New York Post Office of the United Nations on Friday. — AFP

- U.S. says it will oppose any U.N. effort to lay out a road map for post-war Iraq that will remove decision-making from the allies.

- U.S. forces move closer to Baghdad on several routes.

- U.S. planes destroy Iraqi tanks trying to break out of besieged Basra.

- Over 30 Marines injured in friendly fire near An Nasiriyah.

- Sandstorms blow over.

- The war could last months, say U.S. officials

- France says it is ready to mend the rift with U.S.

- Aid flow hampered by mines discovered in Umm Qasr port.



# Some of Saddam's Arab foes admire his fight

By Neil MacFarquhar  
 ascus: Normally the appear- of Saddam Hussein on televi- prompts catcalls, curses and rs for his demise from a regu- athering of about 20 Saudi essmen and intellectuals, but lay night was different. When i preserve him for a few more s.

hey want Saddam Hussein to d they expect him to go even; but they want him to hold on e longer because they want to the Americans a lesson," said d M. Batarfi, the managing ed- of the newspaper *Al Madina*, ibing the scene in a sprawling room in Jidda, Saudi Arabia. ab pride is at stake here," he l, describing a sentiment ng the region from Algeria to n. "American propaganda said going to be so quick and easy, ing we Arabs are weak and un- o fight. Now it is like a Mike i fight against some weak guy. don't want the weak guy ed out in the first 40 seconds."

From the outset, there has been a certain ambivalence in the Arab world toward the war in Iraq, an ambivalence tipping toward outright hostility as Baghdad, the fabled capital of "The Arabian Nights," shudders under American bombing.

The region's governments, edgy about the idea of a United States-inspired change of government in Iraq, have been trying to placate Washington and siphon the anger off their streets, although they have permitted larger demonstrations than usual.

The Middle East's educated elite, seeking deliverance from repressive governments, hope Washington wants to create a model for the region in Iraq, but the US lacks a credible track record. The public recognises that leaders like Mr Hussein abuse their people, but the suspicion that the US is embarking on a modern crusade against Islam tends to overwhelm other considerations.

Since the creation of Israel in 1948, followed by repeated military setbacks, Arabs have felt a certain humiliation in their own neighbor-

Never say die



"American propaganda said it was going to be so quick and

easy, meaning we Arabs are weak and unable to fight. Now it is like a Mike Tyson fight against some weak guy. They don't want the weak guy knocked out in the first 40 seconds"

for some kind of saviour. The Iraqi leader sought to fill that role, gaining vast public support in 1990 by contending that the road to Jerusalem led through Kuwait. Nobody believes him any more, but the yearning remains.

This week it seemed that the Iraqi people, or whoever exactly was fighting America, might win that role. "If Saddam's regime is going to fall, it's better for our future, for our self-confidence and for our image that it falls fighting," said Sadik Jalal al-Azam, a Syrian author and academic. "People are not defending Saddam or his regime, but they are willing to put Saddam aside for a much greater issue."

Arab governments opposed the war in Iraq from the outset. They shared no great love for Mr Hussein, but replacing him by force seemed a bad precedent.

"If they do not like 100 regimes around the world, are they going to change all 100?" asked Buthaina Shaaban, a spokeswoman for the Syrian foreign ministry, reciting a familiar argument used by opponents

of the Bush administration's policy

That prospect is unnerving for Middle Eastern governments for a variety of reasons. In Syria, which is controlled by a rival branch of Iraq's Baath Party, overthrowing the Baathists next door comes uncomfortably close to a scary pre- view of what might happen there.

"Nobody knows who will be next," said Georges Jabbour, a Syrian law professor and member of parliament. Longtime rulers have begun making noises about reform.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt recently announced a series of minor changes lightening the government's repressive hand, including abolishing the special state security courts for ordinary crimes.

Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia also started publicly addressing the issue of reform, although that seems more inspired by the post-Sept. 11 discovery of widespread sympathy for Osama bin Laden rather than concern that democracy in Iraq might destabilise the kingdom. NYT News Service

# Twin tactics: secure south, hit from north

SUJANDUTTA

**Kuwait, March 27:** As the war on Iraq entered its second week, coalition forces marked out two priorities. First, securing the rear area to ensure that supply lines are intact and keep flowing in southern Iraq. Second, open a northern front, which has happened with a huge parachute drop of forces through last night.

The paratroopers took over an airfield in Kurdish-controlled territory. "This is the beginning of the northern front," a US defence official said.

However, it is unlikely that forces parachuting in can be large enough to open a fully credible northern front. The coalition forces could simply try to reinforce the position of the Kurds, who are opposed to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and are in control of the territory in the north, just as in Afghanistan the Northern Alliance helped make the push to Kabul.

In the same area, Kurdish fighters crossed into Iraqi government-controlled territory in the first such advance since the war began.

US forces in central Iraq were bracing for the biggest battle on the road to Baghdad near Karbala with elements of Saddam's Republican Guards. Karbala is 110 km south of Baghdad.

Coalition sources described it as a key battle because of its importance in the final push to Baghdad. Whenever that happens, the supply line for the forces running from Kuwait — a distance of 300 km and more — will have to be working smoothly.

There was recognition at the very top in Washington that not everything was going well in the war. President George W. Bush cut out the words "ahead of schedule" from a speech he was to make at an air force base and replaced them with "good progress".

## The Telegraph **IRAQ** **EXCLUSIVE**

Later, after a meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Bush said: "Saddam Hussein will be removed no matter how long it takes."

The coalition thrust towards Baghdad has three spearheads. The first is racing west from An Nasiriyah. The second has travelled through the desert mostly on the right bank of the Euphrates and is in the region of Karbala. It has engaged Iraqi troops in Nasiriyah and An Najaf on the way and much of these engagements still continue. This thrust continues on both banks of the Euphrates. The third is by and large taking the Tigris route.

These spearheads of the coalition thrusts have to be fed continuously with fuel, ammunition, spares and relief. The "snakes" of the spearheads are definitely targets of the Iraqi army, which has withdrawn even with armoured units into

cities on the Euphrates but are following a strategy of "active resistance", trying to make sudden attacks on the supply line.

On the Tigris thrust, fighting has been reported from two cities, one of which is Al Kut, the site of the defeat of the British army 80 years ago. Both cities have Iraqi Republican Guards divisions.

The "snake" of supply lines is being secured to sustain not only the spearheads but also an infantry division that is being redeployed from its intended staging ground in Turkey for a north-to-central thrust to Kuwait.

As the weather improved in Iraq after two days of blinding sandstorms, US troops consolidated their supply lines.

Baghdad was bombed again this afternoon and evening after dozens of blasts overnight.

In the south, British forces said they had destroyed 14 Iraqi tanks and four troop carriers making the latest of several attempts to break out of Basra.

With a quick-fix regime change no longer on the cards, the US seems

APR 6  
2003

# Stuck in Iraq

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

**B**ARELY A week into the second Gulf War, most of the cosy assumptions on which the US had based its decision to attack Iraq are in danger of being proved false. These were, first, that Saddam Hussein was a hated tyrant whom all but a handful of Iraqis would be happy to see the last of. Second, that the bulk of the Iraqi army, which was made up of 'wretched conscripts', was not prepared to fight a vastly superior force and would surrender in droves. Third, that there would, as a consequence, be relatively few Iraqi casualties, especially civilian. Fourth, that most Iraqis, especially the Shias of southern Iraq and the Kurds in the north, would welcome the 'coalition forces' as liberators.

All this would lead to a swift end to the war, perhaps in as little as two weeks. That would enable the 'coalition' to rush relief supplies into the Iraqi cities well before the food supplied before the war by the World Food Programme and slated to last for six weeks ran out. All this would facilitate a smooth and painless changeover from a dictatorial regime to a democratic one overseen by the United States.

As of today, all these calculations seem to be going haywire. Very few Iraqi soldiers have surrendered. On the contrary, the British and US forces moving towards Basra from Kuwait and towards Baghdad from the south have encountered unexpectedly stiff resistance. There have been pitched battles at Najaf and Nasiriyah. Heavy artillery fire has halted a British advance into Basra.

There has been a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for the 'liberators' among the people. There have been no civilian uprisings against Saddam, barring possibly a small one in Basra which might be part of a US-British covert operation using Iraqi dissidents. On the contrary, a top US army officer admitted to Bernard Weinraub of *The New York Times* that the Shia uprising that they had expected did not take place.

Still more unexpectedly, many civilians, currently estimated at 40,000, seem to have joined various irregular forces to fight the invaders. It is difficult not to conclude that while Saddam may be highly unpopular within the domestic Iraqi



SHOCK AND AWE: US Marines in a mud field in Nasiriyah, Iraq

grave doubt. In the north, the Kurds, so far the US's staunchest allies, could be facing a monstrous betrayal. The Turkish Parliament seems to have concluded that the fall of Saddam will be a prelude to the emergence of an independent Kurdish state and has authorised the army to move into Iraqi Kurdistan should the need arise. The US is adamant that Turkey should not do this, but is hardly likely to declare war on Turkey if Ankara ignores its admonitions and moves in.

In the south, the unexpected resistance by armed civilians using guerrilla tactics has thrown into sharp relief the basic contradiction between the military and political objectives of the Bush administration in Iraq. Faced by a well dug in and hostile military force inside Nasiriyah, Najaf and Basra, US and British military commanders had to decide whether or not to call in artillery fire and aircraft strikes in order to minimise their own casualties when they went in, or to avoid calling in such strikes in order to minimise civilian casualties and the consequent anger of the populace against them.

Reports from the frontlines suggest that initially the senior commanders resisted insistent appeals by their field commanders to 'soften' the enemy, but eventually gave in. As a result, civilians died in considerable numbers in Najaf and Nasiriyah on Monday. On Tuesday, the British declared Basra a 'legiti-

As in Baghdad, the rising death toll has aroused a wave of anger in the people. This has become much more strident after the US bombing of a marketplace and residential area in Baghdad which have reportedly claimed about 20 Iraqi lives. The stiffer the resistance that the coalition forces will meet, the greater the civilian death toll will be, making it more difficult for the Americans to convince anyone in Iraq that they have come as liberators.

But the damage has not ended there. The invaders no longer know which civilian is a friend and which is a foe. As a result, they are increasingly treating all of them as foes. American marines have been given a checklist of the types of civilian vehicles upon which they are allowed to fire. Video clips aired on BBC and CNN have shown a truck with its windscreen shot out and the driver dead beside the open door. The truck turned out to contain fertilisers. The commentator stuck gamely to his script and insisted that the fertilisers could have been used to manufacture explosives.

In the same way an Iraqi irregular who walked straight towards a tank holding aloft a rocket grenade, was shot dead on the presumption that he was a suicide bomber, when he could have been trying to surrender. No one was taking any chances.

What lies ahead is likely to make Basra, Nasiriyah and Najaf look like a picnic. To capture or kill Saddam, the Americans...

28 MAR 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# after four days



## Massacre blow to middle path

PRANAY SHARMA

**New Delhi, March 26:** It may still take a few more days for the American troops to reach Baghdad and get rid of Saddam Hussein, but India's policy on Iraq seems to be coming off the hinges already.

Delhi's muted response to the US invasion of Iraq, in an attempt to deny Pakistan an edge in its dealing with the Bush administration, has been jeopardised by Sunday night's massacre of 24 Kashmiri Pundits.

India seems to have landed in a soup — military action against Pakistan at this juncture threatens to ruin its relation with the US, while failure to deal with the situation will not only tarnish the country's "tough image", but also raise doubts about its ability to safeguard national interests.

South Block has given out clear signals to Washington and other key world capitals that it may be difficult for the Indian leadership to maintain status quo in South Asia if such Pakistan-sponsored terrorist activities continue at regular intervals.

Condemning the "senseless and brutal killings" on March 23, Pakistan's National Day, the foreign ministry said in a statement issued this evening: "No cause, no religion, no so-called struggle justifies such inhuman acts."

"The pattern, methodology and the nature of targets of these acts of terror are all too familiar and, therefore, the culpability of Pakistan is all too clear," the statement added.

set after an air strike in Baghdad on Wednesday. (Reuters)



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# Black column from hell *o/mo-1*

► FROM PAGE 1

Goggles sealed off the eyes. The sand crept in, anyway. "You dwell too long on it, you go crazy," Sgt Maj. Hector Torres said. To sleep, the soldiers curled up in the lee of trucks, or huddled in their sleeping bags, which are full of clever design features to make them miniature tents.

By day, the soldiers from the 101st were kept busy reinforcing the camp they have set up here in central Iraq.

The official name is Forward Operating Base Shell; another similar base is called Exxon. A few snipers have been spotted around the perimeters, and there is concern about mortar fire. The soldiers bulldozed the sand into long berms, and dug bunkers as a refuge.

For shelter, the soldiers climbed into the back of trucks or squatted in a friend's Humvee.

After the rain fell, the sky brightened, for an hour or so, into a strange burnt amber colour. "We're on Mars now," Sgt Henry DeGrace declared.

Gibbs said he spent nearly eight months here before the Persian Gulf war of 1991, so he had come well-stocked with baby wipes and the essentials of living without running water, with no showers or regular toilets.

Clothing turns out not to be all that important a part of the kit, since the protective chemical suits have to be worn 24 hours a day. Most soldiers wear just a tee shirt and underwear.

Sgt Michael E. Murray recalled using his pluggie — the global positioning device that nearly all the soldiers carry — a few weeks ago, during another sandstorm, to get to the mess hall. "It was good chow," he said, fondly recalling the meal.

As he and few soldiers chatted with a reporter, another man came into a tent. He had gone outside to burn one, as the soldiers say about having a cigarette. "You went outside to smoke in this?" asked Torres. "I would," interjected Sgt Murray, handing along a piece of military wisdom given to him: "You've got to embrace the suck."

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

global war against terrorism and Washington will continue to put pressure on Pakistan to stop cross-border-terrorism in Kashmir.

What US secretary of state Colin Powell had told foreign minister Yashwant Sinha on Monday was today repeated by American ambassador Robert Blackwill to deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani.

Blackwill met Advani this afternoon to gauge the Indian mood following the Kashmir carnage and told him the US was doing everything within its power to bring an end to terrorist acts in the Valley and elsewhere in the country.

The assurances notwithstanding, questions are now being raised on how prudent India's decision to adopt a "middle path" approach on Iraq was.

The pro-US sections within the Indian establishment have been arguing in favour of a moderate response from Delhi on Washington's armed action. They have repeatedly said India's interest should be safeguarded by refraining from being too critical of the US in order to prevent Pakistan from getting an upper hand while dealing with Washington.

"We want to avoid a situation where the US starts pushing in a big way to internationalise the Kashmir issue," a senior Indian leader had said recently.

However, the US state department's call for resuming the stalled India-Pakistan dialogue indicates that Delhi's policy has not been very effective so far.

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the Samiya Desert in Iraq has ensured that the vanguard of the US 3rd Mechanised Infantry Division is close to Baghdad now.

One significant reason for the lightning stride is that the invading force is largely bypassing cities and defences. Had, for instance, Saudi Arabia thrown open its borders to the US forces, they would have got to where they are now even earlier.

There are enough instances in military history in which an invading army makes rapid ground at first. That is what has happened this time in Iraq, too.

The US will forever be afraid of getting bogged down into a "dirty little war" in Iraq as it was

the US military, which has not been prone to taking risks since the Vietnam experience, has taken one this time.

Why? Because the Americans are sure that the superiority in men and material will overcome Saddam's forces.

Another important reason for the advance is technology. Technology has compressed the duration of wars, just as it has compressed so much in life. But technology has not changed the pattern of the war.

A war that is into its sixth day is still a "young" war but the information blitz is making it look much older. This is because time has been compressed.

tion-starved, this one is about being information-surplus. It is necessary to sift through the intelligence in that glut.

It will not be surprising to find television viewers tiring of the same images, though this war is just past a little more time than a full-length Test match.

Imagine, what it is like then to the men and women fighting the war, either as invader or as defender. Add to it the months and years of preparation that have gone into it.

Saddam's regime is, therefore, trying to play politically to win the war militarily. This war

# bombed

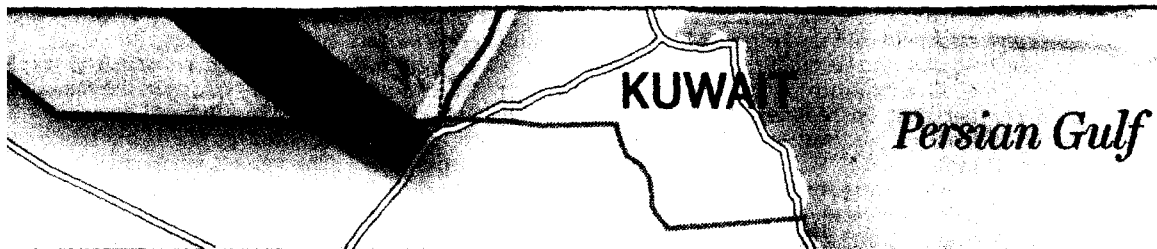
1 praises 'lethal precision'



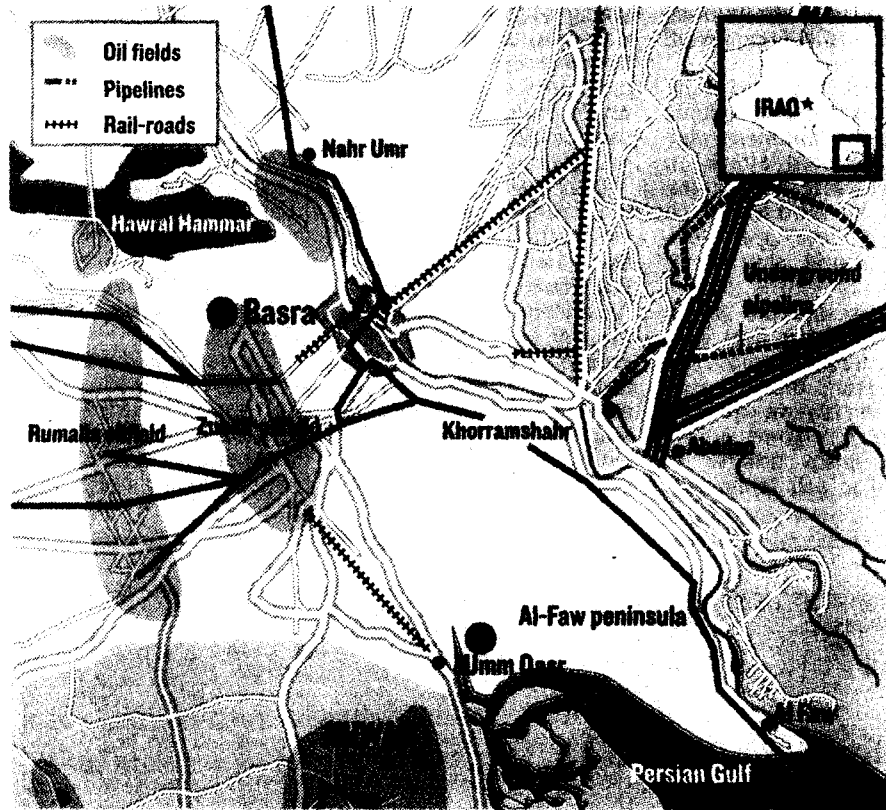
REUTERS

An Iraqi runs past wrecked cars after Baghdad was bombed on Wednesday.





## South Iraq: Resistance on last legs, aid trickle begins




### UMM QASR


City firmly under their control, US and British forces said Wednesday. 7 trucks carrying food and water arrived in the city. An additional 231 tonnes of aid, including 192 tonnes of food and fresh water, was due to arrive shortly on board the British aid vessel *Sir Galahad*


### BASRA

Pockets of resistance still alive, hampering entry of aid into city facing a humanitarian disaster. There has been no power or water in Basra since Friday, and 100,000 children are at risk from disease

## Overwhelming advantage: How the numbers stack up

 USA	
PERSONNEL (including Marines, Air Force and Navy)	241,000
TANKS	370
ARMoured VEHICLES	800
ARTILLERY	168
ROCKET LAUNCH SYSTEMS	54
ATTACK AIRCRAFT	1,430
HELICOPTERS	194
SHIPS AND SUBMARINES	100

 UK	
PERSONNEL (including Marines, Air Force and Navy)	37,800
TANKS	120
ARMoured VEHICLES	200
ARTILLERY	32
ATTACK AIRCRAFT	70
HELICOPTERS	62
SHIPS AND SUBMARINES	16

 IRAQ	
ARMY including Republican Guard	375,000
Special Republican Guard	80,000
AIR FORCE & NAVY	20-25,000
TANKS (operational)	30,000
ARMoured VEHICLES	1,500
ARTILLERY	2,000
MISSILES (possibly)	2,250
HELICOPTERS (operational)	100
ATTACK AIRCRAFT	100
	75-80

Source: AP, KRT, Reuters, Jane's  
Graphics: ASHUTOSH SAPRU, VINEY, SANJAY KAPOOR : Text: MONDJIT MAJUMDAR



# Water Wars

Oil has come to be synonymous with the ongoing Iraq war as both sides dig in for control of the world's second largest petroleum reserves. But another commodity perhaps more precious than oil will play a crucial role in the shape of things to come after the war in the region. That is water, long a source of contention between nations in the inhospitable terrain of West Asia. Iraq is particularly fortunate in this regard as two of Asia's biggest rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, run through it. Washington's biggest ally in the area, Israel, on the other hand, is perennially short of fresh water. Israel's only source of fresh water, the Sea of Galilee, is fed by aquifers from the Golan Heights, a crucial reason why Tel Aviv is loath to come to any agreement with Damascus on the contentious issue. But, in recent years, the water levels in the Galilee have been dropping, raising fears of a drought in Israel. Israel is already in conflict with Lebanon which has accused it of siphoning off water from its territory and, of course, the Palestinians who justifiably hold Israel guilty of diverting water from aquifers in Palestinian territory. The average Israeli uses 275 litres of water a day, a rate comparable with affluent European countries.

It is not for nothing that Israel has repeatedly warned that the next war in the area will be over water. Across the region there are ongoing water disputes and so far little done by way of mechanisms to settle them. The Euphrates and Tigris on whose banks the great Mesopotamian civilisation flourished flow through Syria, the Kurdish areas and then into Iraq. If Baghdad were to fall and an independent Kurdistan were to be formed outside the influence of Turkey, Tel Aviv is confident that it can come to an arrangement with it to buy water from these rivers at favourable rates. In any event, it will be Washington which will dictate who gets how much of the precious commodity. For hardliners in Israel, water is the key to supporting its expansionist plans and encouraging more Jews to return to the promised land. So far, the US has been silent on water, confining itself to the volatile issue of oil. But those who planned this war are in no doubt that more than destroying supposed weapons of mass destruction, it is control over oil and water, not necessarily in that order, that will shape the course of the future in the troubled region.

27 MAR 2003

# Civilians

## 15 killed in Baghdad ● Bush

Baghdad, March 26

TWO CRUISE missiles struck a residential area in Baghdad on Wednesday, killing at least 15 Iraqis and injuring 30. But President Bush praised the "lethal precision" of American pilots and missiles.

"Our pilots and cruise missiles have struck vital military targets with lethal precision," Bush said.

The missile strike occurred around midday in the heavily populated Baghdad neighbourhood of Al-Shaab. The area consists of homes and about 30 shops, mostly inexpensive restaurants and auto repair shops.

At least 15 scorched corpses littered the street amid blackened and mangled cars and rubble from broken buildings, while flames leapt from an oil tanker.

The massacre is likely to be a major setback for British and US efforts to reduce public opposition to the war by minimising civilian casualties. A US Central Command spokesman said coalition forces take "extraordinary" measures to protect civilians.

A furious Russia poured scorn on the claim. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said: "It is already becoming clear how far removed from reality are their (the allies') attempts to present military action against Iraq as a triumphant march for the liberation of the Iraqi people with minimal casualties and destruction."

British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon, however, said that though civilian casualties will "obviously" increase with air strikes, that will not slow down the military campaign. "Obviously, as we move forward, those risks are increased and obviously, as the aerial campaign has demonstrated, there are risks to civilians," Hoon told Parliament. "But I do not believe that in any way has slowed down the campaign nor will we allow it to."

At the massacre site, dozens of people standing amid the debris shook their fists in anger. "This is barbarian!" shouted Adnan Saleh Barseem. "It's proof that their aggression is collapsing."

Iraq on Wednesday finally decided to take the battle to the enemy camp. A large contingent of the elite Republican Guard headed south in a 1,000-vehicle convoy towards US Marines in central Iraq. US intelligence said the Republican Guard units were travelling on a route that avoids advancing US Army troops but leads directly to the Marines who had recently been fighting in An Nasiriyah.

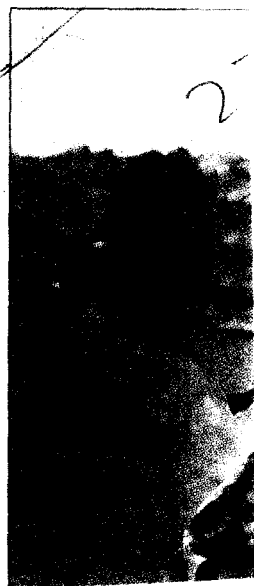
With their advance troops still stranded 50 miles from Baghdad, buffeted by a second day of sandstorms, the allies shifted the focus of their land campaign. They have decided to take on the Fidayeen and other militias in the south before beginning the battle for Baghdad.

The American strategy had been to bypass Iraq's southern cities and drive towards the capital to take on the Republican Guards. But the militias have so successfully harassed the advancing allies from the rear that commanders decided this Iraqi threat has to be addressed first.

But the coalition went ahead with the preparation for a final assault on Baghdad, trying to cripple the regime's communications in overnight bombing. Iraqi satellite TV was knocked off the air around 4.30 am after an attack, but resumed telecasting about eight hours later. The domestic state-run television, which doesn't telecast at night, resumed broadcasting in the morning as scheduled. But there was no trace of Al-Shabab TV, owned by Saddam's son Qadai



COLLATERAL DAMAGE:



# U.S. plans despatch of 1 lakh more troops

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 28. Even while refusing to concede that the present plan on hand is not sufficient to achieve the kind of victory it is looking for, the Bush administration is planning to add at least 100,000 more troops on the ground in Iraq next month. If and when this takes place, it would double the number of troops in that country to about 225,000.

Administration officials, some of whom had insisted that a "lean" force is what was required to achieve objectives in Iraq, are now arguing that the infusion of 100,000 more troops was a part of a "long developed" war plan.

The Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, denied that Pentagon is altering any of the existing plans. Critics have been saying that to achieve the military objectives in Iraq, the U.S. should have had a very large

contingent of troops, perhaps around of 300,000 forces or more. "It's a good plan and it was designed in a way that forces would continue to flow over a sustained period", Mr. Rumsfeld told reporters here after meeting lawmakers on Capitol Hill. "Every day the number of coalition forces in Iraq is increasing by one or two or three thousand people and it's going to continue to do that — and we have plenty of forces en route", he said.

Mr. Rumsfeld also suggested to a Senate panel that American and coalition forces may not opt for an all-out assault on the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, rather lay a siege and wait for the anti-Saddam Hussein elements to rise in revolt. To some extent, the Republican administration here is banking on the Shiite population to rise in revolt. But the Defence Secretary was clear that the U.S. will not stop at

anything but total victory.

"There isn't going to be a ceasefire. It will end at the point where that regime does not exist and a new regime is ready to go in its place", Mr. Rumsfeld told the Senate Appropriations Defence sub-committee.

Senior administration officials are talking to lawmakers on the President's supplemental request for \$75 billions as the initial cost of military operations and other related expenses that include doling out economic assistance to many in the so-called Coalition of the Willing.

Senior officials and military planners here are saying that as the battle for Baghdad is reaching the decisive stage, the U.S. will be using its heavy and time-tested B-52s out of bases in England and Diego Garcia to continuously pound and soften Iraqi military targets, especially that of the Republican Guards.

## Iraqi resistance slows down coalition advance

By Atul Aneja

AS SAYLIYAH (QATAR), MARCH 28. With the yellow haze over the Iraqi desert resulting from fierce sandstorms abating, the U.S. advance towards Baghdad is expected to gather some momentum. But the final assault on the Iraqi capital is likely to await the arrival of more reinforcements. Military analysts visualise that the U.S. might wait for the anticipated arrival of around 100,000 additional troops before committing itself to a final attack on Baghdad.

That means, the U.S. fourth Infantry division that had been moved earlier towards the Turkish front in anticipation of Ankara permitting this forces to funnel into northern Iraq, has now to be fully re-deployed. Not surprisingly, forces belonging to the fourth infantry division have begun to land by ship on the Red Sea port of Yanbu in Saudi Arabia earlier this week. It is expected that most of these troops will be shifted to beef up a western assault on Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's strongholds of Falluja and Tikrit, in the vicinity of Baghdad.

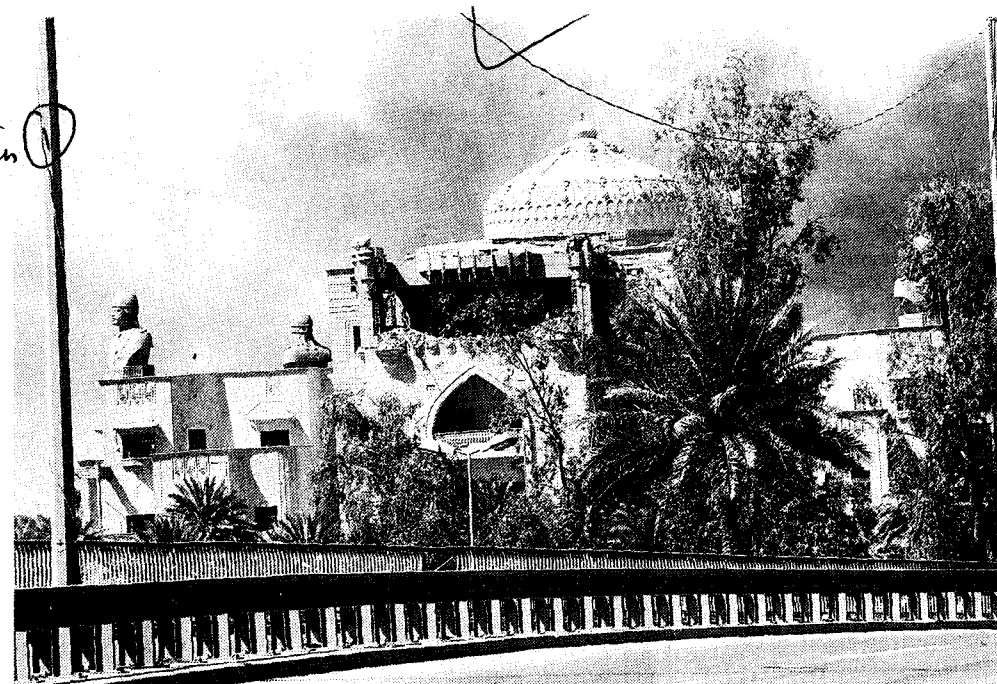
Some of these combatants might also be moved towards the north to open up what has been described as the "northern front." At a press briefing this afternoon, the spokesperson of the U.S. Central Command, Vincent Brooks, said that para-dropping of the U.S. 173 airborne brigade in

northern Iraq on Thursday was part of an on-going build up in northern Iraq. Eight days after the war, troops belonging to the U.S. elite 101st airborne division have reached closest to the gates of Baghdad.

Deployed quietly three days after the war began, this force showed up west of Karbala on Thursday. Contrary to the considerable ground covered by the 101st airborne division, fierce resistance offered by the Fedayeen parliamentary units appears to have bogged down the advance of the U.S. third infantry division, nearly 150 km short of Baghdad. Fighting appears to be centred around three flashpoints. Combat is being reported around the Shia stronghold of Najaf, where U.S. forces are contending with mixed forces that includes the Fedayeen guerillas and elements of the Republican Guards' Medina division.

In the As Nasiriyah area along the Euphrates, the U.S. marines have been unable to break out towards Baghdad in the face of stiff Fedayeen resistance.

Around 2000 troops of the Iraqi Nebuchadnezzar division of the Special Republican Guards has been reportedly sent from Baghdad towards Al Kut along the Tigris River to check the U.S. advance. In Basra in southern Iraq, the British forces did not appear to make any significant military headway.



Smoke from burning oil in trenches rises behind one of Saddam Hussein's palaces after an air strike in Baghdad, early on Friday. — AP

## British relief ship docks at Umm Qasr

UMM QASR, MARCH 28. Flanked by patrol boats and assault helicopters, the British supply ship 'Sir Galahad' docked at the Umm Qasr port on Friday, loaded with the first military shipment of relief aid for Iraqi civilians.

Just ahead of it was the British mine-detecting ship HMS Sandown, clearing a route in the Khor Abdallah waterway, where U.S. and British minesweeping teams have found and detonated six potential mines in the past 36 hours.

The cargo consists of 100 tonnes of water and 150 tonnes of rice, lentils, cooking oil, tomato paste, chick peas, sugar, powdered milk and tea, medical supplies and blankets.

The bulk of the aid was donated by Britain. In Baghdad, Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed, Saeed al-Sahaf, insisted Umm Qasr was still under Iraqi control. He said "Imperialist sheep" had sent out lies and misinformation under the influence of Hollywood movies. Group Captain Al Lockwood, the main British spokesman at war headquarters in Qatar, said U.S.-led forces were still sweeping for mines in the waterway linking Umm Qasr to the Gulf. — AP

## Worst crisis since Cold War: Putin

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, MARCH 28. The United States-led war against Iraq has triggered the worst international crisis since the end of the Cold War and is fraught with global destabilisation, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said on Friday.

The war "has gone beyond the confines of a local conflict," Mr. Putin said during a meeting with Russian lawmakers in the Kremlin on Friday. "It is for the first time since the end of the Cold War that the international community has encountered such a grave crisis (fraught with) the danger of rocking the foundations of global stability and international law."

The Russian leader has again warned of an impending humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq. The fighting "is getting increasingly fierce and protracted, the loss of human lives and destructions are increasingly massive," Mr. Putin said. "The paramount task before the international community is to prevent a looming humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq."

Mr. Putin called on the U.S. to stop the war immediately and seek political solution to the crisis. "The only correct solution is

the immediate end to military action in Iraq and resumption of a political settlement in the U.N. Security Council."

Mr. Putin said Moscow was ready for dialogue with all parties involved in the Iraqi conflict, "including the U.S." "The partnership character of our relations with America will give us a basis for continuing our open dialogue," Mr. Putin told Russian lawmakers.

Meanwhile, Russia has protested to the U.S. over "threats" to Russian diplomats in Iraq. The Russian embassy in Washington lodged the protest with the State Department on Thursday, sources said. In an interview to Russian media, the U.S. ambassador, Alexander Vershbow, on Thursday warned that it was "pretty risky for the Russian embassy (in Baghdad) to maintain its staff there."

The Russian Foreign Ministry accused the U.S. envoy of making "veiled threats" to the Russian diplomatic staff in Baghdad, the sources said.

Russia is one of the few countries, which have neither closed down its embassy in Iraq nor scaled down its representation. The Russian mission is still headed by an ambassador and includes about 25 staff.

14 KILLED IN MISSILE ATTACK ON RESIDENTIAL AREA IN BAGHDAD

# Elite Iraqi troops to take on Marines

**SOUTH-CENTRAL IRAQ, MARCH 26.** A large contingent of Iraq's elite Republican Guard headed south today in a convoy of about 1,000 vehicles towards U.S. Marines in central Iraq — an area that has already seen the heaviest fighting of the war. In Baghdad, Iraqi officials said two cruise missiles hit a residential area, killing 14 persons. Hundreds of Iraqis were reported killed and the U.S.-led coalition advance on Baghdad held up in the biggest battle so far of the war to topple the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's regime, as air strikes continued to pound the capital.

Intelligence officers with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force said the Republican Guard units were headed in a 1,000-vehicle convoy from Baghdad on a route that avoids advancing U.S. Army forces but leads directly to the Marines who have been fighting in recent days around the city of An Nasiriyah. The advance appeared to signal that the Republican Guard, Mr. Hussein's best trained and most loyal force, was still prepared to go on the offensive despite several days of allied air strikes and missile attacks on its positions.

British reports suggested there may have been an uprising against Mr. Hussein's regime in the southern city of Basra.

The Iraqis denied there was



Iraqis struggle to get boxes with food from a trailer brought to Safwan by the Kuwait Red Crescent on Wednesday. — AP

any such uprising.

In Baghdad, Iraqi defence officials said two cruise missiles struck a residential area. Hamad

Abdullah, head of civil defence

of the area, said 14 persons were killed and 30 injured in the attack in the northern Al-Shaab neigh-

bourhood. Charred bodies and mangled cars littered the area, sparking fury among crowds of Iraqis, after what witnesses and local officials said was a double missile strike.

Crowds of enraged Iraqis carried away bodies chanting: "there is no God but Allah" and "we will sacrifice our blood and souls for you, Saddam". The U.S. Central Command said it was aware of claims that a market area had been hit and was checking the report.

American and British warplanes pummelled Baghdad and its suburbs through the night and into the morning in a bid to soften up frontlines for advancing coalition forces, targeting Republican Guard strongholds on the capital's outskirts and television stations.

The air raids came after U.S.

armoured forces clashed with foot soldiers in sandstorm south of Baghdad, reportedly killing up to 650 Iraqis in the fiercest fighting so far.

A blizzard of dust meanwhile kept a fleet of helicopters out of action for the second day.

Aid trickled into Iraq today, with Kuwait sending food to the border port of Umm Qasr and trucks braving a dangerous trip across the west to get medicines to Baghdad.

In Basra, Red Cross workers managed to get the water supply partially working again as they strove to avert a crisis for two million people trapped in the city.

On Tuesday, the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, said the U.S. was legally responsible for providing relief aid. — AP, Reuters, AFP

## WAR UPDATE



Pope John Paul II praying in the Vatican on Wednesday. He said he thought "about the news from Iraq with a heavy heart without forgetting the other conflicts that bloody the world." — AP

- Hundreds of Iraqis killed in battles as coalition forces advance on Baghdad.
- U.N. Security Council open meeting to call for an immediate end to the conflict.
- Faced with mounting Iraqi resistance, the U.S. is altering its overall war plan.
- Blair says the allies should broaden their agenda beyond Iraq.
- Britain says there was an anti-Saddam uprising in Basra; Iraq has denied it.
- Saudi Arabia says it has put forward only ideas and not a formal initiative to end the war.
- Marines confiscate more than 3000 chemical suits and masks from a hospital in An Nasiriyah.
- Russia expresses fears that the U.S. could fabricate evidence of Iraq hiding its weapons of mass destruction.
- Two British soldiers killed in friendly fire when their Challenger tank was targeted by a similar tank.
- A convoy of Kuwaiti food aid arrives in Umm Qasr.
- Anti-war protests continue in many countries.



# Saddam sounds defiant on missiles

**BAGHDAD, FEB. 25.** The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, indicated he will disobey United Nations orders to destroy his Al Samoud 2 missiles, CBS News said, but the Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, insisted on Tuesday that no decision had been reached as Iraqis "prepare ourselves for the battle."

In a three-hour interview in Baghdad, CBS television quoted Mr. Hussein as belittling an order from the chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, to begin destroying the Al Samoud 2 system by the end of the week. "Iraq is allowed to prepare proper missiles and we are committed to that," the network quoted him as saying. Asked whether the Al Samoud 2 missiles are "proper," Mr. Hussein was quoted as replying: "We do not have missiles that go beyond the proscribed range."

But top officials said on Tuesday that Iraq still hadn't made a decision on the missiles. "It's being studied," Mr. Aziz said in a meeting with Egyptian dignitaries.

"Readiness for the aggression is continuing ... but this doesn't mean that we should stop our political and diplomatic work," Mr. Aziz said. "We should continue with it, but we should also prepare ourselves for the bat-



**Iraqis raise slogans in protest as the U.N. weapons inspectors search the Al-Fayhaa poultry company near Babylon on Tuesday. — AP**

tle." Lt. Gen. Amer al-Saadi, Mr. Hussein's adviser on the inspections, said Iraq was still studying the U.N. order. He said he couldn't comment on the CBS interview because he hadn't seen it.

Recent visitors have said Mr. Hussein appeared eager to cooperate fully with the U.N. inspectors in a bid to avert a U.S.-led war. Those include the former U.S. Attorney-General,

Ramsey Clark, and the former Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov.

Mr. Clark said that Mr. Saddam sees little incentive to cooperate with the inspectors because he believes the U.S. President, George W. Bush, is set on war. "What he thinks is, no matter what Iraq's performance is, the President will attack". In the CBS interview, Mr. Hussein also challenged Mr.

Bush to a televised debate via satellite link-up, along the lines of those in a U.S. presidential campaign, the network said. "I am ready to conduct a direct dialogue — a debate — with your President," CBS quoted Mr. Hussein as telling the anchor. "I will say what I want and he will say what he wants."

CBS quoted Mr. Hussein as saying, "This is something proposed in earnest out of my respect for the people of the United States Iraq and the rest of the world. I call for this because war is not a joke. As leaders, why don't we use this opportunity?"

In Washington, the White House spokesman, Mr. Ari Fleischer, said Mr. Bush wasn't taking the debate offer seriously. "This is not a serious issue," Mr. Fleischer said. "There is no debating his need to disarm."

Mr. Blix's order came after international experts determined the Al Samoud 2 flew farther than the 150-km limit set down by the U.N. in 1991.

Iraq maintains some of the missiles overshot the limit because they were tested without warheads and guidance systems.

Iraq has until the end of the week to begin destroying the missiles, components and related systems. — AP

## U.S. dismisses Saddam's offer of debate

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**WASHINGTON, FEB. 25.** The White House has reacted along expected lines to the statements of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, as it pertained to the destruction of the Al Samoud 2 missiles.

The spokesman, Ari Fleischer, has said that Mr. Hussein's reported refusal to get rid of the Al Samoud 2 missiles is an "open defiance" of the United Nations. "He even refuses to acknowledge that the weapons are prohibited", Mr. Fleischer said.

The White House was responding to Mr. Hussein's lengthy interview with the anchor of CBS News, Dan Rather. Excerpts of the interview are scheduled to be broadcast today with the entire interview to be aired on Wednesday.

In the course of his three-hour meeting with the Iraqi leader, Mr. Rather has been quoted as saying that Mr. Hussein ap-

peared to be "unhurried". "Iraq is allowed to prepare proper missiles and we are committed to that", the Iraqi President has been quoted as saying. Asked if the Al Samoud 2 missiles are "proper", Mr. Hussein was quoted as replying, "We do not have missiles that go beyond the prescribed range. "There is a 93-mile limit on the Al Samoud 2 missiles and the U.N. weapons inspectors recently said that this range has been breached. According to Mr. Rather, in the course of the interview Mr. Hussein challenged the U.S. President, George W. Bush, to a live debate, an offer straightaway dismissed by the White House. "This is not a serious issue. There is no debating his need to disarm", Mr. Fleischer remarked.

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, the top weapons inspector, Hans Blix, has said that he is serious about the imperative of Iraq dismantling and starting destruction of the Al Samoud 2 missiles. Dr. Blix has

pointed said that any discussion could only be about the "pace" of destruction of the missiles. This process is to begin on March 1. "We have set the date for the commencement of the destruction of these missiles and we expect that to be respected. There will be a discussion about the pace of the destruction", Dr. Blix maintained going on to say that his deputy will be in Baghdad for the purpose. But what has to be taken note of is that even if Iraq dismantles and destroys the Al Samoud 2 missiles, that will not be of satisfaction to the Republican administration here which maintains that Baghdad has to account for the stockpiles of sarin and VX nerve agent.

"This is not about public relations. This is about protecting the lives of the American people. If Saddam Hussein destroys the missiles that he said he never had... you've got to wonder what other weapons does he have", he said.

BLAIR SEES DIFFICULT DAYS AHEAD

# Sandstorms slow allies' march to Baghdad

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NEAR KARBALA (IRAQ), MARCH 25. Fierce sandstorms that reduced visibility to a few feet slowed American and British forces to a crawl and thwarted air missions on Tuesday as the U.S.-led forces edged closer to the Iraqi capital. Baghdad residents, hunkered down for an eventual battle, woke to howling winds and the distant crash of artillery.

Combat missions from two aircraft carriers were called back due to bad weather. At least a dozen planes returned without reaching Iraq. Two Army divisions were virtually stalled in a vicious sandstorm.

Saudi Arabia has contacted the U.S. and Iraq with a peace proposal, the kingdom's Foreign Minister told newsmen in Riyadh. He said he was awaiting a response.

Iraq accused the U.S. and Britain of creating a humanitarian crisis by forcing the United Nations to halt food and medicine destined for the country. The southern port city of Umm Qasr on the Kuwaiti border is under the control of the invading forces, but it has been left without water supplies or electricity. Residents say stocks of food are running low.

Tuesday's sandstorms were "exceptional" even for Iraq which often sees them in the spring, AccuWeather meteorologist John Gresiak said. Dust and sand flew in from as far away as Egypt and Libya, he said adding muddy rain was likely later in the

day, lighter winds tomorrow and then no major sandstorms for at least several days.

## Another British soldier killed

Meanwhile, British forces — a day after coming under heavy attack — declared that parts of Basra, Iraq's second largest city, were now a "military target". A second British soldier was reported killed overnight near the town of Az Zubayr, close to Basra.

An AFP correspondent in An Nassiriya reported that more than 100 Iraqi bodies littered the road north from the town where U.S. Marines headed toward Baghdad after fierce fighting. It was not clear how many were soldiers or civilians trying to flee the key passageway over the Euphrates river after days of the sharpest fighting of the war.

The odour of burnt flesh filled the air and the road was strewn with bombed-out vehicles.

A military spokesman said in Baghdad that an Iraqi committed a suicide attack in the southern region of Fao overnight and destroyed a tank of the coalition forces. The Iraqi Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, told a news conference that Iraq had killed at least eight invading troops, destroyed three armoured personnel carriers and downed three U.S. helicopters in recent fighting against U.S. and British forces.

Iraq's Trade Minister, Mohammed Meh-

di Saleh, denounced what he described as the "inhumane and immoral behaviour" of the two countries for blocking the U.N.'s oil-for-food programme. "There are products and contracts currently on ships and near the border and some are in Jordan," the Minister told reporters in Baghdad. He retorted, though, that Iraq was a country that could fend for itself. "Iraq does not need any humanitarian assistance. We are a rich country."

Meanwhile in London, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, predicted difficult days ahead in the assault on Iraq, and British forces reported that Iraqis were using human shields to defend Basra.

"There will be resistance all the way to the end of this campaign," Mr. Blair said at his second news conference since the invasion began. "It will take time and perseverance and the continuing skill and dedication and professionalism of our armed forces to break it down."

In five days of fighting, "a huge amount has already been achieved", he said adding that British forces had "secured" the port town of Umm Qasr in southern Iraq, and that resistance had been anticipated. "Nobody, least of all the forces loyal to Mr. Hussein, should be in any doubt that the resistance will be broken down and that the goals of the coalition forces will be met." — AP, AFP, Reuters, PTI

# Sandstorms may give Iraq a breather

By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA, MARCH 25.** The brewing sandstorms in the Iraqi desert are likely to retard the pace of the U.S. ground offensive that is targeting Baghdad from three directions.

For the next three days, the advancing U.S. troops may worry less about the speed of the campaign, but more about ways to prevent fine sand grains choking their tank and helicopter engines.

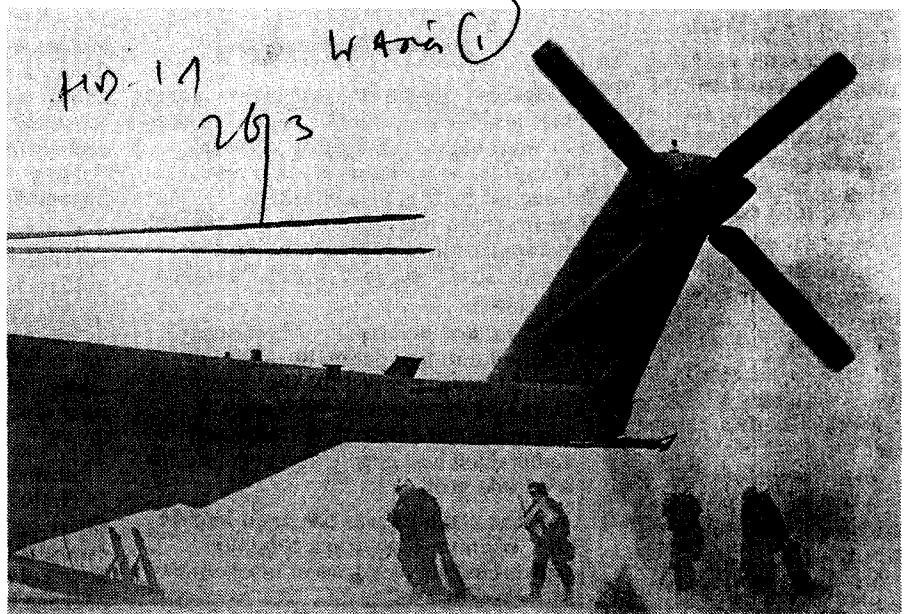
The U.S. and British forces that are advancing towards Baghdad across Iraq's western desert zone from the direction of Jordan may also have to bide their time. This column, at this point, is close to Ar Rutba and could subsequently head towards Tikrit, a stronghold of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, north of Baghdad.

In northern Iraq, where the U.S. is flowing in Special Forces from Kurdish air bases such as Bemarni, Harir and Bakarjo, swirling snowstorms, rather than desert sand, may interfere with the build-up. The aim of this formation is to take hold of the northern oil cities of Mosul and Kirkuk and exert pressure on Tikrit.

Consequently, decisive battles for the takeover of Baghdad may take place around the weekend, when the weather is likely to clear up. Iraqi forces that have been subjected to relentless U.S. military pressure may seize this opportunity to replenish supplies, repair equipment and regroup.

After six days of war, it is becoming clear that the main U.S. advance towards Baghdad is coming from the south along the Euphrates and Tigris river valleys. Two columns are advancing along the Tigris, while a third led by the U.S. Seventh Cavalry is heading along the Euphrates. The shadowy presence of a fourth column running further west of the U.S. Seventh Cavalry is also suspected.

The U.S. forces seeking to overrun Baghdad have since Sunday night begun to engage the well-armed Iraqi Republican



**U.S. Marines struggle to make their way through a sandstorm to board a CH-53E Sea Stallion in the Kuwaiti desert on Tuesday. — AP**

Guard units that form the core of Baghdad's defences. The Medina division of the guards has been battling with the elements of the U.S. Third Infantry Division and the 82nd Airborne Division at Al Amarah and Al Kut along the Tigris, in Central Iraq, since Sunday night.

The battle at Al Kut that has raged throughout Sunday night and Monday, has still not abated. The U.S. forces of the Seventh Cavalry that have bypassed Karbala are now likely to confront the Hamourabi division of the Special Republican Guard.

This battle could prove decisive, for a defeat of the Hamourabi division will bring the advancing U.S. forces close to Baghdad's Saddam International airport.

The U.S. forces, before the decisive battles for Baghdad begin, are seeking to fulfil two key military objectives. Their first goal is to advance artillery units to distances

from where Baghdad can be subjected to intense shelling. Second, the U.S. planners want a link-up of the Hamourabi and Medina divisions prevented. The U.S. air attacks till the ground battles for Baghdad commence are now likely to focus on "freezing" the Republican Guard units, so that they cannot retreat into Baghdad for hand-to-hand combat with the invading force later.

The weakest link in the U.S. advance so far has been its rapidly elongating supply lines, which can now be subjected to "fidayeen" guerilla attacks with greater frequency.

Faced with Iraqi resistance, the U.S. is also looking for reinforcing its forces before the assault on Baghdad fully materialises. The U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade is already heading for the Gulf from Italy and Fourth Armoured Division crossed the Suez Canal on Monday.

26 MAR 2003

THE HINDS



# Demilitarised to occupied zone

## WAR BRIEFS

### Luckiest shot since 1918

London, March 25: If the American AH64D Longbow Apache, the world's most advanced combat helicopter, really was brought down by an Iraqi farmer armed with a bolt-action rifle, as the Baghdad regime claims, he will be the world's luckiest shot since Sgt Cedric Basset Popkin. It was the Australian Sgt Popkin who in April 1918 noticed a German triplane flying over his position in France. Firing into the air with his rifle, incredibly he hit the pilot. The pilot was none other than the notorious German ace Baron Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, scourge of the Royal Flying Corps.

In the 1991 Gulf War, the AH64 flew almost 10,000 missions, and is credited with destroying 837 tanks and other armoured vehicles, 501 wheeled vehicles, 66 bunkers and radar sites, 12 helicopters on the ground, 10 fighters on the ground, 120 artillery sites and 42 SAM and AAA sites. Only one aircraft was reported lost in combat.

According to Paul Jackson, the editor of *Jane's All The World's Aircraft*, the Apache is designed to be able to withstand the impact of 23mm anti-aircraft fire. So the chances of being downed by a single shot are very slim, he said.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

### Al-Jazeera ban

New York (Reuters): The New York Stock Exchange banned an Al-Jazeera reporter from its trading floor on Monday, saying it was restricting access to "responsible" networks, as the Arab satellite television channel faces criticism in the US for its coverage of the war in Iraq. The ban is "indefinite". Al-Jazeera could not be contacted.

### Chemical line

Washington (Reuters): US officials say the Iraqi leadership has drawn "a red line" around the map of Baghdad and once American troops cross it, Iraqi Republican Guards have been authorised to use chemical weapons, US television networks reported on Monday. The reports by CNN, NBC and CBS's national security correspondent David Martin did not name the US officials or give any further details. A senior Pentagon source, however, said he could not confirm the reports.

### Numbers game

London (Reuters): The US-led force in Iraq risks as many as 3,000 casualties in the Battle for Baghdad and Washington has underestimated the number of troops needed, a former commander from the 1991 Gulf War said. Retired US Gen Barry McCaffrey, commander of the 24th Infantry Division 12 years ago, said defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld had misjudged the nature of the conflict.

### Overflight right

Paris (Reuters): French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin on Tuesday defended his country's decision to maintain overflight rights for British and US military planes heading for Iraq in a war France staunchly opposes. "There are, as the French President has underlined, customs between allies that we should respect, and among those are overflight rights," Villepin said in answer to a National Assembly deputy who asked why Paris was letting the planes use its airspace. "No Nato member, whatever its position with regard to the war, has questioned these (rights)," the minister said.

## The Telegraph IRAQ EXCLUSIVE

SUJAN DUTTA

Near the Kuwait-Iraq border, March 25: From the vantage point somewhere in this Arabian desert vastness, the horizon to the northeast is marked by plumes of smoke that are sometimes faint and sometimes prominent.

That is where Iraq's Umm Qasr and then on Basra are. Battles still rage there because an all but defeated army has rolled itself up into little knots of resistance in the face of the coalition military might.

From where those columns of smoke rise, there is a people

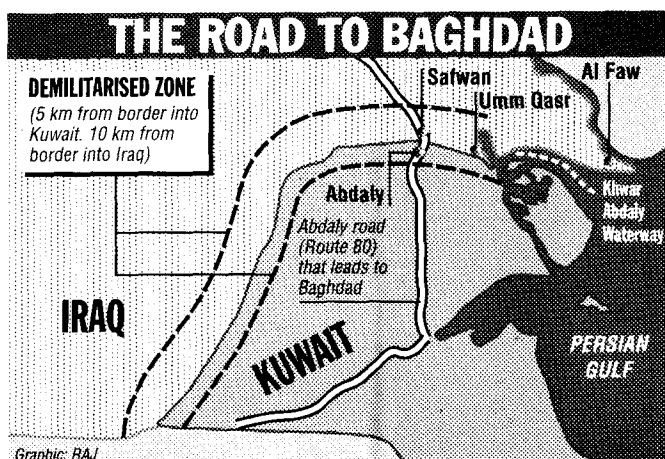
waiting for water, food and shelter. From where we stand, those columns of smoke might as well have been from smouldering ruins of the United Nations.

We are at a point that should otherwise have been part of the demilitarised zone (DMZ) monitored by the United Nations Iraq Kuwait Observer Mission (Unikom).

Staffed by handpicked soldiers and officers from the world's militaries, Unikom's mandate has since been suspended. Its officers have withdrawn to safer havens, in the Kheitan support centre near Kuwait City, its other staff to Brindisi in Italy and Dhaka in Bangladesh.

Yesterday, Iraqi officers in Baghdad called UN secretary general Kofi Annan names, called him a "salaried employee of America". The UN has not been able to prevent the war and now it is unable to enforce peace, they have alleged.

We cannot go beyond the



point where we are. There is a crew from Latvian State Television with me. We have been warned, of course, that we go at our own risk and in any case we simply cannot make it to the border without military escort. We just wanted to check that out and here we are being turned back at a check post of the Kuwaiti Army. There is no question of resisting.

On the way, we have seen camps of the coalition forces from a distance, rows and rows of armoured vehicles, huge, sophisticated trucks and trailers.

In one camp we can make out the shapes of helicopters of different kinds — the Chinooks with their double rotors are easi-

ly identifiable — that take off and land in clouds of dust. The dust gets into everything, shoes, in the folds of clothes and in the ears, into the M4 rifles that the soldiers carry.

This is what used to be the "demilitarised zone". It used to be to our right and to our left and even on the water.

Three roads lead into Iraq from Kuwait. The main road is "Route 80" or the Abdaly road. Abdaly is the last point on the border with Iraq along Route 80.

On the Iraqi side, the town facing Abdaly is Safwan. Safwan was overrun by the coalition forces in a blitz on Day 1 of the war.

Till two weeks ago, 4x4s of the Unikom, each with an officer and a soldier in the front seat, patrolled the Kuwait-Iraq border. The land border Unikom monitored was 200 km long, the maritime boundary, to our right, 45 km.

On its width, the DMZ used to stretch from 10 km inside Iraq to

5 km inside Kuwait. Umm Qasr, where Unikom was headquartered, lies on the far east of the border. That is also where the navigable Khwar Abdaly Waterway was used by the peacekeepers for maritime supervision.

The DMZ was divided into three sectors — the maritime with three Patrol Observation Bases (POBs), the northern with 8 POBs and the southern with 8 POBs. One of the maritime POBs was in Al Faw Peninsula that has been taken by the British Royal Commandos.

Unikom's chief of staff, Brigadier Upinder Clair, a dashing despite his age officer from the armoured corps of the Indian army, drove from POB to POB, in his 4x4, flying a white flag, a soldier or another officer by his side.

"We drove ourselves," says Clair. "And we sent daily situation reports. We carried out aerial surveys by two choppers. We had boats and radars." In many ways, Unikom was a

unique outfit even by UN standards. It was staffed by military observers from 31 countries, including representatives from all five permanent members of the Security Council. It had a battalion and a helicopter unit from Bangladesh and the Malteser German Medical Unit. Unikom's commander is Major General Franczick Gagor of Poland.

Five days before the war began, Unikom noted breaches in the berms — walls of desert sand and stone — that determine the border. Closer to the 19th, the number of breaches increased. Unikom POBs in the isolated sectors began withdrawing from the 14th and on the night of 17th and 18th Unikom got orders to pull out.

For Brigadier Clair, it has afforded him the opportunity to meet his wife flying home to India from the US via Kuwait.

For Kofi Annan and the United Nations, there is no meeting ground on the Kuwait-Iraq frontier anymore.

## Charge to Baghdad, via armoured corridor

An Nasiriyah, March 25 (Reuters): US Marines finally punched a path through stubborn Iraqi resistance and forced their way across the Euphrates river after a fierce street battle in the southern Iraqi city of An Nasiriyah that opened up a new line of advance northward toward Baghdad.

But they met a fresh ambush on the road north, despite an air strike that killed at least 30 Iraqis apparently heading into battle.

In Baghdad, warplanes hammered elite Republican Guards defending the city. Field commanders said the war unleashed by the US and Britain last week to topple President Saddam Hussein was on track, but America's top soldier said the hardest combat of the war still lay ahead.

Military briefers told reporters at Central Command in Qatar that US paratroopers had seized a desert landing strip overnight and that six Iraqi jamming systems aimed at disrupting US satellite positioning equipment had been destroyed.

As the battle front moved closer to Baghdad, the main prize in the campaign, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers said: "We think the toughest fighting is ahead of us."

Once out of An Nasiriyah city, the Marines passed blasted Iraqi buses and other vehicles hit by the air strike. Two days after a first bid to cross the river and the nearby Saddam Canal was blocked by Iraqi irregulars, the Marines laid down a 3.5-km corridor of armoured vehicles and the convoy charged through the streets under cover of helicopter rockets and a barrage of artillery, tank and heavy

machinegun fire. Once the trucks and other vulnerable vehicles were across, the tanks and other armoured vehicles rolled out behind, leaving Iraqi fighters still operating in An Nasiriyah, a dusty city of more than a quarter of a million, 375 km south of the capital.

US leaders "wanted us to come north, so we needed to get all of our stuff through, and this was the way to do it," said Lew Craparotta, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Infantry regiment.

The Euphrates had been a major barrier on their route to Baghdad from Kuwait, 150 km to the south. At least five Iraqis died during nearly three hours of intense fighting from first light in the city centre, Craparotta said. One US Marine was slightly wounded from a bullet ricochet.

Two of the dead Iraqi men, whose family said they were brothers in their 40s, lay on the floor in separate rooms of a house looking onto the main road. Outside, an old woman wept beside her wounded husband as the Marines tried to treat him.

US soldiers were leading away prisoners, some of them injured after an apparent bombing raid. Some of the Iraqis were wearing the black clothes typical of Iraqi militias. No weapons were visible.

Cobra helicopters blasted Iraqi positions with rockets, American tanks shattered low-rise brick homes with high-explosive shells from close range — sometimes as little as 100 metres. Bullets ripped through the flimsy walls.

The heavy rattle of 50-mm machinegun fire from armoured vehicles was almost constant as thousands of US troops

## BATTLE FOR BAGHDAD

**US FIREPOWER**

- A-10 Thunderbolt: Likely backbone of air support. A-10s are based at Ali Al Salem Airbase in Kuwait
- US Armoured Brigade: A typical brigade will have 11,000 troops, M1A1 Abrams Tanks, 115 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and 110 Armoured Personnel Carriers

**IRAQ MUSCLEPOWER**

- 1,000,000 soldiers in six Republican Guard divisions. Considered Iraq's most loyal and capable force, better trained and better equipped than the rest of Saddam's 350,000-man army

**US' ACHILLES HEEL**

The lack of a northern front because of Turkey's defiance. Everything has to come from the south, where Saddam's guerrillas are drawing blood. Urban pockets of resistance in the rear can cut off US forces near Baghdad if the south is not secured.

**THE LAUNCHPAD**

Karbala: Coalition troops from the south engage Republican Guards, Medina Division, at 'Karbala Gap'. Karbala is one of the holiest sites in Islam after Mecca and Medina. Tank battles likely with close air support for coalition forces.

**THE TIMEFRAME**

US forces expected to pause after initial attack and await supply lines to be lengthened. "A week, two weeks, a month" may be needed to take Baghdad, a British officer said.

## Bypass raises rearguard fear

Washington, March 25 (Reuters): US commander General Tommy Franks is electing to bypass some Iraqi forces and not occupy key cities in the dash to Baghdad, raising questions about leaving behind dangerous enemy fighters and chaos in urban areas in the wake of his advancing troops.

Military analysts today said Franks, the head of US Central Command, may be taking unnecessary risks in the strategy he is employing, including stretching supply lines, allowing concentrations of enemy forces in the rear of his advancing troops and using an invasion force that may be too small for the task at hand.

"The force is so light that it probably has the lowest ratio to enemy forces of any major ground campaign we've fielded in the last century," said military analyst Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute think tank in Virginia. In essence, the US is attacking a dozen Iraqi divisions with two divisions of its own, he said. Divisions generally are composed of roughly 15,000 troops.

"Normally with a ground force of this size going up against a ground force the size of the Iraqis, one doesn't prevail quickly," said Thompson, who still foresees a decisive and swift victory for the US-led forces. "Can air power compensate for that? It's going to be interesting to watch."

Franks, during a briefing in Qatar on Monday, said invading US troops have moved rapidly toward the Iraqi capital and "intentionally bypassed enemy formations", including paramilitary forces, in southern Iraq.

Iraqi forces in the rear of the advancing US troops already have drawn blood. For example, an army supply convoy that apparently took a wrong turn near the southern city of An Nasiriyah on Sunday was ambushed by irregular Iraqi forces, leaving 12 US soldiers missing. Videotaped of five of them being interrogated was shown on Iraqi state television, along with grisly footage of corpses, apparently those of the other missing Americans.

Franks said: "You can expect that our clean-up operations are going to be ongoing" in the days ahead, saying Iraqi forces can be expected to "mill about to create difficulties".

Analysts said the strategy requires the invading troops arriving in Baghdad to be at the end of a 480-km supply line. "We're watching the flanks with the full realisation that we are stretched out somewhat," said retired US Rear Adm Stephen Baker of the Center for Defense Information.

Another consequence of electing not to occupy cities and towns left in the rear of the advancing army is the possibility of civil unrest.

forced their way through the city in the early morning light. A CNN correspondent near An Nasiriyah said a Marine was wounded by "friendly fire" in confused fighting overnight. The US-led forces have largely skirted cities. But without going through An Nasiriyah, the bridges could not be crossed.

An advance up the road toward Kut, on the Tigris river, could be a second prong in an attack on Baghdad, complementing US infantry west of the Euphrates, who have already probed to within 100 km of the capital.

A CNN correspondent with the 7th Cavalry also crossed the Euphrates on Tuesday, appar-

ently over a different bridge. On Sunday, the US Marines had said they were in control of two bridges in An Nasiriyah, one over the Euphrates river and one over the Saddam Canal, 3.5 km to the north of it.

But they had been unable to control the streets in Baghdad and suffered casualties on Sunday when Iraqi forces, includ-

ing the Saddam Fidayeen, mounted a guerrilla counter-attack.

An Nasiriyah, built in a farming region, was the site of a 1915 battle in World War I when British forces took 500 casualties in seizing the town from the Ottoman Turks. About 500 defenders died in that battle nearly a century ago.

## Blitz for Basra uprising

SUJAN DUTTA

Kuwait, March 25: British forces are laying siege to Iraq's second largest city, Basra, ringing it with tanks, guns and loudspeakers, dropping leaflets and distributing satellite telephone numbers of coalition officers to the citizenry to wear it away from Iraqi regular army and militia.

Basra was today designated a "legitimate military target", three days after the coalition command saw little reason to target it.

The coalition command believes that elements of the Iraqi army's 51 Division have withdrawn to the city and, along with irregulars, are targeting the coalition targets from among the people and out of the centre of the city but the British army does not intend to blast through the city.

Colonel Chris Vernon, spokesman for the British land force component, said after returning from the battle zone that Iraqi irregulars have been trying to attack coalition forces in the rear but have met with little success so far.

"In the best case scenario, we would have defeated the Iraqi army in the desert. So, predictably, they pulled back into Basra. There is no way we are going to get into Basra through a rush. So we have to wear down their military capability. The shift to redesignate Basra as a military target) has been driven

by the need to wear down and eradicate Iraqi regulars and irregulars," Colonel Vernon said.

The Iraqi forces had tried a counter-attack this morning with tanks towards the Al Faw peninsula. The spokesman claimed it was beaten back and 20 Iraqi tanks were destroyed.

There are now 26,000 of the British army on the outskirts of Basra. These include the British army's armoured 7 Brigade and the 3 Commando which had relieved the 15 Marines that took Al Faw. The total number of British forces in the battle for

Basra is still open. There is no evidence that Iraqis are involved in Basra militarily.

Basra is dominated by Shias. In the 1991 Gulf War, Shias in southern Iraq had rebelled against Saddam Hussein. The coalition command has been hopeful that the Shi'ite rebellion can be fomented to its advantage in the campaign in Iraq.

But an uprising in Basra against Saddam is not visible enough yet to bolster coalition hopes. The coalition command believes that the people of Basra are virtually being held hostage by the militia.

What is more, the situation in Basra shows signs of just what the Iraqi defence would have liked.

"We cannot say yet that they (the Iraqi militia) are cut off. Maybe, they could still get supplies down the Tigris. Many of them (of the 51 Iraqi Division) would have gone home," he said.

The coalition tactics in the battle for Basra are to use artillery to bomb the outskirts and "decapitate" the Baath Party leadership in the city. In following up this strategy, the British army took out a Baath Party leader from his office in an operation this morning.

"Whack they were in, whack they were out," Colonel Vernon said. "That must have sent shockwaves."

There would also be air strikes on "political targets". "It's going to be very much on our terms," he said.

## Cry for water, not war

Umm Qasr, March 25 (Reuters): Cupping his hand to his mouth, 27-year-old Farazdag tried to explain to an American soldier that he needed water.

Behind him, a crowd gathered, making the same gesture to anyone in uniform, even towards the US and British military vehicles speeding by.

The southern Iraqi port city of Umm Qasr, on the Kuwaiti border, is now under the control of the invading forces, but it has been left without water supplies or electricity. Residents say stocks of food are running low and the market is empty.

"We welcome these people," said Farazdag, eyeing the US soldier nervously. "We want to tell them we don't want guns, we don't want bombs, we don't want war. We come in peace. The people here want food and water."

A joint force of US and British military engineers today toured Umm Qasr's water treatment plant and power station, both out of action since the invasion began last week.

Local residents say the water plant was damaged during the thunderous ground assault. Not true, say US forces. They say water feeding the plant comes from further north near the city of Basra, and the taps have been closed on the orders of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"Saddam turned it off," said Major John Taylor, part of a team from the British Royal Engineers, specialising in civil infrastructure.

"The water plant has no military damage at all. Not a single bullet hole. The minute Umm Qasr was invaded the guys in Basra cut the supplies."

The US and British forces say they will get water and electricity supplies running as soon as they can, but are reluctant to say when.

## Cricket

FROM PAGE 1

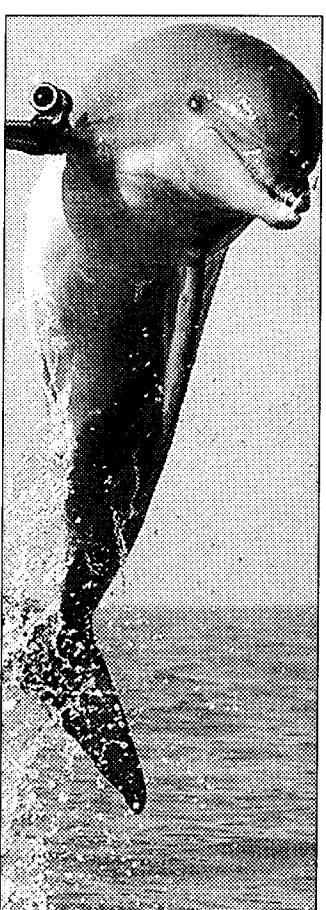
It began with him praising Vishy and ended with the former India captain (now an Elite Panel Match Referee) requesting "ek-do gaane". The "ek-do gaane" became *dus-barah* as just about everybody cornered Abhiheet and kept asking for "one more". Eventually, he obliged for over an hour — rendering both his own numbers and some of Kishore Kumar's greatest hits (*Zindagi ka Safar*, for example).

First the welcome, then Abhiheet's brilliant solo performance... It made many forget Sunday's disappointment. In fact, the reception was rousing on arrival at the Sahar International Airport, too.

Meanwhile, the March 29 fundraiser for the Lata Mangeshkar-promoted hospital in Pune will be the players' first post-Cup commitment. Led by Sourav, an Indian XI will face Arjuna Ranatunga's Sri Lankan XI.

The day-night match, at the Wankhede, will be preceded by a felicitation of Team India (over lunch) by the Mumbai Cricket Association, the Cricket Club of India and the corporate sector.

Former BCCI president Raj Singh Dungarpur, instrumental in initiating the felicitation, said: "Eight wins in success on... The boys played like champions, even if they didn't return as one... They've got to be fettered. Few should argue with that."



A US navy handout shows K-Dog, a bottle-nosed dolphin of the Commander Task Unit, training near the USS Gunston Hall operating in the Gulf. Divers of this multinational unit are taking the help of the natural sonar ability of these specially-trained dolphins to ensure that the coastline around Umm Qasr is free of deep/shallow water mines for humanitarian-aid ships. (AFP/Reuters)



# Political necessity keeps Kurds quiet

Associated Press

KALAK (Northern Iraq), March 25. — Squinting through binoculars, Iraqi Kurdish fighters watch Mr Saddam Hussein's troops apparently laying mines ahead of a possible assault from the north. But the attack may never come — or at least not with the level of US firepower originally anticipated. The relative calm in northern Iraq, where the Western-protected Kurdish zone is situated, shows how the war planning has become hostage to sticky regional politics.

With coalition forces pressing toward Iraq's capital from the south, there are growing doubts about whether the Pentagon will also mobilise a major push from the north into the important oil districts of Kirkuk and Mosul.

Instead, the current speculation includes the possibility of pinpoint ground attacks by US forces or the bolstering of Kurdish defences in the hopes that Iraqi northern divisions will collapse without a fight once Mr Hussein is removed.

US Marine Maj. Gen. Henry P Osman, apparently the highest-ranking US officer in the north, did not arrive until Sunday. In a brief statement to reporters, he gave no indication that a sizable attack force was assembling. Instead, he spoke of coordination with aid agencies and Kurdish officials to help humanitarian efforts and try to keep the fighting from spreading north.

Kurdish political sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they were under direct US orders to hold back on any offensive.

The Pentagon originally wanted to move up to 60,000 troops into the Kurdish area for a push toward Baghdad from the north. But the Turkish parliament refused to allow US troops to use Turkey as a staging ground. For the moment, American troops can reach northern Iraq by air only. And, in fact, some US forces have been ferried into northern Iraq. But they have arrived in relatively small numbers that suggest commando-style activities.

"The best they can hope for is potentially offering some small resistance around Mosul and Kirkuk, but we have no ability to really take either of those two cities unless the Iraqis just surrender," a defence analyst said. "If they really put up a fight the best we can do is probably to just hold them there."

The analyst said the lack of a powerful northern front could prolong the war and "this is going to colour the public's perception of how the war is going".

Instead of mounting a ground campaign, the USA has repeatedly sent warplanes to strike Baghdad-controlled areas near the Kurdish line, including the Mosul and Kirkuk districts.

The most obvious other option is to allow Kurdish fighters to lead an attack against Iraqi forces. Kurds are anxious to stake their claims to Kirkuk and Mosul. But a

Kurdish-led ground campaign could become a bloodbath, Kurdish commanders say. "It would be suicide to go in without the Americans giving us strong support and hitting Iraqi positions from the air," a top Kurdish commander said. "We are ready, but we can't do it alone."



ALL QUIET ON THE NORTHERN FRONT: A Kurd soldier in Komala in north Iraq. — AFP

26 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

# Soldiers of steel ring Baghdad

## Brighter Iraq after dictator, says Blair

AMITROY

London, March 25: Tony Blair gave one of his presidential style news conferences at 10, Downing Street, today — and what he didn't say was just as significant as what he did.

He didn't say much about the weapons of mass destruction — or "WMD" as Blair likes to call them — which apparently posed the threat that persuaded Britain to go to war in the first place. He concentrated, instead, on the reconstruction of a post-war Iraq, in which he promised that the UN would have the central role backed up by a new Security Council resolution.

Again and again, he stressed that British and American military strategy would be combined with the need to safeguard Iraq's civilian population and infrastructure and the future for the country would be much brighter once Saddam Hussein and his regime were removed. And they would, he declared.

His press conference was aimed, in part, at the Iraqi people. "They have been let down before. My message to them is that this time we will not let you down. Iraq and its people will have a better future," he pledged. Humanitarian aid was ready to be moved into Basra once the city was safe, he said, but Blair also made it appear it was the fault of Saddam loyalists for holding up the much needed supplies of medicine, food and water.

Blair confirmed he is due to fly to Camp David tomorrow for talks with President Bush, and that he would return to London after discussions with Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, in New York on Thursday. The news that Blair and Bush are meeting suggests that despite what both are saying, developments are not going to plan.

Blair confirmed he is due to fly to Camp David tomorrow for talks with President Bush, and that he would return to London after discussions with Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, in New York on Thursday. The news that Blair and Bush are meeting suggests that despite what both are saying, developments are not going to plan.

Blair had an explanation for why British and American troops were not being greeted by cheering Iraqis grateful that their country was being "liberated". His argument was that they would remain scared to show their true feelings until they were absolutely certain that Saddam and his henchmen were gone.

The Prime Minister turned mainly to journalists he knows well, addressing some by their first names — such as Andrew Marr, the BBC's political editor; Adam Boulton of Sky News; Robin Oakley, who did Marr's job but now works for CNN; and Eleanor Goodman and Jon Snow of Channel 4. There were a few Arab journalists but he did not expose himself to what could be described as a hostile questioning.

His message could be summed up as follows: war is a nasty business, and yes, deaths and tragedies would occur but, at the end, in a process overseen by the UN, a beautiful and democratic Iraq would arise once the shadow of Saddam had vanished from the land. The British and Americans would do everything possible to keep Iraqi civilian casualties to a minimum but the conflict would not be easy because desperate men close to Saddam, who had no future without him, would fight to the finish.

To be sure, there were some awkward questions. The man from *New York Times* wanted to know if Bush was as keen on the process as Blair was — implying the US would steer clear of the UN. To this, Blair replied that he was convinced Bush would involve the UN since the two leaders had agreed to do so when they met in the Azores.



A British soldier at Basra airport. (Reuters)

ERIC SCHMITT

Washington, March 25: As the US army closes in on Baghdad, the central question facing American commanders is how fiercely Iraq's Republican Guard will fight.

The roughly 100,000 soldiers in six Republican Guard divisions are considered Iraq's most loyal and capable force, better trained and better equipped than the rest of Saddam Hussein's 350,000-man army.

Three of the divisions are now guarding approaches to Baghdad. Perhaps the toughest unit of all, the Medina Division, is dug in with its Soviet-made T-72 tanks to the south of the Iraqi capital.

"It is one of the best of the Republican Guard divisions, one of the most powerful," Maj. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, vice-director of operations for the military's joint staff, told reporters yesterday. "It is a linchpin to the consistency of the Republican

Guard defence." For more than a decade — and especially in the last year, as planning proceeded for this war — military intelligence officers and independent analysts have been paying special attention to the strength and tactics of the Republican Guard.

Created from a small palace guard during Iraq's war against Iran in the 1980s, the Republican Guard came of age as a formidable fighting force in the last two years of that long conflict.

Republican Guards were volunteers — not conscripts — who were given bonuses, new cars and subsidised housing to join.

Unlike the American military, which relies on speed and firepower, the Republican Guard fought largely set-piece battles that relied on detailed planning and logistics.

When the first President Bush waged war in 1991 to evict Iraqi troops from Kuwait, American commanders assumed that the Republican Guard would stand and fight. But after 38 days

of airstrikes and artillery barrages from Army forces, battered Guard divisions retreated to Iraq from Kuwait when they saw they were outflanked by the advancing US army.

"Generally, they fought, but they were not elite forces," said Gen. Ronald H. Griffith, a retired commander in the Persian Gulf War. "They made a valiant effort, but they were far less skillful than I anticipated."

This time, however, the Republican Guard forces are fighting for their lives on their soil. Although their equipment is degraded after 12 years of sanctions against Iraq, military commanders say they believe the Guard units around Baghdad are near full strength, and may have been issued chemical weapons.

Apache attack helicopters, army long-range missiles and navy and air force bombers have been pummeling the Guard divisions, especially the Medina, in the last several days in an ef-

fort to destroy not only their armour but also their will to fight.

"They will continue to be hit," Gen. Tommy R. Franks, the allied commander in Iraq, said yesterday, "at points and places and times that make sense to us. The effect has been very positive for us."

To defend Baghdad, the Republican Guard has established two defensive rings: one about 50 miles from the capital, and the other just on the outskirts. In addition to the Medina Division, the Nida is to the east and the Hammurabi to the west. A fourth division usually based in the north, the Adnan, moved close to Tikrit, Saddam's power base.

Historically, the Republican Guard has been used as a buffer between the regular Iraqi army and Baghdad, to prevent mutinies. The divisions also serve to deter Shia uprisings in the south and by Kurds in the north.

But Saddam has never fully trusted the Republican Guard ei-

ther — its generals were involved in attempted coups in the 1990s — and has kept the forces outside the capital.

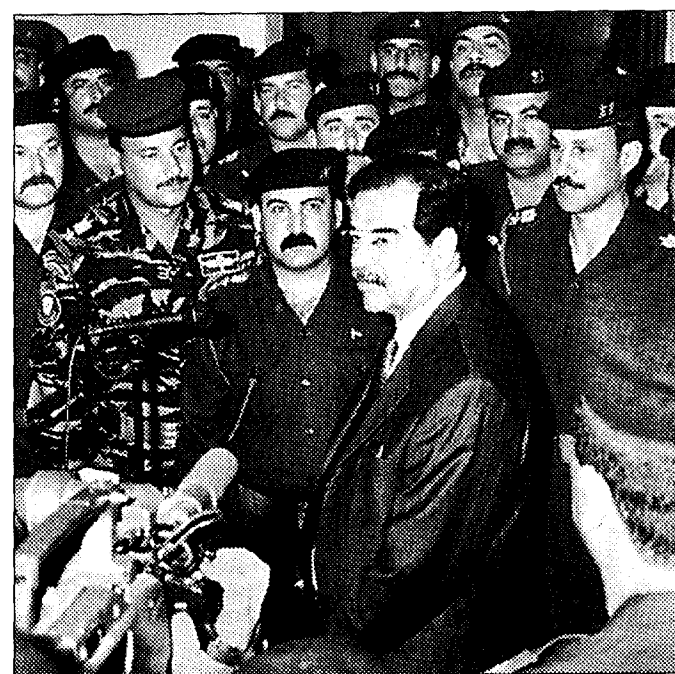
Baghdad itself is defended by the Special Republican Guard, the most reliable Iraqi unit, which numbers more than 15,000 troops and also guards presidential installations like including Saddam's compound in Tikrit.

An array of other security forces and militias carried out the assaults and guerrilla raids in Basra, Umm Qasr and Nasiriyah over the weekend.

Pentagon officials said much of the resistance in southern Iraq was probably driven by fe-dayeen, a security force under the control of Saddam's son Uday.

"To tell you the truth, they've always been above the law — they're Saddam's internal terror troops," a Pentagon official said. "They have no role in post-Saddam Iraq. It's no wonder they're fighting to the death."

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE



Saddam Hussein (centre) with Republican Guards officers in Baghdad recently. (Reuters)

## Death whisper in dining room

ANTHONY SHADID

Baghdad, March 25: Breakfast was simple, but late. Days of bombing had left the Khalil family sleepless. When a respite arrived at noon yesterday, a moment of ease in an uneasy time, they sat down, picking anxiously at boiled eggs, tomatoes and bread.

Shahid, nine, told stories, and her brother Ahmed, 12, laughed. The older family members, with harrowing memories of bombings in the 1991 Gulf War, sat uneasily, their silence an eloquent testament to worry.

Then a whisper sounded, ever so slight. In seconds, the house was shattered by a cruise missile, the family said.

Um Aqeel, the mother of five children, and her daughter-in-law, Sahar, were killed. Two sons and a daughter were wounded.

Hours later, weary and angry, Aqeel, the oldest son, looked out at his bandaged siblings laying dazed in their hospital beds.

"There are no soldiers in my home, there's no gun in my home!" he shouted. "How can God accept this?"

In five days of bombing, the US and Britain have hurled hundreds of cruise missiles and bombs at Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

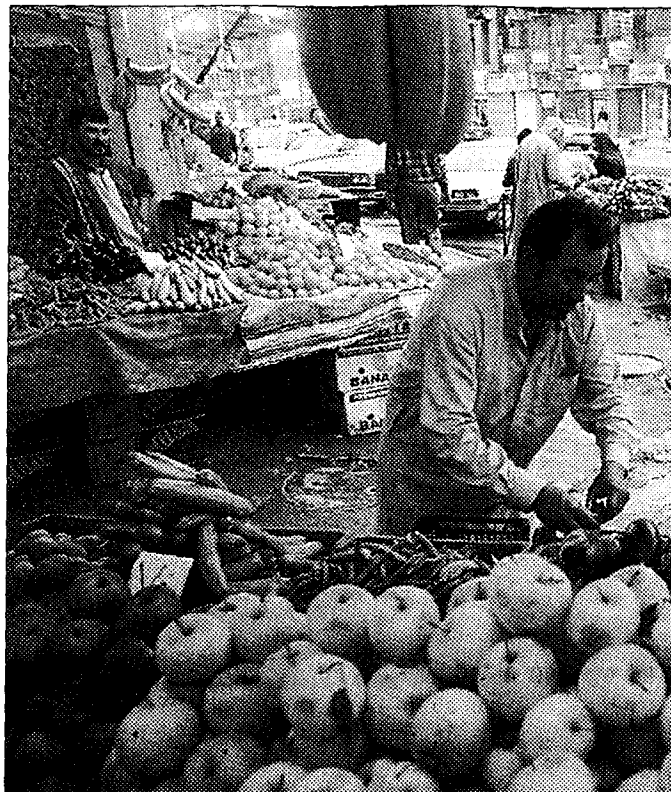
For the most part, their precision is stunning, carving out craters in the domes of presidential palaces and gaping holes in the sides of fearsome intelligence headquarters that dot the capital.

Even by the official Iraqi count, hundreds of civilians have been wounded but only a handful killed, despite a furious assault that has left the capital jittery and afraid.

But the arithmetic of war makes mistakes inevitable — blasts gutted the student union at Mustansiriyah University on Sunday and a cluster of homes in the Qadisiya neighbourhood last week.

Adhimiya, a working-class quarter, may have witnessed another mistake, a snapshot of the horrors of war and the scenes of resentment and revenge that lay in their wake.

In a warren of narrow alleys, perched uncomfortably



Traders arrange fruits and vegetables at a market in Baghdad. (Reuters)

behind a trench of burning oil that cloaked the neighbourhood in a blinding, black haze, at least three houses were destroyed by the blast, which blew out the windows of others in an arc around the detonation.

Cream-coloured brick and cinder blocks were strewn across the muddy street. Rubble poured forth from a crater that left the homes resembling an archaeological dig.

Nearby rested the artifacts of domesticity — a mattress spring, a brown scarf and a green plastic bowl. Residents insisted no military or government site was nearby, and none was visible from the limited vantage point of the street.

Journalists were accompanied by government escorts to the hospital where the wounded received treatment. Neighbours said that at the sound of the blast and the smell

of smoke, they rushed into the houses, pushing aside furniture and rubble to search for those buried by it. Dirt particles were suspended in the air.

Five minutes later, sirens announced the arrival of ambulances, which took the four dead and 27 wounded to Noman Hospital.

At the hospital, the head of Ali, 14, another son in the Khalil family, was wrapped in a bandage. He stared blankly

at the ceiling. His sister, Shahid, lay motionless. Her fingernails were painted in sparkles and ringed by dried blood.

The face of his brother Ahmed was still bloodied. A bandage sat like a helmet on his forehead. "We trust in God, what can we do?" Ahmed said softly, curled in a fetal position. "I'm safe and alive. That's most important."

A doctor, Abdullah Abed Ali, leaned over to a visitor. He whispered, out of earshot of

Ahmed. "He doesn't know that his mother has died," he said, shaking his head.

Relatives ran into the hospital ward. Their eyes were red. Aqeel, the oldest brother whose wife's body was in the morgue, rested his head on the shoulder of one. He started sobbing. "It fell on us," he said, his voice cracking. "It fell on us."

In Adhimiya, militiamen and civil defence workers in red helmets picked through the rubble, searching for 70-year-old Khawla Abdel-Fattah.

Workers shoveled dirt to the side, and a bulldozer carted away brick and concrete. Sewage from broken pipes poured into the street, lapping at the rubble.

Without saying a word, as a baby cried nearby, neighbours passed around gnarled, fused pieces of metal they said were left by the blast of the missile.

Neighbours lined up to watch the workers dig clumsily through the rubble, now a makeshift grave. There were no chants for President Saddam Hussein, as there are in so many officially sanctioned public gatherings. There were no cries of "God is greatest."

There was only silence, the shock of the devastation.

As the bulldozer crashed through another crumbling wall of his house, AbdelFattah's brother, Thahir Sheikhly, cried out.

"Bush is cursed!" he shouted. "This is a civilian building, 100 per cent. There are no weapons of mass destruction. He wants to destroy the people. Maybe God will destroy him." For a moment, he was quiet, then spoke again. "We'll have our revenge with Bush."

For most Iraqis, limited to news from state-run media, every day brings fresh victories over invading US and British forces. Daily television news bulletins show downed US strike helicopters, captured US soldiers and "heroic" resistance by Iraqis in battle. President Saddam Hussein broadcasts to the nation, exhorting his troops and calling on all Iraqis to stand firm and defeat the enemy.

LOS ANGELES TIMES-WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

## German restaurants say 'nein' to all things American

No more Coca-Cola or Budweiser, no Marlboro, no American whisky or even American Express cards — a growing number of restaurants in Germany are taking everything American off their menus to protest the war in Iraq.

Although the protests are mainly symbolic, waiters in dozens of bars and restaurants in Hamburg, Berlin, Munich, Bonn and other German cities are telling patrons: "Sorry, Coca-Cola is not available any more due to the current political situation."

The boycotts appear to be part of a nascent worldwide movement. One website, [www.consumers-against-war.de](http://www.consumers-against-war.de), calls for boycotts of 27 top American firms from Microsoft to Kodak while another, [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org), urges the "millions of people against the war" to "Boycott Brand America."

Consumer fury seems to be on the rise. Demonstrators in Paris smashed the windows of a McDonald's restaurant last week, forcing police in riot gear to move in to protect staff and customers of the American fast-food out-

let. The attackers sprayed obscenities and "boycott" on the windows.

In Indonesia, Iraq war opponents have pasted signs on McDonald's and other American food outlets, trying to force them shut by "sealing them" and urging Indonesians to avoid them.

In the Swiss city of Basel, 50 students recently staged a sit-down strike in front of a McDonald's to block customers' entry, waved peace signs and urged people to eat pretzels instead of hamburgers.

Anti-American sentiment has even reached provinces in Russia, where some rural eateries put up signs telling Americans they were unwelcome, according to an *Izvestia* newspaper report.

A German bicycle manufacturer, Riese und Mueller GmbH, cancelled all business deals with its American suppliers.

"Americans only pay attention when money is on the line," director Heiko Mueller said, whose firm buys \$300,000 worth of supplies from half-a-dozen American firms each year. "We wanted to make a statement



A protester during an anti-war rally in Berlin. (Reuters)

against this war and told our American partners that unless they renounce what their government is doing we won't do any business with them anymore."

The German restaurant boycotts of American products started small but spread rapidly after the Iraq war began on Thursday. The conflict has struck a raw nerve in a country that became decidedly anti-war after the devastation of World War II, which it initiated.

"If people all around the world boycott American products it might influence their policies," said Jean-Yves Mabileau, owner of "L'Auberge Francaise" which joined 10 Hamburg restaurants in banning Coca-Cola, Philip Morris' Marlboro cigarettes, whisky and other American goods.

"This started as a light-hearted reaction to Americans dumping French wine in the gutter and renaming 'French Fries' as 'Freedom Fries'," he said. "But it feels good to take a stand against this war. It is just a small gesture, but a good one."

Diners at the Osteria restaurant in

Berlin are finding that "things go better without Coke" and are ordering Germany's long overshadowed imitation of "the real thing" — the slightly sweeter "Afri-Cola" — to express their outrage.

"We wanted to do something to express our annoyance," Osteria owner Fabio Angile said. "We want to hit America where it hurts — in their wallets. None of the customers have complained. On the contrary, most thought it was a great idea."

Herve Keroureda, owner of a French restaurant in Hamburg known as "Ti Breizh", said he was astonished by the massive media coverage of their small-scale anti-American protest. "It was only intended as a small gesture but has turned into a gigantic issue," he said. "And the reaction from the patrons has been tremendous. Most have called it a brilliant idea." In Bonn, bartender Brunc Kessler said he was refusing to sell American whisky or American beer such as Anheuser-Busch's Budweiser at his "Eifelster Stuben".

Reuters



VICTORY WILL BE OURS SOON, SAYS SADDAM

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25/3

# Allied forces face stiff resistance in Iraq

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NEAR KARBALA (IRAQ), MARCH 24.

Coalition troops pressed toward Baghdad with new wariness today, as militiamen loyal to the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, proved that they were not a beaten force and sandstorms snarled the advance. By night, a dozen explosions hit an area southeast of the capital. Mr. Hussein, in an appearance that seemed calculated to show he remained at the helm, sought to rally his people with a televised speech.

Iraq claimed to have shot down two U.S. helicopters and taken two pilots prisoner, a day after more than 20 Americans were killed or captured. And a British soldier was killed today in southern Iraq, British defence officials said.

Facing a pattern of deadly ambushes and ruses, and with many of Mr. Hussein's supporters discarding their uniforms in favour of civilian clothes, coalition forces responded with tough new tactics in the south. U.S. officials also confirmed that forces, including British and Australian troops, were operating in the north and west of Iraq. Some were special forces travelling in small teams.

Mr. Hussein, appearing on Iraqi TV in full military uniform and appearing calm, said: "Strike them, and strike evil so that evil will be defeated... Victory will be ours soon. You Iraqis are in line with what God has ordered you to do, to cut their throats."

Iraqi television later showed images of what appeared to be a downed U.S. Apache attack helicopter sitting largely undamaged in a grassy field. The Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, claimed that peasants had shot down two Apaches and that two pilots were in custody.

U.S. Gen. Tommy Franks, commander in charge of the allied forces, later confirmed that one helicopter and its two pilots were missing in action.

A brutal sandstorm with how-



Iraqis celebrating the downing of an Apache military helicopter in Hindiya district, 120 km south-west of Baghdad, on Monday. — Reuters

ling winds stalled U.S. troops about 80 km south of Baghdad, near Karbala, a city holy to Iraq's majority Shias. As the U.S. Army's 7th Infantry Regiment pressed north, Iraqi militiamen shot mortars at a supply convoy. There were no casualties.

But coalition officials rejected suggestions that continued Iraqi resistance or casualties had knocked war plans off balance.

"I think that within three days of real military operations beginning, the idea that somehow people are losing confidence or heart is nonsense," the British Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, said. "This is a difficult, demanding, complex, sophisticated military operation. It is not going to be over in a matter of days."

In another sign that the situation remained intense, the

coalition cancelled press tours of the strategic southern port of Umm Qasr and the Rumeila oil fields, which Iraqi forces set ablaze early in the ground war. Fighting in that area was fierce enough to drive civilian firefighters away.

Nine U.S. Marines died and a dozen American soldiers were missing and presumed captured after surprise engagements near An Nasiriyah, a crossing point over the Euphrates. The Marines were still bogged down early on Monday at An Nasiriyah after taking significant casualties. Two Marines were killed in accidents.

A British soldier was killed on Monday in combat near the port of Az Zubayr in southern Iraq, the first British combat death since the war began, the Ministry of Defence said in Lon-

don. Sixteen British servicemen had died in two helicopter accidents and the downing of a British jet by friendly fire from a U.S. missile battery.

An AFP report from Basra, quoting British military officials, today said fierce Iraqi resistance forced British troops to withdraw today from Basra to regroup. Elements of Britain's Seventh Armoured Brigade, the Desert Rats, withdrew from the southern Iraqi city — the nation's second largest — after coming under attack by mortars and guerillas disguised in civilian clothes.

Military officials admitted they had vastly underestimated the strength of Iraqi resistance and the loyalty of Basra's population to the regime of Mr. Hussein. — AP, Reuters, AFP

More reports on Page 14

DEE MINDL

25 MAR 2003

# Treat PoWs humanely, warns Bush

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 24. The United States President, George W. Bush, has asked Iraq to treat captured American soldiers in a humane manner and warned of war crimes prosecution if evidence to the contrary surfaced.

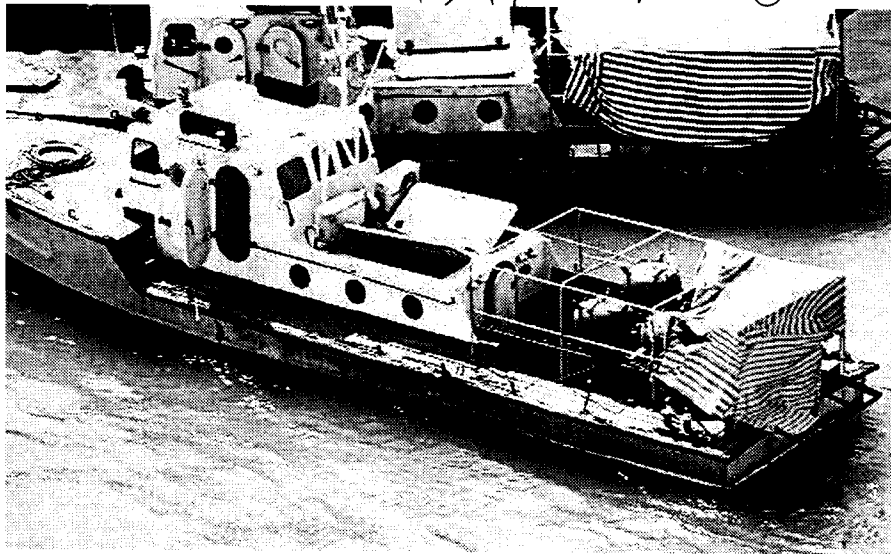
"I expect them to be treated... humanely. If not, the people who mistreat the prisoners will be treated as war criminals," Mr. Bush remarked upon his return to the White House from Camp David.

White House officials are said to be outraged over the "brutal and cruel" treatment being meted out to captured American soldiers. "This only stiffens the President's resolve against Saddam Hussein's inhumane regime," an official was quoted as saying.

Aside from the Marine Maintenance Unit that lost its way and ended up facing Iraqi soldiers, resulting in loss of lives and capture, the Pentagon is holding out the possibility of more troops missing and, therefore, more prisoners of war.

For the first time since the start of the military offensive, the President interacted with the media on Sunday afternoon and even answered a few questions on the captured American soldiers and the general direction of the war. "If there's somebody captured — and it looks like there may be — I expect those people to be treated humanely," he said.

Mr. Bush said coalition forces were making "good progress"; that the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, was "losing control" of his country; and that the military operation was just in the beginning phases. "I know that Saddam Hussein is losing control of his country, that we're slowly but surely achieving our objective. It's important for the American people to realise that this war has just begun. And it might seem like a long time because of all the action on TV, but in terms of the overall strategy, we're just in the beginning phases..." What has



An Iraqi T15 mine-layer, with mines visible astern of the ship, is seen in this photo released by Britain's Royal Navy on Monday. Allied forces are trying to clear the Gulf of mines that could hamper the arrival of humanitarian relief. — AP

to be pointed out is that no one in the Pentagon or elsewhere in the corridors of Government were under any illusion of what was in store in an invasion of Iraq, particularly involving ground forces. Top uniformed officials have been consistently making the point that while Mr. Hussein's armed forces may not be the most modern, it was certainly not a rag tag group either.

Military planners may be disappointed at the pace of the movement of troops, but no one was naive enough to think that it would be a smooth roll out of Kuwaiti borders and into Iraq. From the outset, the assessment had been that it would be tougher as the going gets closer to Baghdad with coalition forces meeting resistance from the Republican Guard and the personal security forces of the Iraqi President. This is precisely what is happening now.

The photographs of American soldiers — some killed and others in captivity — shown to viewers here after they had seen it on the *Al Jazeera* network, is unlikely to significantly alter the war plan. As coalition forces move closer to Baghdad, the city will be subjected to heavier strikes from an assortment of bombs, cruise missiles and guided weapons. The idea behind this is to soften the ground considerably to facilitate the entry of ground forces.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bush is meeting top Congressional leaders and will be discussing with them not only the progress of the war but also a supplementary spending bill that he may be sending to Capitol Hill to cover the costs of the military operations. Even on Sunday, Mr. Bush would not put a figure, but the White House is expected to ask between \$75 billions and \$90 billions.

# Five Syrians killed in U.S. missile attack

DAMASCUS (SYRIA), MARCH 24. A United States missile hit a passenger bus carrying Syrian workers fleeing the war in Iraq as it was stopped for a rest break on the Iraqi side of the border, killing five and injuring 10, Syria's official news agency reported on Monday.

According to the SANA news agency, an air-to-surface missile hit the bus carrying 37 passengers on Sunday morning inside Iraq close to the Syrian border. Syrian officials refused requests to travel to the area

near the site on Monday.

A Syrian official said on Monday the Foreign Ministry summoned the U.S. and British ambassadors to Damascus "to protest this appalling aggression." A U.S. Central Command spokeswoman had no information on the report that a missile had hit a bus. She said, however, that U.S. forces do not target civilians, and their targeting is done very carefully, using precision-guided missiles, to select military targets. — Reuters

# France rejects U.S. plea

By Vaiju Naravane

PARIS, MARCH 24. In pursuance of its tough anti-war policies, France has rejected calls by Washington to expel Iraqi diplomats in Paris. It has also refused to freeze Iraqi assets in France. The French Foreign Ministry said these were questions of sovereignty that could be decided by France alone.

The French President, Jacques Chirac, also said France would oppose all efforts by the U.S. and Britain to legitimise the war post facto by introducing a new resolution in the United Nations. He said France would oppose any occupation of Iraq by the U.S. and British forces and said any reconstruction efforts should be undertaken through the United Nations. Mr. Chirac has also told Pope John Paul II that their countries should work together to "defend the primacy of law, justice and dialogue between peoples." The message released on Monday was contained in a letter sent the day after the U.S.-led war in Iraq began. Thanking the Pope for his "untiring efforts" for peace in the build-up to the war, begun early on Thursday, Mr. Chirac said he "deeply (regrets) the start of armed operations" in Iraq. Both Mr. Chirac and the head of the Roman Catholic Church are adamantly opposed to the Washington's military campaign to disarm Iraq and oust President, Saddam Hussein. The more Mr. Chirac defies the U.S., the more his popularity appears to soar. Latest polls indicate Mr Chirac's popularity has touched 80 per cent, up from 74 per cent last week. Eighty-five per cent of those questioned described him as 'courageous' while 80 per cent said his actions were 'fully justified.'

# War turning out to be a long haul

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MARCH 24. As the military campaign against Iraq, led by the United States, entered its fourth day, early signs are emerging that instead of a swift and decisive victory, the Anglo-American forces are likely to face a long haul.

Two clear indicators have emerged that the war may not end soon. First, the U.S. does not appear to have won the psychological war it launched against the Iraqi regime, even before the first bombs landed on Baghdad. Consequently, the Iraqi regime has not, as yet, shown signs of becoming dysfunctional. Iraqi command and control over its military has continued to stay intact, discouraging the possibility of a swift capitulation by the regime of Saddam Hussein.

This became evident today when the second armoured brigade of the Medina division — a part of the elite Iraqi Republican Guard — did not crumble under the intense firepower the U.S. attack helicopters unleashed. The lethal Atcams surface-to-surface missiles were also

launched to break the Iraqi resistance. In fact, in the battle that was being fought near Al Kut, southeast of Baghdad along the Tigris valley, the Medina brigade managed to bring down an Apache and a U.S. Black Hawk helicopter.

The fourth day of the campaign also saw the Iraqi President launching a counter salvo of psychological warfare. In a televised address, where he exhorted his forces to fight, the Iraqi ruler looked fit and in full control. Mr. Hussein timed his address to coincide with some of the reverses which the U.S. forces faced at An Nasiriyah on Sunday, for maximum impact. The U.S. lost 20 soldiers while at least five were captured in the fighting that erupted around An asiriyah.

The war could become time-consuming as the U.S. supplies stretching from Kuwait to Baghdad are becoming vulnerable.

The U.S. forces hurtled towards Baghdad in the hope that the presence would persuade the Republican Guards to lay down arms, expose the regime and bring the war to a swift end.

But the forces might have made a major miscalculation.

While speeding towards Baghdad, the invading force bypassed several pockets of resistance in the towns and villages dotting the Tigris and Euphrates valleys. Consequently, it has left the flanks and rear areas vulnerable to harassment by the Iraqi "fidayeen" groups, who are being commanded by Mr. Hussein's son, Uday.

While the Anglo-American forces have made significant gains on the ground, such as the capture of the deep-water port of Umm Qasr and the oil infrastructure on the Faw Peninsula, their advance in southern Iraq appears to have slowed down. Basra, despite its political significance, has not yet fallen to the British troops.

Besides, the "mopping up" operations at Umm Qasr are turning out to be time-consuming.

In northern Iraq, U.S. forces are flowing in through the Bamerini air base in Kurdish areas, but the hard battles for the control of the northern oil fields of Mosul and Kirkuk are yet to begin.

# Saddam's speech pre-recorded?

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 24. Officials of the Bush administration are saying that there was nothing in the speech of the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, to suggest that it was made after the outbreak of hostilities or even over the last two days. The dominant view is that it had been pre-recorded and there is a perception in the intelligence community that perhaps the Iraqi leader had pre-recorded several messages to be released during the course of the fighting.

The determination has been made that the speech was taped, the only question being whether it was hours, days or weeks before the broadcast. Intelligence and military officials are saying that the Iraqi leader referred to certain military units as having been involved in the fighting when apparently this has not been the case. There has also been the argument that Mr. Hussein could have easily made specific references to recent events to show he is alive but he did not. There is also speculation on whether or not it was the 'real' Mr. Hussein, but the caution is that the Iraqi leader would not be too casual on this score for fear of being easily detected. It is one thing for Mr. Hussein to use 'doubles' in motorcades, but it is something totally different when it came to making a public speech.

At the United Nations, the Iraqi Ambassador, Mohammad al Douri, brushed aside speculations on the "real time pictures" of Mr. Hussein even while being less than emphatic on whether or not the Iraqi leader was alive. "I can't answer that question. I think he's alive," he remarked. "I cannot believe these kind of speculations...this is a part of the war propaganda," he maintained.

There has been considerable speculation on

the whereabouts of the Iraqi leader, one suggestion being that he may have been wounded to the extent of requiring immediate hospital attention and transfusion on the opening night of attacks on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon and other administration officials are cautioning against rushing into any quick judgment on the role of captured plant captured at Najaf. The suggestion from top officials is that it could be a chemical plant but for civilian use. The U.S. Central Command is saying that while troops are examining several sites "of interest", it was premature to call the plant as a chemical weapons production centre. Further, American forces are questioning two Iraqi Generals, who have been captured about weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. President, George W. Bush, met his Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, early this morning at the White House. Tomorrow, Mr. Bush is due to make a trip to the Pentagon and on Wednesday, he is travelling to the Central Command Headquarters at the MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

In a related development, the U.S. has asked Russia to prevent Russian firms from doing military business with Iraq. The U.S. President, George Bush, discussed the issue with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, during the course of a telephone talk. According to the Bush administration, the Russian firms were selling anti-tank missiles, night vision goggles and GPS jammers. "We find these actions disturbing," the White House Spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said during a press briefing. "We've asked the Russian Government that any such ongoing assistance cease immediately." Moscow denies that it is involved in any transaction that may be violative of the U.N. sanctions.



# Russians aiding Iraq, claims US

## Fidayeen block allies' march to Baghdad

Washington, March 24

THE UNITED States believes Russian company technicians are in Baghdad helping the Iraqis operate electronic jamming systems that could impair the US-led war against Iraq, a US official said on Monday.

President Bush telephoned Russian President Vladimir Putin to protest against alleged Russian sales of night-vision goggles, antitank missiles and global positioning system (GPS) jamming systems to Iraq, the White House said. US officials said such sales would violate UN sanctions.

Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov of Russia, which along with France strongly opposed the US-led war against Iraq, denied Russia had supplied Iraq with any military equipment in breach of UN sanctions.

But US officials said Washington had been worried about the alleged sales by Russian companies for months and had protested to Moscow at increasingly senior levels, culminating in Bush's telephone call to Putin on Monday.

"The two also discussed United States' concerns, which President Bush discussed, involving prohibited hardware that has been transferred from Russian companies to Iraq," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said at his daily briefing.

Asked if Washington had evidence the items were being used by Iraq as it seeks to fend off the US and British bombing campaign and ground forces marching on Baghdad, he said: "They were not provided for the purpose of sitting on shelves."

The spokesman added: "We do have concerns that some aspects of this may be ongoing, those concerns were raised in the phone call on Monday."

US officials believe the alleged



COMBAT ZONE: US Marines from the 15 Marine Expeditionary Unit fight a pitched battle at the port in Umm Qasr. They came under fire and returned machine gun fire, then more substantial arms including javelin rockets (shown being fired on enemy forces) and mortars.

AFP

sales have been carried out by private Russian firms and they want greater oversight by Russian authorities to stop them.

Speaking to reporters earlier in the day, Fleischer said: "The United States has credible evidence that Russian companies have provided assistance and prohibited hardware to the Iraqi regime, things such as night vision goggles, GPS jammers and antitank guided missiles."

A US official who asked not to be named said Washington made its accusations public late last week when it discovered Russian technicians in Baghdad aiding the Iraqis with the GPS jamming system after the start of the war.

"They are there in Baghdad ... trying to make the system work, the jamming system," said the US official. "It was the discovery that there are ... Russian technicians helping to make this GPS

jamming work in Baghdad that prompted the internal debate in the US government about what to do and (whether) to go public," the official added.

Allegations of such alleged Russian military sales surfaced on Sunday in the *Washington Post*, which reported that the US had protested against the sales late last week.

The newspaper reported that US officials, citing intelligence

sources, believe the jamming devices were initially imported to counter US and British jets patrolling the "no-fly" zones of northern and southern Iraq and were deployed last week when US began the attack.

### War to cost at least \$70 bn

President Bush is confronting the costs of the Iraq war in lives and dollars, grieving for lost

civilians and soldiers while telling lawmakers it will cost at least \$70 billion to fight Baghdad.

Bush planned to provide the estimate to congressional leaders on Monday, ensuring that lawmakers' discussion of war spending will take place amid a surge of public support for US troops. Aides at the White House said the figure will be between \$70 billion and \$80 billion.

Agencies

THE FIDAYEEN, believed to have been involved in the capture of American soldiers on Sunday, have emerged as a new and unexpected threat to American forces.

The fidayeen are a militia that is commanded by Saddam Hussein's son Uday. Their members are recruited from one of several security agencies and intelligence services and from Iraq's Republican Guard. There are an estimated 60,000 members and as many as 1,000 in southern Iraq opposing American forces.

American officials are well aware of the fidayeen and thought they might confront them in Baghdad or in some southern cities. But they did not expect them to be so aggressive.

The fidayeen are equipped with sports utility vehicles, light trucks, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms. They do not wear uniforms but are dressed in black or civilian clothes, US officials said.

They may not be the only irregular forces operating in the south. Some of the other fighters who have ambushed American troops may include hard-core Baath Party officials and members of Iraq's intelligence organisation.

Saddam Hussein has set up multiple security organisations to ensure that his survival does not depend on a single organisation and to establish a system in which the organisations watch each other. The most dedicated members of the fidayeen are organised in the "Golden Company." They are described as a group of militants who are prepared to fight to the death.

The New York Times



# Screen Saddam strikes back

Baghdad, March 24 (Reuters): Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said in a speech televised today that US-led invaders sent to topple him were trapped after underestimating Iraqi resistance and that the "evil ones" were doomed to defeat.

"I herald the near-victory for our patient fighters," Saddam said on Iraqi state television, dimming speculation that he had been killed or wounded in early air raids. "These are decisive days, oh Iraqis, so attack as God ordered."

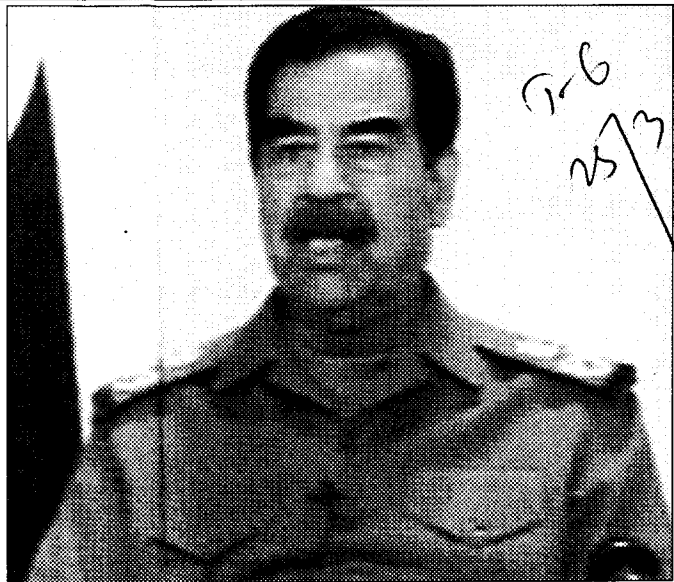
"After underestimating you ... the enemy is trapped in the sacred land of Iraq which is being defended by its great people and army," he said, wearing a military uniform and reading a speech from behind a podium.

Saddam praised some Iraqi commanders, including those at the southern port of Umm Qasr where the US-led forces have faced stiff resistance. He said "victory is very near" in Basra, southern Iraq, which the US and British tank units were trying to secure.

"I make special mention of ... the general who lifted high the banner of jihad and the name of Iraq in the epic battle of Umm Qasr, him and his men," Saddam said.

It was not clear when or

## ON TV: LAST THURSDAY AND TODAY



(Left) Saddam during a speech on Al-Jazeera television on March 20 after the US attacked Iraq and later during the state television broadcast on Monday. (Reuters)

where the 20-minute speech was delivered but the references to the fighting suggested it was no more than a day or two old. Saddam branded his opponents "evil ones" and called President George W. Bush "satanic".

In Washington, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said CIA analysts would examine the speech to try and determine if it was Saddam's voice. Diplomats say Saddam has a number of doubles but they rarely speak when they stand in for him.

"But that's only half of the problem because even if it's his voice it doesn't give you any indication about when it was taped," Fleischer said. "We don't know when it was recorded, how old it may be, whether it is new."

British defence secretary Geoff Hoon also said the broadcast was not live but it would make no difference to the military campaign if Saddam is alive or dead. Saddam rarely, if ever, gives live televised speeches.

## Same face and voice, suspense on status

London, March 24 (Reuters): The voice, the face, the manner were vintage Saddam Hussein — but experts say today's broadcast by the Iraqi leader gave no concrete proof as to whether he is alive or dead.

Most believed it showed Saddam in robust form.

As evidence, they cited the look, sound and swagger of a man who favours florid rhetoric to rally his people and heap scorn on the "evil ones" bent on conquering "the sacred land" of Iraq.

But Saddam's principal enemies in the five-day old war — the US and Britain — cast doubt on the Iraqi leader's apparent health and commanding presence.

"What I can say straight away is that those pictures were not live," said British defence secretary Geoff Hoon.

"We are well aware that he spent many hours recently tape-recording various messages. We have to do a little more analysis of what he was actually saying to see whether or not that was Saddam Hussein," Hoon told reporters.

Even if it was Saddam as most analysts believe — this was the second Saddam speech broadcast of the Iraq war — Washington said it proved nothing about his grip on Iraq's power structure.

Not since the US-led forces tried to kill al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in 2001 has there been such rampant media speculation on the whereabouts of one man.

"One hundred per cent it is Saddam Hussein," said an activist whose latest of many meetings with Saddam was last month.

"This is his accent, these are his words, this is his speech and his style," the Lebanese activist said in Beirut. "This is his way. This is his without hesitation."

Saddam, well-versed in the sort of psychological warfare that comes with combat, will have known that such a broadcast would dim speculation that he had been killed or wounded in early US air raids.

He even made mention of on-going battle sites, bolstering the tape's credibility, but military experts said the place names banded around would have been obvious locations for conflict before the first shot of the war was fired.

The US-British allies, too, would know that fanning rumours about his fate could either force Saddam to emerge from cover, enabling forces to take a new shot at him, or else unsettle his top commanders into early surrender.

"We're in the middle of a fairly intense psy-ops campaign... The whole American strategic plan is based on triggering a coup so they don't have to fight in Baghdad," Toby Dodge, an Iraq expert at Warwick University in England, said.

"He's alive and as well as you and me."

Saddam, who usually appears in spacious marble palaces, sat before a white drape for today's appearance in a makeshift touch that lent credibility to the broadcast, he said.

"It was put together much more hastily than the normal output. This was 'I'm still alive, let's keep fighting!'"

Saddam would be anxious to avoid new intelligence-led raids on any hideout and anyway rarely appears live on television.

"He has always been terribly wary about US technology. If you do it live, one can find out where the broadcast is coming from and a Tomahawk missile will arrive soon afterwards," Antoine Basbous, head of the Paris-based Observatory of Arab Countries, told France 2 television.

As for reports that Saddam was so badly wounded in the opening US raid that he needed a blood transfusion — forget it, say the experts.

"Assuming that this broadcast was made after the attack on Saddam's bunker last Thursday, he looks in remarkably good health for somebody who is supposed to have had a blood transfusion and was badly injured," his biographer Con Coughlin said.

"The balance of probability is that Saddam is alive and well." Iraq's ambassador to the UN, Mohammed Douri, told today he believed Saddam was alive.

## THE HUMAN COST: BOTH SIDES BLEED

### GENEVA CONVENTION



Prisoners must be treated humanely

Prisoners must be protected from violence, intimidation, insults and public curiosity



Prisoners must get adequate medical care and appropriate diet



Iraqi TV shows an American prisoner of war (AFP)



US Marines taking Iraqi soldiers prisoner (Reuters)

### TOLL TILL NOW

Following are the announced casualties to date

#### US MILITARY IN COMBAT

- March 20: US marine killed, first combat death
- March 21: Second US marine killed
- March 23: Iraq says 25 American bodies found in An Nasiriyah. Iraqi TV shows 8 American corpses, 5 captured US soldiers, including a wounded woman

#### IRAQI MILITARY IN COMBAT

- March 21: US says 70 Iraqis killed south of Najaf overnight. US air force General Richard Myers confirms 2,000 Iraqi POWs
- March 22: Iraq says 3 killed in overnight air raids, 250 civilians hurt in Baghdad since Day 1
- March 23: Iraq says 77 civilians killed, 366 hurt in Basra, most with cluster bombs. Iraqi satellite TV reports 4 killed, 13 hurt in air strikes on Tikrit
- March 24: Iraq information minister says 62 killed in past 24 hours, over 400 hurt; in Baghdad, 194 hurt, 30 deaths in Babel and 14 in Basra

#### IRAQI CIVILIAN

- March 21: 8 UK soldiers, 4 US marines die in US marine chopper crash in Kuwait
- March 22: 2 Royal Navy Sea King choppers collide in northern Gulf, killing all 7 on board
- March 23: US Patriot missile brings down Royal Air Force Tornado jet near Kuwait border, killing 2 crew
- US' Captain Christopher Scott Seifert killed, 15 hurt in grenade attack on three tents of 101st Airborne Division in Kuwait. Suspect is US military man
- US marine killed, 3 hurt in vehicle accident in Kuwait
- March 24: Pentagon says 2 US marines killed in separate accidents in Iraq

#### NON-COMBAT DEATHS

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- US marine killed, 3 hurt in vehicle accident in Kuwait
- March 24: Pentagon says 2 US marines killed in separate accidents in Iraq

#### JOURNALISTS

- March 22: Australian lensman dies in

car-bomb hit in north Iraq; Kurdish officials blame militant group Ansar al-Islam

- March 22: British Independent Television News journalist (ITN) Terry Lloyd dies in firing on way to Basra

#### NON-IRAQIS

- March 20: Jordanian taxi driver dies in first US missile hit on Baghdad
- March 23: US missile hits bus bringing Syrians home from Iraq, killing 5, wounding 10 near Iraq's al-Rutbeh, Sana news agency says

#### MISSING

- March 23: 2 ITN journalists missing after car comes under fire near Basra day before
- March 24: 2 UK soldiers missing after vehicle comes under attack in south Iraq

## Stoic British accept losses

AMIT ROY

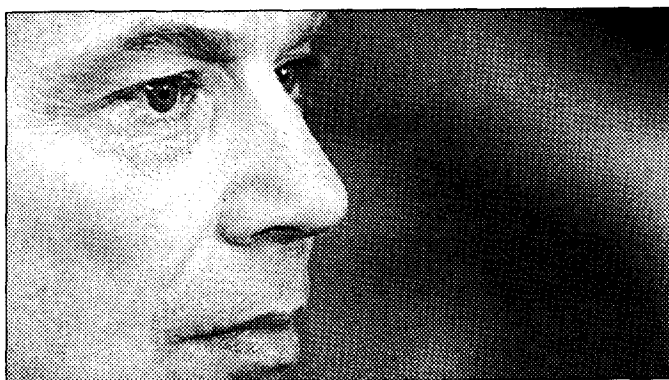
London, March 24: The British do not suffer from the American equivalent of the "Blackhawk Down" syndrome, named after the helicopter misadventure in Mogadishu in 1993 when the deaths of 18 undeniably brave US soldiers caused Washington to pull out of Somalia.

Unlike the Americans, who have a horror of losing their men in conflict, the British, most military experts would say, have more stomach for battle. Although this war has divided public opinion, British casualties will have to climb to more than 200 — the number lost in the Falklands in 1982 — before British Prime Minister Tony Blair is forced to review his war strategy.

Britain is more like India, in that the country has a much greater willingness to accept the casualties of war. Military analysts point out that modern Americans would much rather defeat the enemy by using high precision weapons from afar.

British defence secretary Geoff Hoon today paid tribute to British and US servicemen killed or missing in Iraq. He played down expectations of a swift victory but added: "I recognise at some stage Baghdad will have to be taken."

If there is one issue that is likely to cause problems between Britain and the US, it is the question of "friendly fire". Both sides are working frantically to ensure there is no repetition of the



Blair at 10 Downing Street on Sunday. (AFP)

incident in which two Raf crew members were killed when their Tornado GR4 was shot down by a US Patriot missile.

Although this is a deeply unpopular war, anyone who tries to use British casualties as a way of attacking Blair's policy is on weak ground. This explains why the anti-war coalition is focusing partly on the more emotive issue of Iraqi civilian casualties. Today's *Mirror*, for example, has a front page of a little Iraqi girl covered in blood.

Given this background, it is unusual that the family of one of the British casualties has been critical of the war. Mark Stratford was one of eight Royal Marines killed, along with four US soldiers, when their American Sea Knight helicopter crashed in Kuwait. It was an accident.

A note from 10 members of his family, left at the Royal Marine commando base at Stone

house Barracks in Plymouth, read: "In memory of Mark Stratford, who gave his life for this senseless war. Sincere condolences to his beloved wife, Lisa, Carol, Clark and family."

Six more British servicemen were killed when two Sea King helicopters, one outgoing and another incoming off the aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal, collided in the dark.

Double Oscar-winning actress Glenda Jackson, who is now the (anti-war) Labour MP for Hampstead, in north London, was slapped down in the Commons when she suggested that the British servicemen had died "needlessly". She was shot down by Hoon who told her he wanted to "resist" any such notion.

Now it has been revealed that two British servicemen are missing in southern Iraq, though there are hopes they may be alive.

"Every effort is being made to

find them," said Hoon.

An insight into the British psychology was provided today by Major General Patrick Cordingley, who commanded the UK's 7th Armoured Brigade during the 1991 Gulf War.

"After a lifetime as a soldier, I am still astonished at the courageous way in which British fighting men and women — and their families back home — accept the loss of friends and comrades on the field of battle. That is the logic of war and the price of victory," he said.

He added: "Since the Vietnam War, the US authorities have been much more squeamish about avoiding deaths, and it has sometimes affected their ability to fight to the finish. Of course, we must strive to minimise casualties but, for the British soldier, death in combat remains an inevitable part of the grand plan."

Every British war produces its own hero. The one who has captured the imagination of the country in this conflict is Lt Col. Tim Collins, who leads the battlegroup of the 1st Bn of the Royal Irish.

In the eve of battle address, he gave a speech which is now likely to enter the annals of British military history.

"It is my foremost intention to bring every single one of you out alive but there are some among us who will not end of this campaign in their and send them back home. There is no time for sor-

## Torture tales from the past

Washington, March 24 (Reuters): US prisoners of war in Iraq risk being beaten, tortured and held in dank concrete jails without medical attention, POWs from the 1991 Gulf War said yesterday, based on their own experiences in Iraqi hands.

Iraqi television filmed five shaken US soldiers — one an injured woman — and the bloodied bodies of up to eight unformed men, all apparently captured or killed near An Nasiriyah in southern Iraq. At least two of the dead had head wounds.

The footage of the first known US POWs in the conflict included brief interviews with the five and was relayed internationally by the Arabic network, Al-Jazeera.

Americans who were POWs in the 1991 conflict with Iraq said the US captives faced grim conditions. "The first few days are usually the worst. The physical beatings, most of them were in the first few days," Lt Col Dale Storr, who was held for 33 days in Iraq in 1991, recalled in an interview with the CNN yesterday.

Sunday's images revived Storr's memories. "I don't remember the first few days. My mind goes out to their families."

sages seen around the world.

"I think our leaders and our people have wrongly attacked the peaceful people of Iraq," navy Lt Jeffrey Zaun said in that 1991 broadcast. And Guy Hunter of the Marine Corps called the war, "an aggression against peaceful Iraq."

US President George W. Bush demanded that the captured Americans be treated humanely as dictated by the Geneva Convention, and Iraqi officials promised they would respect the Convention in their treatment of the prisoners.

But US soldiers who had a similar experience during the 1991 Gulf War expect no compassion from Baghdad.

Zaun, whose battered face became one of Americans' most memorable images of the 1991 war, told NBC television news, "This kind of thing shouldn't be unexpected." Zaun said he was isolated for weeks at a time and then regularly subjected to karate chops to the throat and blindfolded for mock executions.

Asked if he expected Iraq to honour the Geneva Convention while holding the US prisoners, Storr said: "No. I don't see any way that Iraq is going to do that. My mind goes out to their families."

# US pressures Iraqi leaders, generals to defect

W. Amie

Jack Kelley  
Kuwait City, March 24

IRAQI MAJ. Gen. Abdil Wahid al-Jabbar receives a telephone call from his daughter in Baghdad. His daughter says she is urging him to defect. He has gotten the same message from a relative in Jordan, from an Iraqi Opposition member in London and in a letter that was hand-delivered to his house by someone claiming to be a family friend, according to Milad Qassab, 23, who was interviewed by telephone on Sunday.

Other Iraqi generals have received similar messages and, to avoid being reported to the Iraqis, they have been listening to the radio in Baghdad. "My father is ready to fight. He is not going to give in to the CIA."

US intelligence officials have been contacting Iraq's generals and leaders of the ruling Baath Party with promises of safety, asylum and a role in Iraq's new government if they defect. The communications, directed by the CIA, began three

months ago during the buildup of US and coalition forces on Iraq's borders. Initially, US officials were so confident that they could persuade Iraqi leaders to surrender that they delayed the start of the war. And although those early efforts were largely unsuccessful, the communications have resumed even as US forces carry out air and ground assaults inside Iraq, according to three intelligence and two military officials directly involved in the communications efforts.

The Iraqi leaders are being contacted by telephone, e-mail and intermediaries. Some have

had face-to-face talks with CIA operatives in Baghdad, the sources say. Telephone appeals are even being made to the leaders' wives and children.

For the most part, officials say the overtures have been met with stiff resistance. Some leaders may fear reprisals from Saddam. Others, like Qassab, say they genuinely support the Iraqi leader.

But there are also signs the efforts are paying off: US intelligence officials say they have secured oral promises from some Iraqi generals that they won't use chemical weapons against US troops. They have also succeeded

in winning the cooperation of at least one member of Saddam's inner circle, another goal.

US intelligence officials say they have intercepted telephone calls between Iraqi generals that indicate they are not as loyal to Saddam as previously thought.

The intelligence officials estimate that up to 20 per cent of Iraq's 60,000 Republican Guard forces - most of them outside the Iraqi capital - could surrender.

US intelligence officials say they recently recruited a senior member of Saddam's inner circle who is secretly providing them with valuable information

on the movements and activities of Iraqi leaders. The source, an official is trying to persuade members of Saddam's inner circle to surrender.

Last week, the unidentified man gave the CIA the location where Saddam was meeting with his staff and spending the night, the US officials say. The tip led to the first US missile attack Wednesday night. Some CIA and Pentagon officials believe that the Iraqi dictator and his sons may have been injured.



Iraqi soldiers wave white flags

USA Today



## BRITISH PLANE DOWNED; FIERCE FIGHTING IN NASSARIYA

# U.S. forces near Baghdad

HD-1 24/3 WARM (1)

**SOUTHERN IRAQ, MARCH 23.** U.S. forces surged ahead within 160 km of Baghdad today, but their battlefield success was tempered by pockets of resistance and pictures shown on Arab television of bodies in U.S. uniforms lying in a makeshift Iraqi morgue and of prisoners being interviewed who were said to be Americans.

A fierce fighting between the Iraqi forces and U.S. Marines was continuing at the strategic town of Nassariya in which six Marines were reported to have been killed.

In another unsettling incident for the U.S.-led coalition, British officials confirmed that a Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft was shot down accidentally today by U.S. Patriot missile near the Kuwaiti-Iraq border while returning from a mission. The aircraft's crew was missing; details about those on board were not disclosed.

In Baghdad, hundreds of po-

lice and security agents searched for the downed fighter's crew, shooting into the reeds and shallow water alongside the Tigris.

In perhaps the most dramatic advance on the ground, the 3rd Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade covered roughly 370 km in 40 hours to take positions about 160 km from Baghdad less than a day's march.

The brigade raced day and night in more than 70 tanks and 60 Bradley fighting vehicles. At one point the soldiers ran into an hours-long firefight, killing 100 Iraqi militiamen who confronted the Americans with machinegun-mounted vehicles.

While the U.S. officials boasted of the speed of the thrust towards Baghdad, they were forced to confront a horrifying prospect at a camp in Kuwait that one of their own soldiers had launched a fatal attack on comrades.

The attack occurred early to-

day at a 101st Airborne Division command centre, where an assailant threw grenades into three tents. Fifteen were wounded, three of them seriously, said George Heath, spokesman for Fort Campbell, Kentucky, the 101st Airborne's home base. The suspect, found hiding in a bunker, is an engineer from an engineering platoon. The motive "most likely was resentment," said Max Blumenfeld, an Army spokesman. He did not elaborate.

What looked to be a benign ride into Nassariya to quietly secure its major bridges turned into a firefight today as Iraqi tanks, soldiers and secret police darted through the streets, turning their mortars, artillery cannons, rockets and rifles at advancing Marines.

The Americans managed to gain control of the bridges, but not without "significant casualties," the Reuters news agency quoted an officer as saying. The

tanks of Task Force Tarawa's light armour reconnaissance unit crept forward a hundred yards at a time against pockets of Iraqi infantry and secret police, nicknamed the "black pajamas" for their attire. The battle continued throughout the afternoon. The marine artillery unit, attempting to provide cover fire for the tanks, spent frustrated hours unable to shoot into the city for fear of hitting fellow marines.

The battle began shortly after dawn when the infantry unit, codenamed Timber Wolf, approached the southern edge of the city. Several miles south, Glenn Starnes, commanding officer of the artillery battalion, listened on a radio. Minutes before 7 a.m., he shouted, "Timber Wolf is taking fire."

But the cannons were caught off guard, scrambling into position in lines of six in the sand. Iraqi mortar fire sounded in the distance, and the colonel winced and cursed. Twenty-three minutes later, the first battery reported itself ready to fire, or, in the language of battle, "fully in the fight."

Radar detected the location of the mortar fire, and the cannons shot back, but with no Marines yet present in the city to observe, it was impossible to tell what was hit. Mortar, while difficult to fire accurately, can be a difficult weapon to counterattack, especially in a city, where the shooter can drag it back into a home and shut the door in seconds. After being pinned down most of the morning, the infantry unit and the artillery forward observer advanced shortly before noon, meeting machine-gun fire.

Nassariya straddles the Euphrates River, and its bridges are crucial to troops behind Task Force Tarawa heading further north, toward Baghdad. Army units passing quickly through the city on Saturday encountered little resistance, leaving the marines little clue of what was in store. — AP, New York Times



U.S. Marines enter the southern Iraqi city of Nassariya, where allied troops faced resistance in their north-bound advance towards Baghdad, on Sunday. — AFP

## Al-Jazeera TV shows U.S. PoWs

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**WASHINGTON, MARCH 23.** The Qatar-based Al Jazeera television today aired footage of captured American soldiers, some of them seen wounded and lying, sparking questions in the United States about the treatment being meted out to them. At least one media reported here that some of the captured soldiers may have been put to death.

The Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, has warned Iraq to treat captured U.S. soldiers according to the Geneva Conventions; and has once again told Iraqi soldiers that they would be "well advised" to put down their weapons. "We're not going to be deterred at all," Mr.

Rumsfeld said here today.

"The course of the war is clear. The outcome of the war is clear. The regime of Saddam Hussein is gone," the Defence Secretary said in a Sunday Talk Show. The regime of Saddam Hussein is "shortly going to be history," he remarked.

Senior military and civilians officials have been showered with questions all morning after reports surfaced of American forces being captured in southern Iraq. Apparently, a maintenance unit strayed into a fighting zone ending in a shootout that killed some soldiers and a few others taken prisoner.

The footage on television has angered administration officials. It is a "violation of the Ge-

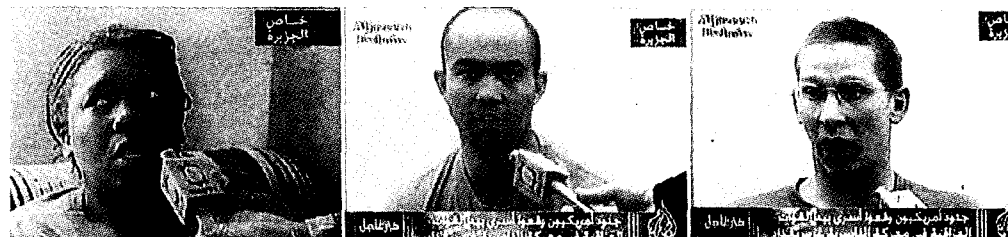
neva Convention for Iraq to be showing Prisoners of War in a humiliating manner," maintained the Defence Secretary.

AP reports from Doha:

At least five prisoners, speaking American-accented English, were interviewed on Al-Jazeera TV. Two were bandaged.

The television crew interviewed several of the troops, including one woman. The narrator provided an Arabic translation, but it was possible to hear some of the comments in English.

In Washington, the U.S. President, George Bush, speaking to newsmen after the footage was aired, demanded that any American troops held captive in Iraq be treated humanely.



Captured U.S. soldiers being interviewed by the Iraqi television in a room in the southern city of Nassariya on Sunday. — AFP



119 - 11  
20/3

## Ensure that the war does not prolong, Pakistan tells U.N.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

**ISLAMABAD, MARCH 23.** Pakistan has called on the international community in general and the United Nations Security Council in particular, to ensure that the military action in Iraq did not prolong.

In a statement here, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, under pressure from the Opposition parties in the country to play a 'pro-active' role, said priority must be given to avert a human-

itarian disaster for the Iraqi people. The territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq and the right of the people over Iraq's natural resources must be preserved. Mr. Kasuri said the United Nations confers on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That responsibility has never weighed more heavily on the members of the Council than in the last few days, he added. In view of the emerging and pressing problems that the

international community now faces, it is imperative that the Security Council should address these issues so that the sufferings, pain and misery of the people of Iraq are brought to an early end, he said.

The statement said Pakistan was in touch with the international community and was playing a constructive role in the Security Council so that the suffering of the civilian population in Iraq was addressed as a priority.

"We hope that the limits im-

posed under the humanitarian law in a situation of warfare as pointed out by the ICRC are observed to avoid suffering to the civilian population of Iraq."

He said the Government and the people of Pakistan have reacted with deep anguish and dismay to the current situation in Iraq. "We have already deplored the initiation of military action against Iraq." He urged that the civilian casualties and infrastructure damage, particularly to the civic services and the holy places, must be prohibited.

THE HINDU

24 MAR 2003

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IRAQ CAMPAIGN / UDAY MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED

# Saddam 'badly wounded, not in control'

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 23. Speculation about the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's physical fitness intensified today after a British newspaper reported that he had been so badly wounded in a cruise missile attack on his bunker on the first day of the war that he needed blood transfusion.

The report came barely hours after the Iraqi TV showed a footage of a smiling Mr. Hussein with his aides and son, Qusay, which it claimed was taken on Saturday.

The Sunday Telegraph, in a front page splash, stuck to its story quoting British intelligence chiefs as telling the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his war Cabinet at a special 40-minute meeting that though the Iraqi leader survived the missile attack, he sustained serious injuries requiring blood transfusion. It said his other son, Uday,

was "also thought to have been injured and may even have been killed". The Observer, citing a British "military source" in Washington, said Mr. Hussein "does not appear to be in control" apparently after suffering serious injuries. It said he was thought to have been "too badly incapacitated to be an effective leader."

Meanwhile, concern over the safety of British troops grew after it was confirmed that an RAF aircraft was shot down by a U.S. missile by mistake. The Commander of British troops in the Gulf, Air Marshal Brian Burridge said it happened when an RAF Tornado was returning from an "operational mission". Its crew was missing.

"This is a sad moment but we will put it behind us as quickly as we can in a military sense and carry on to our objective," he said.

Fourteen British soldiers have already been killed since



Amid reports that the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was seriously injured, the Iraqi television telecast this picture on Sunday, showing Mr. Hussein with his son Qusay. The exact date and location of the video were unknown. — AP

the war started four days ago, conflict drags on and there are and there are fears that if the heavy casualties, Mr. Blair's po-

sition at home could become vulnerable.

In another case of "friendly fire", a veteran British TV journalist, Terry Lloyd, and his two colleagues were feared to have been killed when their car came under heavy attack, possibly from coalition forces in southern Iraq.

As anti-war protests continued, Mr. Blair again promised that all efforts would be made to minimise civilian casualties. The attacks, he said, were aimed solely at the Iraqi regime's "levellers of oppression and power". "We must realise that no matter how hard we try to avoid them, there will be civilian casualties. But while the dramatic TV pictures have shown the force of attacks on Baghdad they have also highlighted just how much effort has gone into safeguarding civilians..." he said in an article even as newspapers carried pictures of little children wounded in attacks.

23 MAR 2003

24 MAR 2003

UPSIDE

■ IRAQ PARADES PoWs ON TV ■ US TROOPS KILLED IN NASIRIYAH

# SUNDAY SETBACK

Associated Press

SOUTHERN IRAQ, March 23. — US forces surged to within 160 km of Baghdad today and the aerial bombardment of Baghdad continued for the fourth consecutive night, but their gains were offset by the reported loss of six Marines (12 were confirmed missing) in pitched battles near Nasiriyah — which coalition commanders had earlier announced as taken — and the capture of at least 11 soldiers by Iraq. Pictures on Arab television of bodies in US uniform lying in an Iraqi morgue and of American prisoners being interviewed added to the misery. Eyewitnesses said a coalition pilot had ejected over Baghdad where authorities were searching for him along the Tigris.

Graphic scenes of captured soldiers were shown on Qatar's *Al-Jazeera* TV, prompting the Pentagon to warn: "It's illegal to do things to PoWs that are humiliating." A visibly upset President George Bush too demanded that any American held captive in Iraq be treated humanely. He reiterated: "Saddam's losing control. (Though) there are pockets of resistance, we're making good progress". Indicating that Sunday was probably the toughest day of fighting yet, he said: "This is just the beginning of a tough battle."

The Iraqi military has put the number of coalition troops killed around Nasiriyah at 25. Defence minister Hashem Ahmad said an unspecified number of US soldiers were killed in battle and their bodies abandoned in the mid-Euphrates region, adds AFP. He said Iraq would respect the Geneva Convention in its treatment of PoWs. The minister also claimed Iraq had destroyed four US *M-1 Abrams* tanks.

Tonight's aerial attack on the Iraqi capital began with a powerful American missile landing on an unidentified target on the east bank of the Tigris sparking a huge fireball. Ambulances sped through deserted streets as residents huddled indoors ahead of an expected long night of bombing.

In another development, British foreign office minister Mr Mike O'Brien reiterated on *BBC Radio* that President Saddam Hussein probably survived Thursday's missile attack on his compounds in Baghdad but was reportedly taken away in an ambulance.

Earlier, the 3rd Infantry Division covered roughly 370 km in 40 hours to take positions about 160 km from Baghdad, less than a day's march away. The brigade raced day and night in more than 70 tanks and 60 *Bradley* armoured carriers. At one point the soldiers were engaged in an intense gunbattle and reportedly killed 100 Iraqi militiamen who had confronted them from machine-gun-mounted vehicles. No American injuries were reported in this battle.

Coalition troops were also trying to mop up resistance at Iraq's only deep water port of Umm-Qasr — which they claimed to have taken on Thursday



PROGRESS AT A PRICE: US Marines being airdropped by a *Sea Stallion* helicopter somewhere in southern Iraq on Sunday. — AFP

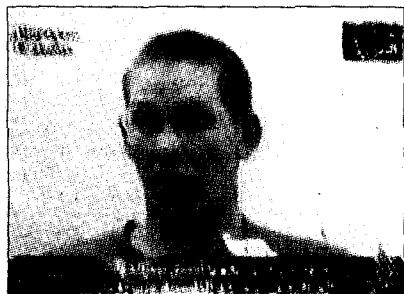
night. They engaged in street-to-street battles against guerrillas, including paramilitary fighters of the Ba'ath Party. Near the Persian Gulf, Marines seized an Iraqi naval base at Az Zubayr.

Iraqi officials said more than 500 people in four cities were injured in airstrikes yesterday, and 77 civilians were

killed in Basra alone. Details of Iraqi civilian casualties are still sketchy.

Iraq has christened the war "Decisive Battle", or *Maarakat al-Hawassem* in Arabic. Iraq had termed the 1991 War the "Mother of All Battles".

More Iraq War reports on pages 3 & 4



In these TV grabs from *Al-Jazeera* telecast on Sunday, four GIs taken PoW are seen being interviewed on Iraqi TV in a room allegedly in the southern city of Nasiriyah. The Pentagon confirmed that about 10 soldiers reported missing have been taken prisoner and has begun notifying their families. Bodies of coalition soldiers killed were also shown. — AFP

## The enemy within...

Associated Press/PTI

KUWAIT CITY/DUBAI, March 23. — The relatively low number of casualties for the US-led coalition has been off-set by a string of what military commanders call "blue-on-blue" incidents in the opening days of *Iraq Freedom*.

On Sunday, an US soldier was held for launching a grenade attack on his comrades that killed one and injured 13, while a US *Patriot* missile downed a British *Tornado* fighter in "friendly fire".

A GI was detained for suspected involvement in a series of grenade explosions at a US command centre in Kuwait today. He lobbed three grenades into his colleagues' tents, including the command tent. An US army spokesman said the most likely motive was "resentment".

A *Tornado* was shot down by a US *Patriot* missile battery near the Kuwait-Iraq border. The crew, comprising a woman pilot and her co-pilot, are missing. A joint US-British probe has been ordered into the incident.

[www.thestatesman.net](http://www.thestatesman.net)  
e-mail: [thestatesman@vsnl.com](mailto:thestatesman@vsnl.com)

# The war after war with Iraq

Three ideas are competing for the succession to the cold war West — the Rumsfeldian, the Chiraco-Putinesque and the Blairite, says Timothy Garton Ash

AS THE second Persian Gulf gathers momentum, we peer into the sandstorm, straining to discern the outline of the new world beyond. Like most new worlds, this is actually a mix of old and new.

American officers at computer screens send "e-bombs" to fry Saddam Hussein's command equipment thousands of miles away; the intergalactic fight scenes in *Star Trek* look like 19th-century realism by comparison. But then I watch British foot soldiers in Kuwait preparing for hand-to-hand combat. A sergeant-major urges one young squaddie to bark elemental cries of hatred as he stabs and stabs again with his bayonet at a stuffed dummy of the enemy. This scene could be the eve of Agincourt in 1415: one man being psyched up to kill another by forcing sharp metal through his guts.

So also with the politics. There is something rather new: America feels so confident of its own military power and moral rightness that it will march into the most explosive region in the world with just one effective ally (two if you count Australia). And something very old: the United Nations diplomacy finally came down to a conflict between Europe's oldest adversaries, England and France. Again as at Agincourt in 1415.

Over the past few weeks, the geopolitical West of the cold war has collapsed before our eyes. No one can know what the shape of the new world will be. As Prime Minister Tony Blair said in his magnificent speech to the British Parliament, "History doesn't declare the future to us so plainly." But we can already see three broad ideas competing for the succession to the cold war West. I'll call them the Rumsfeldian, the Chiraco-Putinesque and the Blairite.

The Rumsfeldian idea — if idea is not too dignified a word — is that American might is right. Secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld sees the United States as a City on a Hill. As the hyperpower of the free, it must strike back at international terrorism, the new international Communism. It may also end up spreading democracy to places like Iraq, and thus make the world a better place. If some allies want to come along to help, that's fine. If not, you work around them.

The Rumsfeldian vision is half right and, therefore, all wrong. It's probably true that the US can now win most wars on its own. But it can't win the



US Marines run to a CH-46 helicopter on a Kuwaiti desert near Iraq. America has the military might to win any war on its own, but it cannot secure peace alone. Without peace, the war against terrorism will be futile. PHOTO: REUTERS

peace on its own. And victory in the war against terrorism is all about winning the peace in Iraq, in the wider West Asia, and beyond.

The Chiraco-Putinesque idea — if idea is not too dignified a word — is that American might is dangerous. President Jacques Chirac of France believes it is unhealthy for any single state to have so much power, but it's particularly dangerous if that state happens to be America (rather than, say, France). France's mission is to construct an alternative pole: Europe, which, in Gaullist geography, includes Russia. Seeing the Franco-German-Russian (and Chinese) continental alliance pitted against the American-British-Spanish (and Australian) maritime one in the recent diplomatic battle makes me think again of the war of super-blocs in George Orwell's *1984*. He called them Eurasia and Oceania.

The Chiraco-Putinesque vision is half right and, therefore, all wrong. It's true that it is unhealthy for any single power, however democratic and benign, to be as preponderant as the US is today. But for France to make common cause with Vladimir Putin and a semi-democratic Russia, as well as a nondemocratic China, to bring temporary succour to Saddam Hussein is not the brightest way to move toward a multipolar world. Anyway, you won't unite Eurasia against the US. Even in this crisis, half the governments of Europe put trans-Atlantic solidarity before their grave doubts about the wisdom of the Bush administration's approach to Iraq.

That leaves Blairism. Tony Blair's idea is that we should recreate a larger version of the cold war West, in response to the new threats we face. What he calls the "coming together" of

weapons of mass destruction and terrorism should frighten us as much as the Red Army used to. The way to deal with American unilateralism is not rivalry but partnership. Partners are not servants. Last September, as the Bush administration began its push for action on Iraq, Europe should have said "with one voice" that it would help Washington confront terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, provided that it went down the UN route and restarted the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Europe and America should always work together through the international institutions of the post-1945 world.

Blair's idea is completely right. The trouble is the execution. He made two big mistakes over the past year. The first was not to do more last September to try to bring Europe to speak with one voice. Instead, he became almost a

part of the internal administration argument in Washington, while neglecting Berlin and Paris as they swung together in an antiwar waltz.

The second error was to forget that partnership also involves sometimes saying no. One has the feeling that Blair is that kind of very decent Englishman who will always say no to drugs and never say no to Washington. If you have a stronger European voice, it's more credible that you might say no, and hence less likely that you'll have to.

If Blair had gotten the European side of his strategy right, there is just a chance that Saddam Hussein would have yielded to the united pressure of the West. I remain unconvinced that this particular war at this particular time is necessary or prudent.

I now hope against hope that our victory will be swift and sure, and that the

consequences in West Asia will be positive.

I am totally convinced, however, that the Blairite vision of a new postwar order of world politics is the best one available on the somewhat depressed market of world leadership. It follows that it would have been a major setback, not just for Britain but for the world, to lose him over this war. The trouble is, of course, that to realise the Blairite vision you need Paris and Washington to sign up for it. With Jacques Chirac in one place and Donald Rumsfeld in the other, the chances don't look good. But does anyone have a better idea?

*Timothy Garton Ash is director of the European Studies Center at St Antony's College, Oxford, and a fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford*  
The New York Times



## Question that dogs US: where are Iraq's weapons?

Washington, March 23: Bush administration officials were peppered yesterday with questions about why allied forces in Iraq have not found any of the chemical or biological weapons that were President Bush's central justification for forcibly disarming Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government.

Officials said they are certain such weapons of mass destruction will be located, but they warned that the weapons may have been dispersed in small batches and could be hard to find. The Iraqi government has not used gas or germs to try to repel invading forces, or loaded such weapons of mass destruction onto missiles that have been fired into Kuwait, raising questions about the size and functionality of Saddam's arsenal.

Gen. Tommy Franks, the war's commander, opened yesterday's news conference in Qatar by saying that the location and destruction of weapons of mass destruction, and the collection of information about them, were among the administration's eight objectives in Iraq. But during questioning, Franks acknowledged that finding them "is work that lies in front of us rather than work we have already accomplished."

"There is no doubt that the regime of Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction," Franks said. "As this operation continues, those weapons will be identified, found, along with the people who have produced them and who guard them." He added that the amount of time that will take "remains to be seen, very candidly."

White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said Friday there is "no question" that weapons of mass destruction will be found, and said documenting the discoveries "is one of the reasons that there are so many reporters present with the military."

A scarcity of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons in Iraq could create both relief and concern for the administration.

Though it is unmitigated good news that such weapons have not been used against US troops, their absence raises questions about the rationale for war. Bush, in his weekly radio address yesterday, again mentioned Iraq's weapons of mass destruction as justification for war and listed their removal as the primary mission. "Our mission is clear: to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people," he said.

A senior US defence official said it is vital to Bush's political objectives to find and make a credible display of evidence of forbidden weapons programmes "very, very fast." At the same time, career disarmament specialists and outside experts said it is far too soon to expect results from such a hunt when the assault to take control of the country has just begun.

Some specialists, particularly in Europe, argue Iraq has little remaining capability to use such weapons. The weapons also might be disassembled, in hiding from UN inspectors. Or Saddam's Republican Guard or other elite forces ringed Baghdad might be waiting to use weapons that other parts of the military were afraid or unable to use.

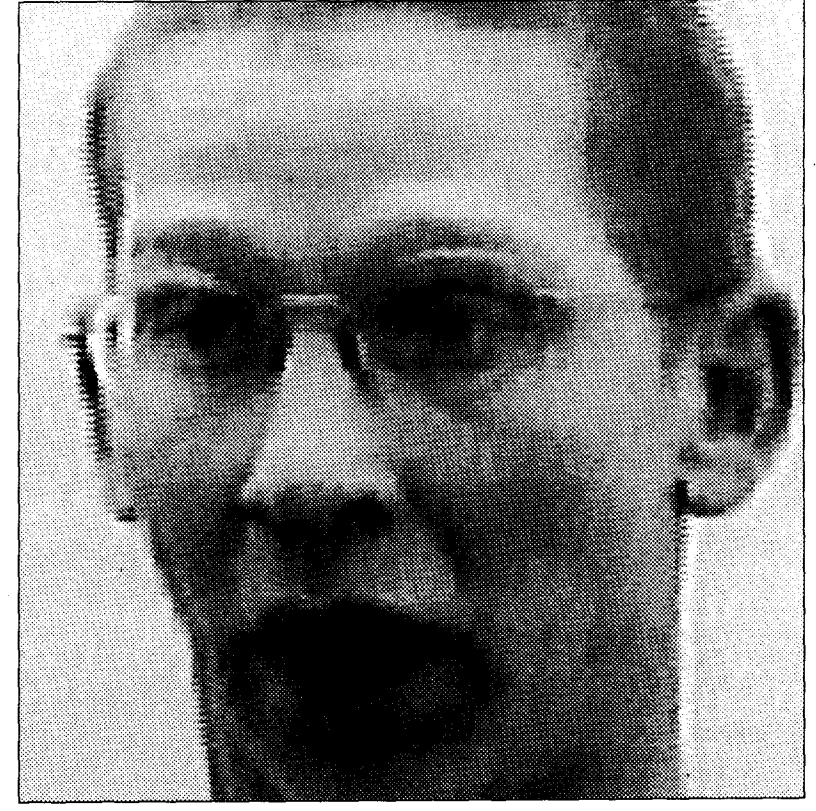
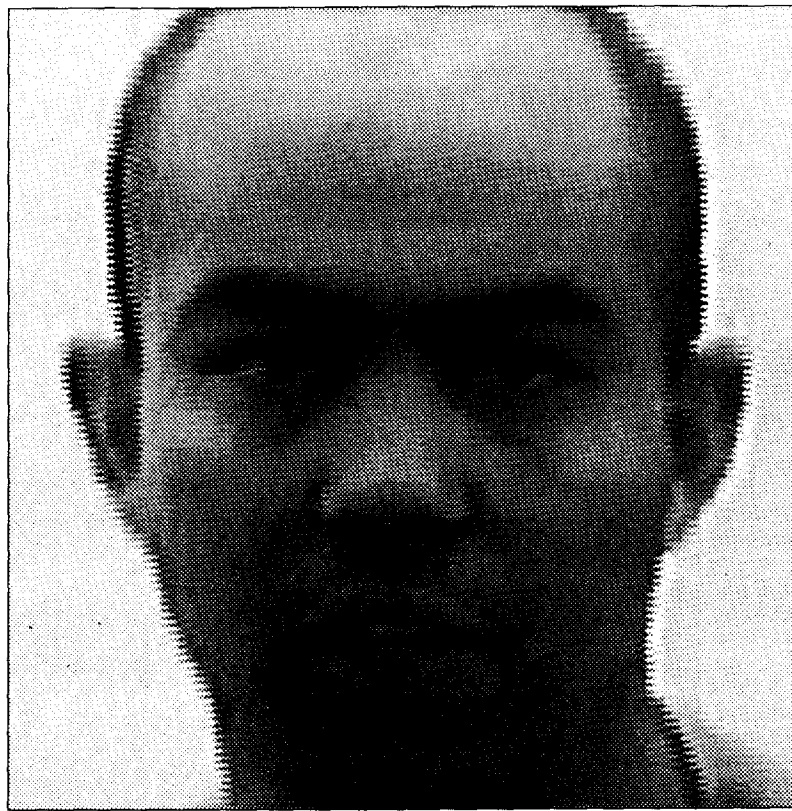
Kenneth Adelman, a former Reagan arms-control official who is close to top Bush military officials and serves on a Pentagon advisory panel, said these weapons are likeliest to be found near Tikrit and Baghdad, "because they're the most protected places with the best troops."

Victoria Clarke, assistant secretary of defence for public affairs, said during a televised briefing yesterday at the Pentagon that the administration knows about "a number of sites" where Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Clarke refused to provide any estimate of how many sites the US knows of, even when asked.

"I have no doubt we're going to find big stores of weapons of mass destruction," Adelman said, though he acknowledged some surprise that they haven't been used yet. "One thing we may find is Saddam Hussein ordered them to be used and soldiers didn't follow the orders. The threat of use goes down every day because adherence to orders goes down."

LOS ANGELES TIMES-WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

# US prisoners paraded on TV



US prisoners of war being interviewed by Iraqi TV allegedly in the southern Iraqi city of An Nasiriyah. (AFP)

Baghdad, March 23 (Reuters): Iraq displayed today five shaken US soldiers apparently captured in a battle near the southern city of An Nasiriyah and some bloodied bodies, in what US officials called a violation of the Geneva Convention.

President George W. Bush warned Iraqis that they would be punished as "war criminals" if they mistreated the US prisoners. "The POWs I expect to be treated humanely, just like we're treating the prisoners that we have captured humanely. If not, the people who mistreat the prisoners will be treated as war criminals," Bush said.

Iraqi television filmed the bodies and prisoners, saying they fell into Iraqi hands during a battle at the town of Souq al-

Shuyukh, southeast of An Nasiriyah where US forces have encountered stiff resistance.

The video showed two rooms each containing what appeared to be two separate groups of four bodies in uniform, at least two with wounds to the head and some lying in pools of blood.

The film then showed interviews with five separate captured soldiers, two of whom appeared to be injured — one a woman, the other a man lying on a rug on the floor.

They were the first US prisoners known to have been taken by Iraq since US-led forces invaded four days ago to overthrow President Saddam Hussein. The prisoners gave their names and home towns and one provided his military identification number.

Lieutenant-General John Abizaid, second in command of the US invasion force, later said 12 US soldiers were missing.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said the video was a violation of the Geneva Convention but added that the capture of Americans would not alter US war plans, saying display of such footage was "obviously part of Iraqi propaganda".

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) agreed the footage violated the convention, which says that prisoners of war must be protected "against insult and public curiosity", and said it would seek permission to visit the captives.

forces, and still photographs of Iraqi prisoners, some showing the captives in humiliating positions, won wide play in the US media on Sunday.

Iraq's defence minister Sultan Hashim Ahmed said Iraq would respect the Geneva Convention in its treatment of prisoners. "Iraq will not harm the captured prisoners of war," he said.

The bodies, mostly still fully clothed but some with their shirts pulled up, were shown strewn on the floor in pools of blood. In the first room, at least two had wounds to the head and another had a groin wound. In another room, a smiling Iraqi uncovered more bodies, some with blackened faces.

The first prisoner shown, a nervous soldier in glasses, gave his name as Miller and said he was from Kansas.

Asked why he had come to Iraq he replied: "Because I was told to come here. I was just under orders. I was told to shoot — only if I'm shot at. I don't want to kill anybody."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a US defence official said the missing American personnel were probably members of a maintenance unit that was operating in southern Iraq.

Two of the prisoners shown by Iraqi television said they were from the 507th Maintenance Company.

The 507th Corps Support Group provides supplies, equipment, repairs and maintenance and would usually provide sup-

port as far forward as possible to the 82nd Airborne Division, the 3rd Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division.

US officers said Marines battling Iraqi guerrillas for An Nasiriyah, on the Euphrates about 375 km southeast of Baghdad, had taken "significant" casualties in a fight to open a route north to the Iraqi capital.

The second prisoner shown, who gave his name as Joseph Hudson, said he came from El Paso, Texas.

Asked why he had come to Iraq, he said: "I follow orders."

He was asked repeatedly whether he was greeted by guns or flowers by Iraqis, but appeared not to understand the question.

A third man who appeared to have a broken arm, was lying on a red patterned rug, but was pulled into a sitting position to answer questions. He gave his name as Edgar from Texas and said only that he had entered Iraq from Kuwait.

A fourth prisoner gave his name as Sergeant James Riley from New Jersey and said he was 31 years old. He appeared to be in shock, turning his head from side to side.

The fifth, a woman who gave her name as Shawna, said she was 30 and had a bandaged ankle.

Appearing on CBS television, Rumsfeld was shown the footage, which was relayed around the world by the Arabic network Al Jazeera, and said it violated the Geneva Convention.

K. P. NAYAR

Washington, March 23: If you are living in the US and following the military operations in Iraq, there are two wars being fought in Iraq — actually three.

For those tuning into American news channels, the war is a picnic. Everything is going smoothly, better than clockwork, if it was possible.

Switch to British, French or German television and you see another picture. Their reporters express unspoken surprise that the resistance from Iraqi forces has been much more than expected — even from the poorly equipped, badly trained conscripts left to defend the south.

Now, move to Arabic channels, which are about the only ones watched in Arab enclaves like Dearborn in Michigan.

For Al Jazeera, Abu Dhabi TV or the Syrian state broadcasters with big viewership in these enclaves, everything else is dwarfed by the anti-war protests.

If these channels had their way, the world ought to have been taken over by protesters by now. It is a reflection of how American TV channels are competing with each other in jingoism that when Saddam Hussein's top aide and foreign minister Najib Sabri arrived in Damascus today, driving all the way to the border, it did not even find a mention in the saturation coverage of the war here.

But for European news organisations, Sabri's unexpected crossing of Iraq's borders was a strong sign that Saddam Hussein's regime had far from collapsed.

Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo had no expectation that Sabri would be able to travel to their conclave.

## Channels fight continent wars

But the Iraqi regime was able to organise his safe drive through a country in the middle of war. When US bombs and missiles knocked out electricity to most of Baghdad, it was repeatedly noted on European news that the authorities in the city restored power supply with unexpected speed. Yet another sign that Baghdad was still running.

Someone said, with greater efficiency than at normal times!

But American TV channels kept mentioning in one sentence that air raids had cut power supply to residents in most of the Iraqi capital.

Even when defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff Gen. Richard Myers acknowledged this morning that about 10 US soldiers were missing in southern Iraq, several TV channels began the report colouring it with a description that "fewer than" 10 Americans could not be accounted for in the war.

And when Qatar's Al Jazeera TV showed footage of Iraqi TV interviews of alleged American prisoners of war (PoWs) shortly before noon today, Washington time, American channels refused to play the tape, at least till the time of going to press.

Instead, there was a barrage of patriotic propaganda on how

Saddam Hussein's regime was violating the Geneva Convention by parading the alleged PoWs before TV cameras.

This was accompanied by pictures of Iraqi PoWs in US and British custody with commentaries on how well they were being fed and treated. On the fourth day of attacks on Iraq, it was becoming clear that the Pentagon's novel idea of "embedding" journalists with units on the field was a brilliant strategy of controlling the flow of information. On the one hand, it was keeping TV crews busy in meeting the demands of their channels for reality TV on the war. It was also keeping viewers back home occupied with images that the army wanted to put out.

As the Al Jazeera episode with PoWs showed, there was little possibility that any disturbing footage such as the brutal execution of US soldiers in Somalia a decade ago would be aired on American TV under this arrangement. The "embedded" journalists, especially Americans, for the most part are beholden to the army for actually being able to witness the battles.

At the first press conference by Gen. Tommy Franks, the commander in charge of the war in Doha, a big gap in questioning by reporters was striking.

American reporters asked soft questions. So much so when an Al Jazeera correspondent finally asked the general if Iraqi resistance was stiffer than expected, he was rattled.

Gen. Franks was briefly at a loss for words when a Chinese journalist asked how the Americans could tell the Iraqis that they were an army of liberation when the US was subjecting residents of Baghdad to such intense bombing.

## CIA faced pressure on war reports

JAMES RISEN

Washington, March 23: The recent disclosure that reports claiming Iraq tried to buy uranium from Niger were based partly on forged documents has renewed complaints among analysts at the CIA about the way intelligence related to Iraq has been handled, several intelligence officials said.

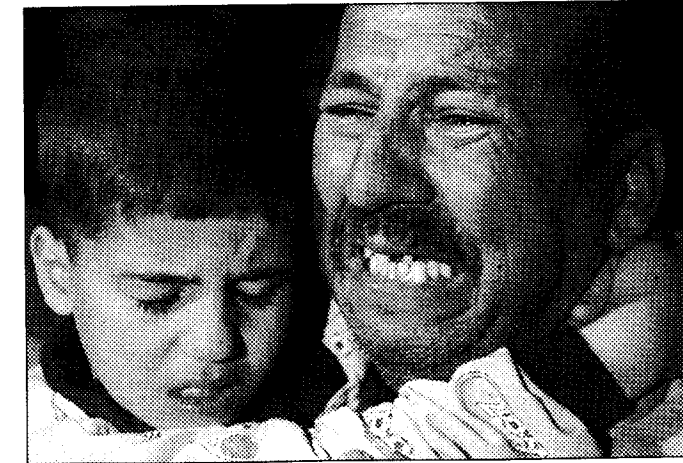
Some analysts at the agency said they had felt pressured to make their intelligence reports on Iraq conform to Bush administration policies.

For months, a few CIA analysts have privately expressed concerns to colleagues and congressional officials that they have faced pressure in writing intelligence reports to emphasize links between Saddam Hussein's government and al Qaeda.

As the White House contended that links between Saddam and al Qaeda justified military action against Iraq, these analysts complained that reports on Iraq have attracted unusually intense scrutiny from senior policy makers within the Bush administration.

"A lot of analysts have been upset about the way the Iraq-al Qaeda case has been handled," said one intelligence official familiar with the debate.

That debate was renewed after the disclosure two weeks ago by Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, that the claim that Iraq sought to purchase uranium from Niger was based partly on forged documents. The claim had been cited publicly by



An Iraqi man cries holding a little boy in front of a house damaged by a missile during an air strike on Baghdad. (Reuters)

President Bush.

"The forged heightened people's feelings that they were being embarrassed by the way Iraqi intelligence has been handled," said one government official who said he has talked with CIA analysts about the issue.

The forged documents were not created by the CIA or any other US government agency, and CIA officials were always suspicious of the documents, American intelligence officials said. But the information still ended up being used in public by Bush.

Intelligence officials said there was other information, which was deemed to be credible, that raised concerns about a possible uranium-sale connection between Niger and Iraq.

Several analysts have told colleagues they have become so frustrated that they have consid-

ered leaving the agency, according to government officials who have talked with the analysts.

"Several people have told me how distraught they have been about what has been going on," said one government official who said he had talked with several CIA analysts. None of the analysts are willing to talk directly to news organisations, the official said.

A senior official of the agency said no analysts had told CIA management that they were resigning in protest over the handling of Iraqi intelligence.

At the state department, by contrast, three foreign service officers have resigned in protest over Bush's policies.

The official said some analysts had been frustrated that they had frequently been asked the same questions by officials from throughout the govern-

ment about their intelligence reports concerning Iraq. Many of these questions concern sourcing, the official said.

The official said that the analysts had not been pressured to change the substance of their reports.

"As we have become an integral component informing the debate for policy-makers, we have been asked a lot of questions," the senior CIA official said.

"I'm sure it does come across as a pressured environment for analysts. I think there is a sense of being overworked, a sense among analysts that they have already answered the same questions. But if you talk to analysts, they understand why people are asking, and why policy-makers aren't accepting a report at face value."

Another intelligence official said, however, that many veteran analysts were comparing the current climate at the agency to that of the early 1980s, when some CIA analysts complained that they were under pressure from the Reagan administration to take a harder line on intelligence reports relating to the Soviet Union.

The official said the pressure had prompted the agency's analysts to become more circumspect in expressing their analytical views in the intelligence reports they produced. "On topics of very intense concern to the administration of the day, you become less of an analyst and more of a reports officer," the official said.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

## MOST WORDS USED NOW WILL FADE AWAY

### Required from this war: mother of all terms

Assistant secretary of defence for public affairs Victoria Clarke (right) with vice-director for operations Maj. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal brief the press at the Pentagon. (Reuters)



World War II gave us "beachhead," "firepower" and "foxhole." Vietnam contributed "friendly fire," "grunt," and "hawks and doves" to everyday language.

But for the war in Iraq to contribute any lasting vocabulary to the English language, "it has to be the long and painful experience that everyone hopes it won't be," says Geoffrey Nunberg, a Stanford University linguist.

The Persian Gulf conflict is only days old, and already certain words are sounding very familiar: "embedded," and "shock and awe," among them.

But they will fade, Nunberg says. "Mother of all" survived so long after the first Persian Gulf War because it became a punch line in jokes, the author of *The Way We Talk Now* said.

"Shock and awe might have a chance at that," he said. "But most will just be military terms used by journalists — who want to sound like they are in the know — and they will fade."

An Iraq war glossary, with basic definition and usage: "Audible" — an American football term for changing a play at the last moment, used to describe the decision to alter US attack plans. "We can take a chance and break out of our pattern and call an audible, as one aide described it and change the play. Try to do a pre-emptive strike of a pre-

emptive war. And the President said go ahead."

"Coalition of the willing" — describes the countries backing the US war on Iraq, first uttered in November. In stark terms, Bush essentially gave the council two options: It can authorise war or it can fail to authorise war and thus cause the US and a "coalition of the willing" to invade Iraq without UN backing.

"Crowd-pleaser" — nickname for 5,000-pound "bunker buster" bombs that can punch through 30 feet of rock or reinforced concrete. "Munitions handlers call the bomb 'the crowd-pleaser'."

"Decapitation" — used to describe the aim of the war's opening missile attack against Saddam Hussein. The bombing raid, which lasted no more than 30 minutes, was what military officials call a decapitation strike. The apparent aim was to kill the Iraqi dictator and either prompt his army to surrender or create chaos in Iraq's leadership.

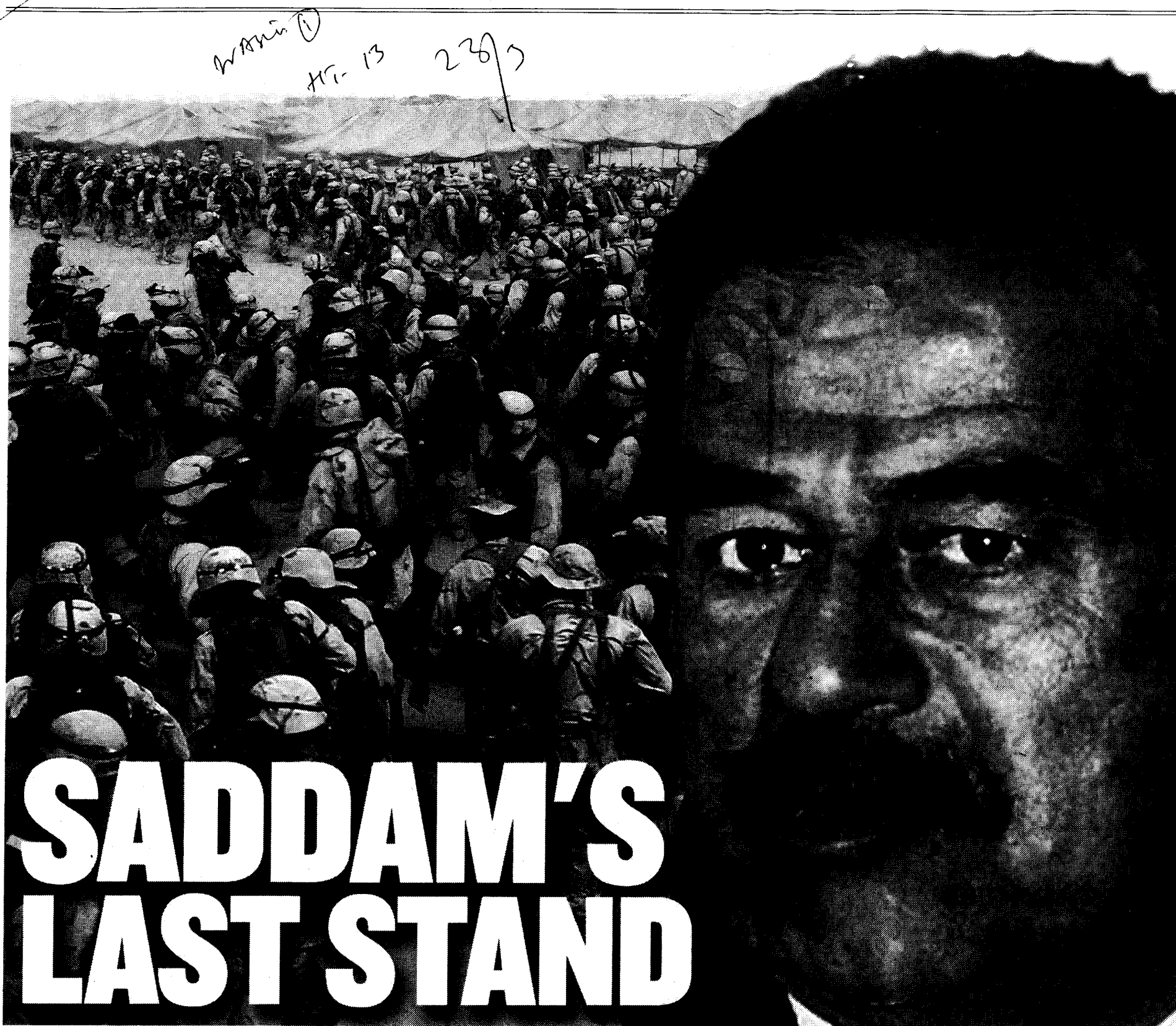
"Embedded" — describes journalists living and moving with US troops.

"Shock and awe" — term for an attack of great destructive power, originally articulated in 1996 in an obscure Pentagon publication by military planners seeking ways for US armed forces to achieve "rapid dominance" over a battlefield foe.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

24 MAR 2003





## SADDAM'S LAST STAND

# Settling scores with an old friend

Donald Rumsfeld was once his knight in shining armour. He's won a UNESCO award. Saddam's life and times

Samrat Choudhury  
New Delhi

IN THE summer of 1982, with Iranian forces advancing upon Basra, the US decided to do all it could to save Iraq from defeat. There was a problem: America did not have diplomatic relations with Iraq. So, Donald Rumsfeld flew into Baghdad to meet Saddam Hussein. And Iraq became a US ally.

He was a 'good guy' back then, unlike that Islamic fanatic, the Iranian Ayatollah. He wasn't a Communist either. Why, he was a good administrator too — didn't he win an UNESCO award for his healthcare policy?

How times have changed. On 28 April, if he still lives, Saddam Hussein at Tikrit will turn 66. He will require all of the survival skills learned in a lifetime of intrigue and violence to see that day.

Saddam Hussein's rise to infamy began early. In 1956, when he was only 19, he participated in a failed coup against King Faisal II, the then monarch of Iraq. Three years later, underwritten by his previous experience, he was back to shooting. His target this time was the republican prime minister of Iraq, Abdul Karim Qasim. Saddam and his team of Baathists failed again. Saddam took a bullet in the leg and

escaped to Syria. From there, he eventually reached Egypt.

He might have stayed there but for the Americans. His return to Iraq in February 1963 was helped by the CIA, who engineered Qasim's downfall. The Baathists, a socialist pan-Arab group, came to power. Saddam, meanwhile, had earned a law degree from Cairo University. He was ready for marriage. The lady he chose was Sajida Khair, his first cousin.

### Anti-Commie Saddam

Back then, Saddam's job was as head of the Baath party's internal security agency, the Jihaz al Haneen. The Cold War was in full swing. With a little help from his American friends, Saddam set about cleaning out the pro-Qasim Communists.

The Baath rule, didn't last. In November 1963, the government was overthrown and Saddam found himself in jail. He stayed there until the Baathists return to power in a coup in July 1968. The man who led the coup was General Ahmad Hasan al Bakr, a cousin of his maternal uncle Khairullah. Saddam's rise to power began.

Through the mid-1970s, as Bakr's health began to fail, Saddam's hold on the government machinery grew. Finally, on July 16, 1979, Pres-

ident Bakr resigned and Saddam Hussein took over. The poor, fatherless shepherd boy was now a socialist king.

### Man named Striker

The first strike of the man whose name means 'striker' came against Iran. In September 1980, he launched a war to recover control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway.

A long series of events led to the war. In 1975, Saddam was forced to sign away control of the waterway and some islands to Iran. The deal then was that the Iranians would stop cross-border support to the Kurds who, under Mustafa Barzani, had gained control of Kurd-dominated areas in northern Iraq.

Barzani's forces were defeated after Iran withdrew support. Saddam had already offered a comprehensive autonomy plan to the Kurds in 1974. This had been rejected. Now, he was offering nothing. He set out to crush them.

The Kurdish guerilla resistance continued. Saddam's response became increasingly harsh. Meanwhile, the Iranian revolution took place. Iran became more of a threat.

When he marched on Iran, Saddam had many scores to settle. It was not to be. Iraq got into all sorts of trouble, with Iranian forces advancing upon Basra, when the US

came to Saddam's aid yet again.

The Americans now say Saddam is a demonic figure. That's not all true. Saddam Hussein is no unidimensional personality.

He created a model healthcare system in Iraq. He also shot dead his health minister in the course of a cabinet meeting for having overseen the purchase of bad medicines. He instituted a successful nation-wide literacy project in the country. It had his touch — not attending school could land the absentee in jail.

### Ruthless nationalist

That he's ruthless is beyond doubt. But he's a nationalist too. In holding together a nation perpetually on the verge of rebellion, he's displayed great political skill. It wasn't always very Geneva Convention, but then, the Americans and British are hardly in a position to cast the first missile.

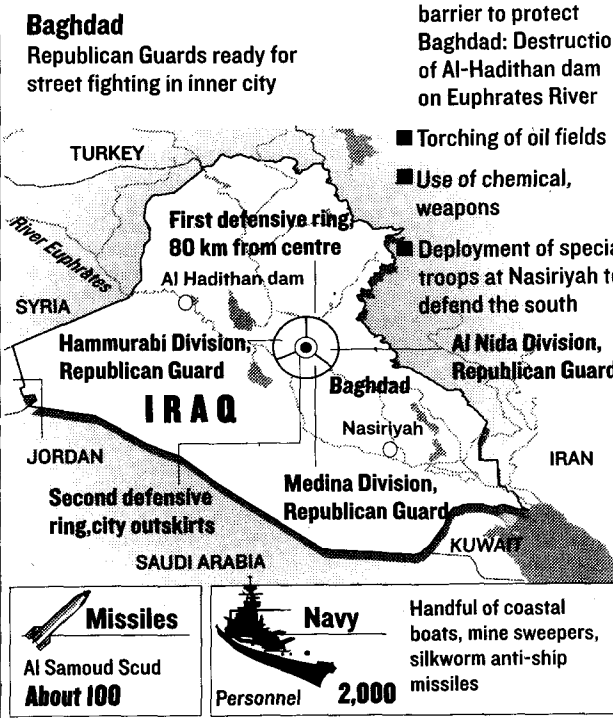
When the British left the region that is now Iraq in 1920, they left it like they did India and Pakistan — in a mess. Their nonchalant drawing of borders left territorial disputes and ethnic divisions as a legacy of empire. Saddam Hussein, the fatherless boy who became dictator, the socialist, pan-Arab Iraqi nationalist, is an offspring of that muddled history.

### IRAQ DEFENCE OPTIONS

Possible measures Iraq could take to defend itself

#### Military capacity (Estimates)

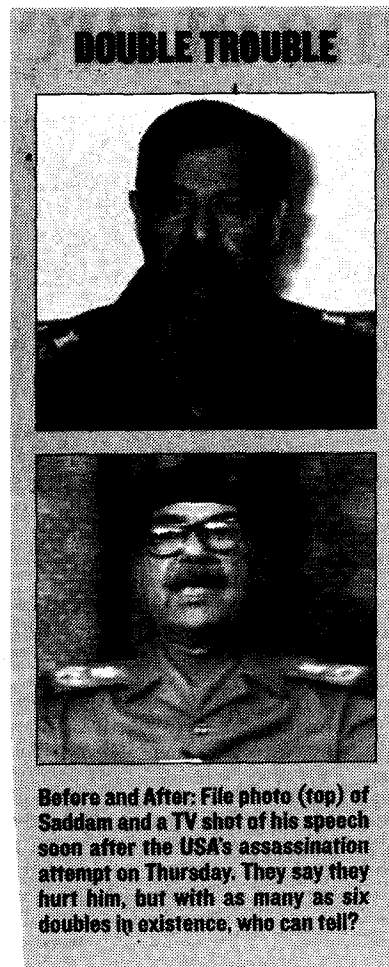
<b>Army</b>	20-23 Divisions
Full time soldiers	3,50,000-3,75,000
<b>Tanks</b>	1,800-2,000
Armoured vehicles	4,000
<b>Artillery</b>	200
Howitzers	200
Multiple rocket launchers	200
<b>Air defence</b>	17,000 Personnel
Surface-to-air missile launchers	1,850
Anti-aircraft guns, mobile radar stations	3,000
<b>Aircraft</b>	20,000 Personnel
Aircraft	About 300
Only 50-60% serviceable, mostly Soviet MIG	



#### Other measures

- Flooding as natural barrier to protect Baghdad: Destruction of Al-Hadithan dam on Euphrates River
- Trenching of oil fields
- Use of chemical weapons
- Deployment of special troops at Nasiriyah to defend the south
- Al Nidra Division, Republican Guard
- Medina Division, Republican Guard
- Handful of coastal boats, mine sweepers, silkworm anti-ship missiles

Source: KRT, AP, NYT, Guardian Graphic: VINEY



Before and After: File photo (top) of Saddam and a TV shot of his speech soon after the USA's assassination attempt on Thursday. They say they hurt him, but with as many as six doubles in existence, who can tell?

## What a dictator does when faced with Shock and Awe

Career choices for a guy with \$ 6 billion in the bank and goodwill around the Ummah

### 1 THE HITLER OPTION

**KILL YOURSELF:** ■ Arab literature is full of heroes who lose but die bravely. So, he may choose 'martyrdom'. His age and megalomania make him amenable to becoming an Arab legend.

■ Saddam is a master of symbolism: note his militarily futile but politically potent 1991 firing of Scuds at Israel.

■ He trusts no one, which is why he's butchered more than one family member in his time. If he cannot overcome his paranoia and declines a deal with the invaders, it's possible he'll turn the gun on himself.

■ Or, one of his inner circle, such as his murderous sons, will decide it would be better if the old man be found dead — and silent — than alive and talking.

■ Hitler analogy reinforced by the fact that Saddam's favourite hangouts in war are German-made bunkers.

### 2 THE OSAMA OPTION

**HIDE AND SEEK:** ■ Could Saddam emulate the Saudi terrorist who master-minded the 9/11 attacks? To disappear would be relatively easy. More difficult would be to successfully live in hiding, sending videotapes to Al Jazeera.

■ Saddam was the head of a state, not a terrorist network. His system depended on overt and public repression, a tightly controlled army and a personality cult.

■ Osama's was a shadowy system of decentralised cells, living on a common ideology but individual finances and weapons.

■ No dictator has graduated to becoming a shadowy terrorist. And Saddam has made no preparations for the like.

■ Al Qaeda was a perfect environment for someone who wants to hide forever. Baathist Iraq provides no such succour for Saddam.

### 3 THE IDI AMIN OPTION

**GO INTO EXILE:** ■ Idi Amin, the brutal dictator of Uganda who drove out the Indians, enslaved whites and ate human flesh, is now living happily in Saudi Arabia with over 30 wives.

■ In 1991, when the road to Baghdad lay open to the US army, Saddam had an airplane ready to fly into exile.

■ Throughout his life, Saddam has taken gambles. But he is first and foremost a survivor. If he feels all is lost, he will overcome his paranoia and cut a deal. But only if all other options are gone.

■ George W. Bush has said Saddam can go where he pleases; diplomats say US will give his plane safe passage over Bahrain, a close US ally, has publicly offered him a place to stay.

■ French intelligence say Saddam has \$ 6 billion salted away in Switzerland, so he'll be comfortable.

### 4 THE MILOSEVIC OPTION

**CAPTURE & TRIAL:** ■ The present post-Cold War fate of dictators is to be brought before some sort of international tribunal and face hundreds of testimonies against him.

■ The Iraqi government-in-exile has promised the same fate for Saddam. Plenty of do-gooding NGOs would like the same.

■ The West would be in two minds about such a fate for Saddam. After all, Saddam was in bed with the USA, the French, the British and pretty much everyone else in his long and chequered career.

■ Jacques Chirac was such a buddy in the 1970s that the French press called him Monsieur Iraq. Who would want Saddam to spill so many spoils before the klieg lights?

■ On the other hand, it would be just, and a useful catharsis for the Iraqis.

### 5 THE AIDEED OPTION

**BEAT OFF THE US:** ■ "We will fight the invaders and drive them to... lose their patience and lose their way." — TV address by Saddam after US attacked.

■ Given the lessons of Vietnam, Somalia and Lebanon, Saddam believes that given enough bodybags and time, the Yankees will go home.

■ Somalian warlord Mohd Farah Aideed sent the US army packing after killing 18 of them in an ambush in the cramped streets of Mogadishu. So his elite Republican Guard are sitting around Baghdad, waiting.

■ A long grinding modern-day Stalingrad, with some chemical warfare, could erode domestic support for Bush.

■ Even the Pentagon believes that its units would take a 30 per cent rate of casualty in street fighting. Only hitch: motivated Iraqi troops are required.

# Donald Rumsfeld was once his knight in shining armour. He's won a UNESCO award. Saddam's life and times

Samrat Choudhury  
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He might have stayed there but for the Americans. His return to Iraq in February 1963 was helped by the CIA, who engineered Qasim's downfall. The Baathists, a socialist pan-Arab group, came to power. Saddam, meanwhile, had earned a law degree from Cairo University. He was ready for marriage. The lady he chose was Sajida Khair, his first cousin.

## Anti-Commie Saddam

Back then, Saddam's job was as head of the Baath party's internal security agency, the Jihaz al Haneen. The Cold War was in full swing. With a little help from his American friends, Saddam set about cleaning out the pro-Qasim Communists.

The Baath rule, didn't last. In November 1963, the government was overthrown and Saddam found himself in jail. He stayed there until the Baathists return to power in a coup in July 1968. The man who led the coup was General Ahmad Hasan al Bakr, a cousin of his maternal uncle Khairullah. Saddam's rise to power began.

Through the mid-1970s, as Bakr's health began to fail, Saddam's hold on the government machinery grew. Finally, on July 16, 1979, Pres-

ident Bakr resigned and Saddam Hussein took over. The poor, fatherless shepherd boy was now a socialist king.

## Man named Striker

The first strike of the man whose name means 'striker' came against Iran. In September 1980, he launched a war to recover control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway.

A long series of events led to the war. In 1975, Saddam was forced to sign away control of the waterway and some islands to Iran. The deal then was that the Iranians would stop cross-border support to the Kurds who, under Mustafa Barzani, had gained control of Kurd-dominated areas in northern Iraq.

Barzani's forces were defeated after Iran withdrew support. Saddam had already offered a comprehensive autonomy plan to the Kurds in 1974. This had been rejected. Now, he was offering nothing. He set out to crush them.

The Kurdish guerilla resistance continued. Saddam's response became increasingly harsh. Meanwhile, the Iranian revolution took place. Iran became more of a threat.

When he marched on Iran, Saddam had many scores to settle. It was not to be. Iraq got into all sorts of trouble, with Iranian forces advancing upon Basra, when the US

came to Saddam's aid yet again. The Americans now say Saddam is a demonic figure. That's not all true. Saddam Hussein is no unidimensional personality.

He created a model healthcare system in Iraq. He also shot dead his health minister in the course of a cabinet meeting for having overseen the purchase of bad medicines. He instituted a successful nation-wide literacy project in the country. It had his touch — not attending school could land the absentee in jail.

## Ruthless nationalist

That he's ruthless is beyond doubt. But he's a nationalist too. In holding together a nation perpetually on the verge of rebellion, he's displayed great political skill. It wasn't always very Geneva Convention, but then, the Americans and British are hardly in a position to cast the first missile.

When the British left the region that is now Iraq in 1920, they left it like they did India and Pakistan — in a mess. Their nonchalant drawing of borders left territorial disputes and ethnic divisions as a legacy of empire. Saddam Hussein, the fatherless boy who became dictator, the socialist, pan-Arab Iraqi nationalist, is an offspring of that muddled history.

## IRAQ DEFENCE OPTIONS

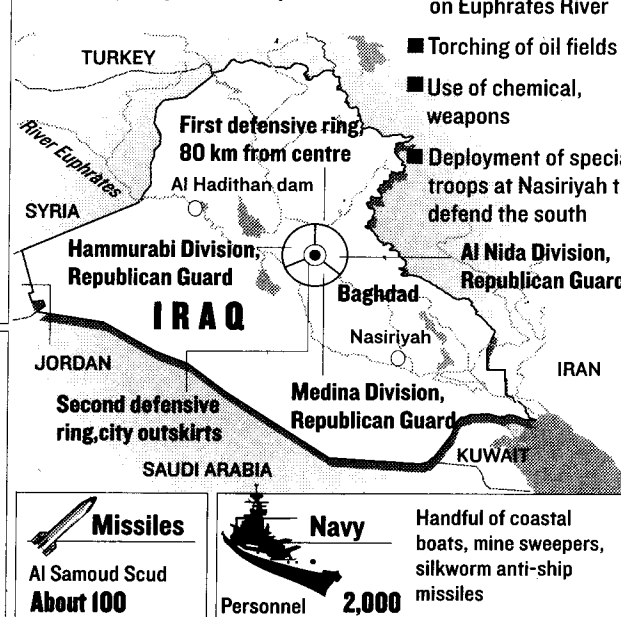
Possible measures Iraq could take to defend itself

### Military capacity (Estimates)

<b>Army</b>	
Full time soldiers	<b>3,50,00-3,75,000</b>
Divisions	<b>20-23</b>
<b>Tanks</b>	
Combat Armoured vehicles	<b>1,800-2,000</b>
<b>Artillery</b>	
Howitzers	<b>200</b>
Multiple rocket launchers	<b>200</b>
<b>Air defence</b>	
Personnel	<b>17,000</b>
Surface-to-air missile launchers	<b>1,850</b>
Anti-aircraft guns, mobile radar stations	<b>3,000</b>
<b>Aircraft</b>	
Personnel	<b>20,000</b>
Aircrafts	<b>About 300</b>
Only 50-60% serviceable, mostly Soviet MiG	

### Baghdad

Republican Guards ready for street fighting in inner city

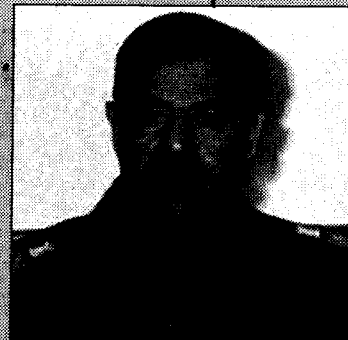


### Other measures

- Flooding as natural barrier to protect Baghdad: Destruction of Al-Hadithan dam on Euphrates River
- Torching of oil fields
- Use of chemical weapons
- Deployment of special troops at Nasiriyah to defend the south
- Handful of coastal boats, mine sweepers, silkworm anti-ship missiles

Source: KRT, AP, NYT, Guardian Graphic: VINEY

## DOUBLE TROUBLE



Before and After: File photo (top) of Saddam and a TV shot of his speech soon after the USA's assassination attempt on Thursday. They say they hurt him, but with as many as six doubles in existence, who can tell?

# What a dictator does when faced with Shock and Awe

Career choices for a guy with \$ 6 billion in the bank and goodwill around the Ummah

## 1 THE HITLER OPTION



**KILL YOURSELF:**  
■ Arab literature is full of heroes who lose but die bravely. So, he may chose 'martyrdom'. His age and megalomania make him amenable to becoming an Arab legend.

- Saddam is a master of symbolism: note his militarily futile but politically potent 1991 firing of Scuds at Israel.
- He trusts no one, which is why he's butchered more than one family member in his time. If he cannot overcome his paranoia and declines a deal with the invaders, it's possible he'll turn the gun on himself.
- Or, one of his inner circle, such as his murderous sons, will decide it would be better if the old man be found dead — and silent — than alive and talking.
- Hitler analogy reinforced by the fact that Saddam's favourite hangouts in war are German-made bunkers.

## 2 THE OSAMA OPTION



**HIDE AND SEEK:**  
■ Could Saddam emulate the Saudi terrorist who masterminded the 9/11 attacks? To disappear would be relatively easy. More difficult

- would be to successfully live in hiding, sending videotapes to Al Jazeera.
- Saddam was the head of a state, not a terrorist network. His system depended on overt and public repression, a tightly controlled army and a personality cult.
- Osama's was a shadowy system of decentralised cells, living on a common ideology but individual finances and weapons.
- No dictator has graduated to becoming a shadowy terrorist. And Saddam has made no preparations for the like.
- Al Qaeda was a perfect environment for someone who wants to hide forever. Baathist Iraq provides no such succour for Saddam.

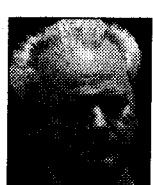
## 3 THE AMIN OPTION



**GO INTO EXILE:**  
■ Idi Amin, the brutal dictator of Uganda who drove out the Indians, enslaved whites and ate human flesh, is now living happily in Saudi Arabia with over 30 wives.

- In 1991, when the road to Baghdad lay open to the US army, Saddam had an airplane ready to fly into exile.
- Throughout his life, Saddam has taken gambles. But he is first and foremost a survivor. If he feels all is lost, he will overcome his paranoia and cut a deal. But only if all other options are gone.
- George W. Bush has said Saddam can go where he pleases; diplomats say US will give his plane safe passage out. Bahrain, a close US ally, has publicly offered him a place to stay.
- French intelligence say Saddam has \$ 6 billion salted away in Switzerland, so he'll be comfortable.

## 4 THE MILOSEVIC OPTION



**CAPTURE & TRIAL:**  
■ The present post-Cold War fate of dictators is to be brought before some sort of international tribunal and face hundreds of testimonies against him.

- The Iraqi government-in-exile has promised the same fate for Saddam. Plenty of do-gooding NGOs would like the same.
- The West would be in two minds about such a fate for Saddam. After all, Saddam was in bed with the USA, the French, the British and pretty much everyone else in his long and chequered career.
- Jacques Chirac was such a buddy in the 1970s that the French press called him Monsieur Iraq. Who would want Saddam to spill so many spoils before the klieg lights?
- On the other hand, it would be just, and a useful catharsis for the Iraqis.

## 5 THE AIDEED OPTION



**BEAT OFF THE US:**  
■ "We will fight the invaders and drive them to... lose their patience and lose their way." — TV address by Saddam after US attacked.

- Given the lessons of Vietnam, Somalia and Lebanon, Saddam believes that given enough bodybags and time, the Yankees will go home.
- Somalian warlord Mohd Farah Aideed sent the US army packing after killing 18 of them in an ambush in the cramped streets of Mogadishu. So his elite Republican Guard are sitting around Baghdad, waiting.
- A long grinding modern-day Stalingrad, with some chemical warfare, could erode domestic support for Bush.
- Even the Pentagon believes that its units would take a 30 per cent rate of casualty in street fighting. Only hitch: motivated Iraqi troops are required.

THE UMMHISTAN TIMES  
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



THE EARTH IS SHAKING, THE EARTH HASN'T SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS

# The Telegraph

INTERNET: <http://www.telegraphindia.com>

CALCUTTA SATURDAY 22 MARCH 2003 Rs 1.50

## SHOCKED AND AWED, IRAQ AND WORLD

A string of white lights danced in the sky, like a clutch of rising or falling stars in slow motion, above Baghdad, lit up as usual this Friday night. A "big blast" is bearing down towards the Iraqi capital — Washington had warned some minutes earlier — in a wave of B-52 bombers. Where was the blast, the Shock and Awe of the US campaign that had somehow created a monstrous expectancy? There was the cough of anti-aircraft fire and the flares still fluttered in the air — the sound and the light had been set up, but where was the act? When it seemed as if television audiences across the world weren't going to have a blast after all, the explosions, one merging into another, started. First a fireball — a red blaze that spread a burning light horizontally around it — and then, as it rose up into the sky, giant mushrooms of smoke (Reuters picture on right). Pink, a hazy kind of pink, almost pretty. Blast after blast after blast: a journalist on TV said "they're just destroying Baghdad". In one furious rain of fire, they were destroying one particular area of the Iraqi capital, apparently the backbone of Saddam Hussein's elite guards. Flash, flash, flash and then a lull. A hissing noise and another round of eruptions as if from the earth itself. In the darkness of night that's what it looked like. Fury that could rise up from the earth alone.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in Washington later that what the world had witnessed was "historic". He mentioned how the entire Shock and Awe show — it's "A-Day" — was on television. President Bush apparently didn't watch it. If Saddam Hussein is alive, he would know what the US meant by those two words. So does the world.



## Saddam is history: US

## Zoom in: Tanks roll with telephotos

Baghdad, March 21 (Reuters): US-led forces unleashed a devastating blitz on Baghdad tonight, triggering giant fireballs and deafening explosions and sending huge mushroom clouds above the city centre, hours after their ground forces thrust deep into Iraqi territory towards the capital where President Saddam Hussein's supporters were dug in for a last stand.

After two days of smaller air attacks, this was the start of an unparalleled air war, dubbed by the Pentagon as "shock and awe".

Missiles slammed into the main palace complex of Saddam on the bank of the Tigris river and key government buildings in an onslaught that far exceeded strikes that launched the war on Thursday.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said the scale of the assault was intended to show Iraqis that Saddam was finished and his rule was "history".

"The regime is starting to lose control of their country," Rumsfeld said at the Pentagon. "The confusion of Iraqi officials is growing. Their ability to see what is happening on the battlefield, to communicate with their forces and to control their

country is slipping away," he said.

Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the US military's joint chiefs of staff, said hundreds of targets would be hit in the next 24 hours.

He said US and British forces should secure oil fields in southern Iraq late tonight and were accepting the surrender of several hundred Iraqi troops.

Other Iraqi soldiers were just leaving their units and running away, Myers added. Iraqi resistance so far had been sporadic.

Saddam has concentrated his best forces in Baghdad, where his regime may be hoping to force invaders into dangerous street fighting in hopes of inflicting heavy casualties.

"The important thing is to get to Baghdad to prevent Saddam's ability to effect any form of command, particularly over weapons of mass destruction," a senior US officer said.

Reuters witnesses reported seeing anti-aircraft fire and explosions over the northern towns of Mosul and Kirkuk.

"The earth is literally shaking in Baghdad," Reuters correspondent Khaled Owies said of the first wave, watching from across the river. A second wave hit targets in the east of the city after a lull of over an hour.

Reuters reporter Nadim Ladki said the attacking planes were apparently flying very low as they hit targets in various parts of the city. "The sound of their engines is very clear," he said.

Fires broke out in the wrecked buildings. Ambulances, fire engines and police cars rushed around otherwise deserted streets of the city, sirens wailing. Fires raged in different parts of the city.

"The sky is totally lit," Reuters correspondent Samia Nakhoul said at the height of the first wave, adding that the strikes appeared to be targeting the Republican Guard and the main symbols of Saddam's rule.

"Black smoke is mushrooming into the air over the presidential palace compound," she said.

The district housing the information ministry and Iraqi television was among those hit, but state television remained on air.

After the first wave, it broadcast pictures of Saddam with his son Qusay, who is in charge of the defence of the capital and Saddam's power base around Tikrit, 175 km to the northwest. It was unclear when the images were shot.

The telecast capped a day of feverish speculation whether Saddam had been killed during the first wave of air strikes on Thursday (See Page 6)

Reuters reporter Joe Logan in Kurdish-held northern Iraq, on high ground with a view to Kirkuk, an oil city some 30 km away in government-held territory, saw anti-aircraft fire over the city and heard several big explosions.

On a day of swift developments, US Marines captured the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr while other troops seized two airfields in the Iraqi desert as part of a move to encircle Baghdad.

British Marines launched an amphibious and aerial assault and secured key oil installations at the head of the Gulf. Other British troops headed for the port of Basra.

One US armoured unit ran into Iraqi resistance that held it temporarily near Nassiriya on the Euphrates river while it called for backup. The town is a

main strategic crossing point over the Euphrates, 375 km southeast of Baghdad.

The startling speed of a US advance from Kuwait up to 160 km into the Iraqi desert had prompted some British and American officers to predict a swift victory.

Iraqi ministers vowed to "incinerate" the invaders and said Saddam was still alive. They ridiculed the claims of early US successes and predicted invasion forces would soon become bogged down.

British commandos took the Faw peninsula on Iraq's southern tip, seizing oil export terminals, but Iraqi troops pinned down US Marines pushing towards Umm Qasr for two hours before British artillery blasted the Iraqi defences open.

In the first day of fighting, two US Marines were confirmed killed in action. Eight British and four US soldiers died in a helicopter crash in Kuwait.

Rapid US and British advances seemed to reassure oil markets. Britain's most senior military officer said only seven oil wells had been set on fire by the Iraqis — not 30 as initially reported — and that all key components of the southern oil fields were safe.

Kuwait, March 21: The rings of smoke are white and Abdulla al-Khalidi and his cousin see them despite the afternoon glare in the Arabian desert because the skies beyond are grey.

Three Patriots have just brought down an Iraqi surface-to-surface missile — was it a Scud? Was it an Al-Samoud? — some 32 km north of Kuwait City near Jahra. Jahra is an urban settlement of 200,000.

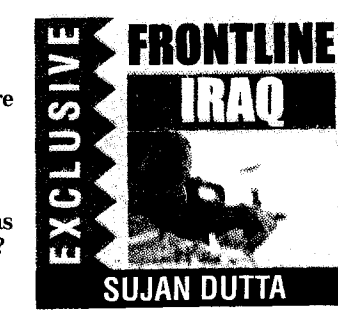
More important, militarily, it's just about 15 km from Camp Doha, headquarters of the US Land Forces Command here, the ARCENT.

This is still behind the lines of the guns-and-cameras invasion by US and British Marines, commandos and mechanised units advancing in at least two, possibly three different lines into Iraq. Baghdad stares down the barrels of tanks and the telephoto lenses of network cameras at the same time.

Here, in Kuwait, like the greyness of the skies, we are in the fog of war. Bits and pieces of information trickle in, the big picture is far from complete.

This much is certain: Iraqi forces are collapsing towards Baghdad — by design or simply capitulating. Coalition land forces have cut across into Iraq from north Kuwait — towards Umm Qasra and Basra — and from the south, through Safwan towards Baghdad.

In a first for any modern war, the frontal units of the land assault are carrying with them select journalists from television networks



who are beaming images live, real-time, images that can be captured by shaky, mostly hand-held cameras.

At the office of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command in Kuwait City, they will say that current and future operations are beyond the scope of briefings. There are definite signs that the US military's 101st Airborne Division is at the ready.

In recent wars waged by the US, the division has been the front paw of many assaults. A possible scenario in which they can be used is a paratroop to secure strategic targets. Oilfields? Maybe. Baghdad? Can be. From there they will fan out, cut back through military firewalls and meet other land components in Iraq, possibly the columns advancing from the south.

The incursions or advances in southern Iraq are still on ground covered by the southern no-fly zone where successive air raids over the past decade had degraded Iraqi air defences. Militarily, it cannot yet be called a "thrust" because it is not yet known how big these columns are, though a CNN "embed" (journalist attached to a unit) described one as a "rolling wall of steel and armour".

The route taken through southern Iraq is plainly through open desert. The roads, the beaten tracks, can be assumed to be mined so as to reduce an advance to a crawl even if it cannot be beaten back.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

THE TELEGRAPH

23 MAR 2003

# US forces claim capture of Basra

● Nassiriyah falls ● Turkey denies moving troops into northern Iraq

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & AGENCIES

**Washington:** A pulverised Baghdad, helpless in anticipation of another shock and awe attack on Saturday, is being squeezed in a pincer movement by American forces from the south and north amidst mixed reports of resistance and collapse by Iraqi forces.

US officials in Washington and commanders in the region said their forces had taken almost complete control of southern Iraq, including the key ports of Umm Qasr and Basra, after sporadic resistance. Hundreds of Iraqi soldiers, mostly from the Iraqi 51st Division, are said to have surrendered without a fight. However, Iraqi officials denied the US claim.

But other reports said some Iraqi units put up stiff resistance and that Basra was still to fall. In fact, the commander of the US Central Command, Gen Tommy Franks, said the US intention was not to take Basra but to work with the people of the city to liberate it.

Basra, which comprises mostly Shiites, is not a Saddam Hussein stronghold, and even the little resistance Iraqi forces there are reported to have put up has surprised many observers. The US army's V Corps also captured Nassiriyah, north-west of Basra, said US navy captain Frank Thorp, a spokesman for the central command. At Nassiriyah, the



commander and deputy commander of Iraq's 51st infantry were among those who surrendered on Friday night, becoming the highest-ranking Iraqi officials to give up, Capt Thorp said.

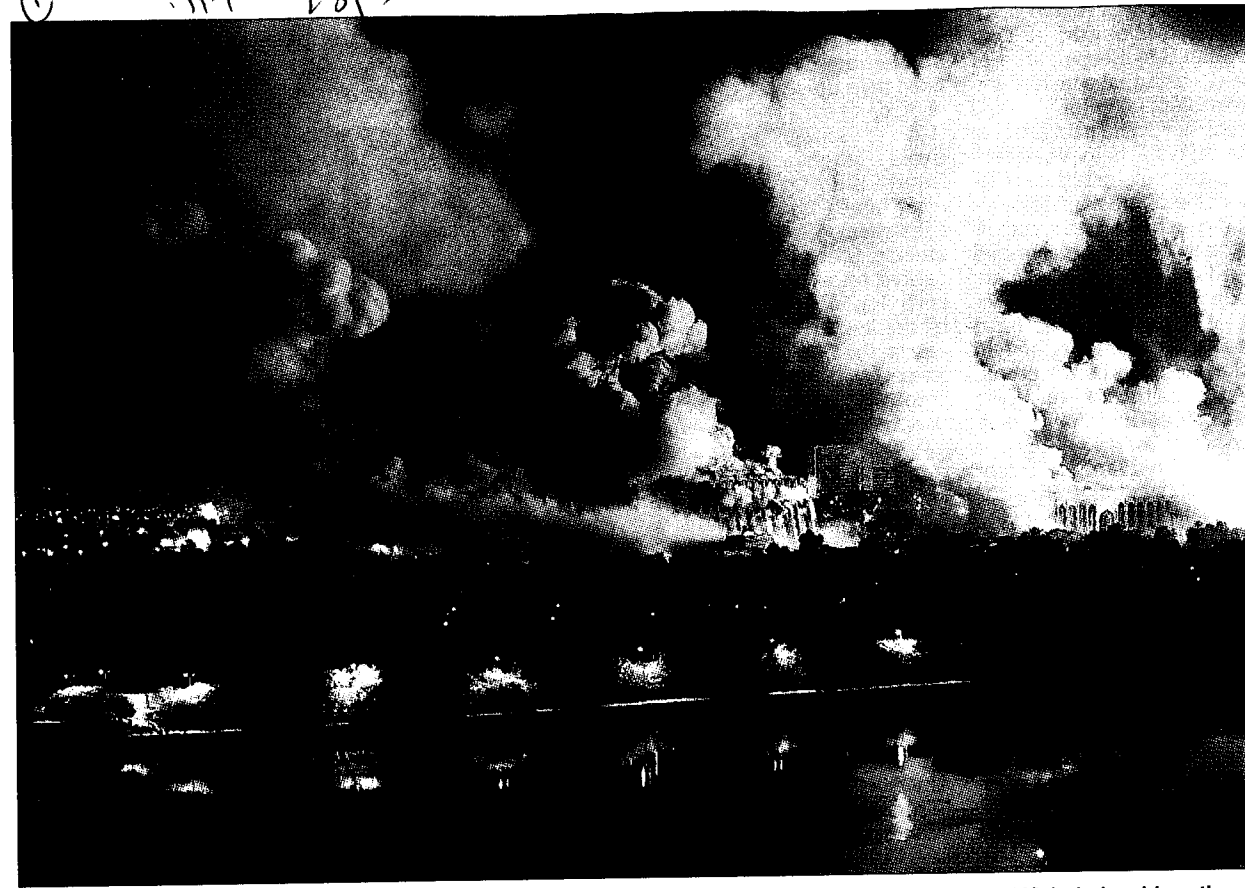
The number of those who have surrendered is "in the thousands" and coalition forces have taken about 1,500 PoWs, he said.

At Basra, the Americans also took one of several bridges going into the city but British officials said the Iraqis still held other bridges. While the marines pressed north, the British

took charge of fighting at Basra and said they hoped the city would surrender without a major battle or their having to storm it.

While US and British troops have resumed their journey north towards Baghdad after minor digressions and are said to be halfway there, Washington has also begun deploying special forces in northern and western Iraq by para-dropping them after bypassing Turkey, a US ally that tried to extract its pound of flesh for allowing land access.

Germany said it would withdraw its crew members from Nato surveillance planes that had been patrolling Turkish airspace if Turkey moved its troops into Iraq.



Smoke envelops the presidential palace compound in Baghdad on Friday night during a massive US-led air raid on the Iraqi capital. US and British troops are reported to be halfway to Baghdad for the final push

## No consensus at all-party meet

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The all-party meeting convened by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee on the US-led war against Iraq failed to arrive at a consensus on passing a resolution on Saturday. The government refused to sign a resolution "condemning" the ongoing aggression against Iraq, as the opposition wanted. Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha said that there was no agreement on the choice of words.

● Related reports on Pages 6, 11, 12 & 13

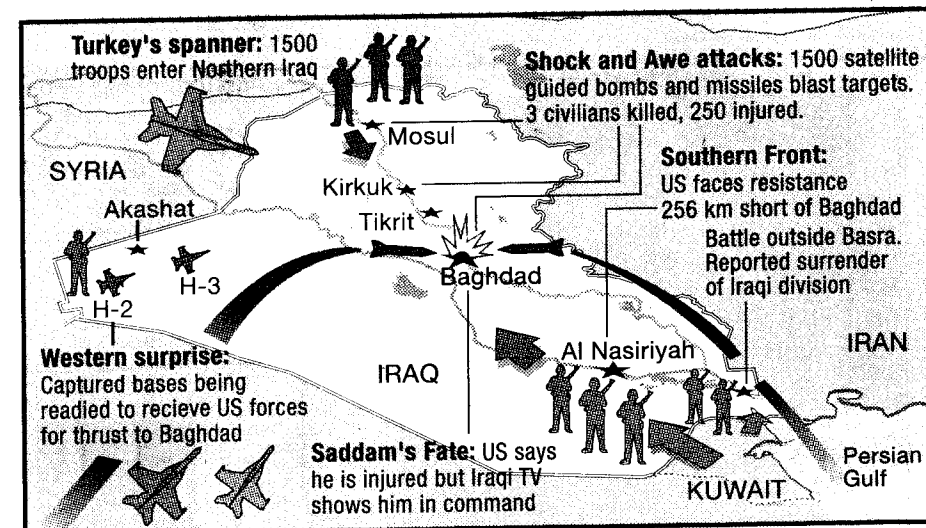
● Detailed report on Page 6

## Where is Saddam?

US officials said in Washington they had no confirmation about Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's fate, but speculation persisted on Friday over whether he survived an initial US missile strike that targeted him. A CIA analysis determined it was Mr Hussein's voice giving a speech aired hours after the US launched a war to topple him on Wednesday by bombing a residence where he and his two sons were believed to have been. But it was unclear whether the tape, in which Mr Hussein appeared, unusually, wearing glasses and reading his words, was made before or after the attack, so it offered no clue about his survival, the officials said. ABC News reported that witnesses saw Mr Hussein taken out of a bombed building wearing an oxygen mask on a hospital gurney. Reuters

## Terms of war

- **Target of Opportunity** is an unforeseen, temporary glimpse of the enemy that might not reappear. Saddam and his coterie were such targets on Day 1 after the CIA seemed to have pinpointed the exact location of the Iraqi command.
- **Shock and Awe** tactics are concentrated air strikes, so named because they are expected to result in complete submission from the enemy—essentially shock them with precision strikes and put them in awe of US military might.
- **Decapitation Attack** is a strike aimed at removing the top Iraqi leadership before the start of the war. However, Mr Hussein appeared live on Iraqi TV barely a few hours later to address the nation.
- **Silver Bullet Theory** is one where discontent within the top echelons of the Iraqi military leads to a coup or assassination from one of Saddam's own people.





Key towns fall, open route to Baghdad;  
Iraqi capital bombed round the clock

# SOUTH IRAQ CAPTURED

Baghdad, March 22

US AND British forces gained in Iraq's second-largest city and oil hub Basra in the south on Saturday, taking its airport and a bridge in the face of artillery resistance, and launched a fresh aerial attack on Baghdad.

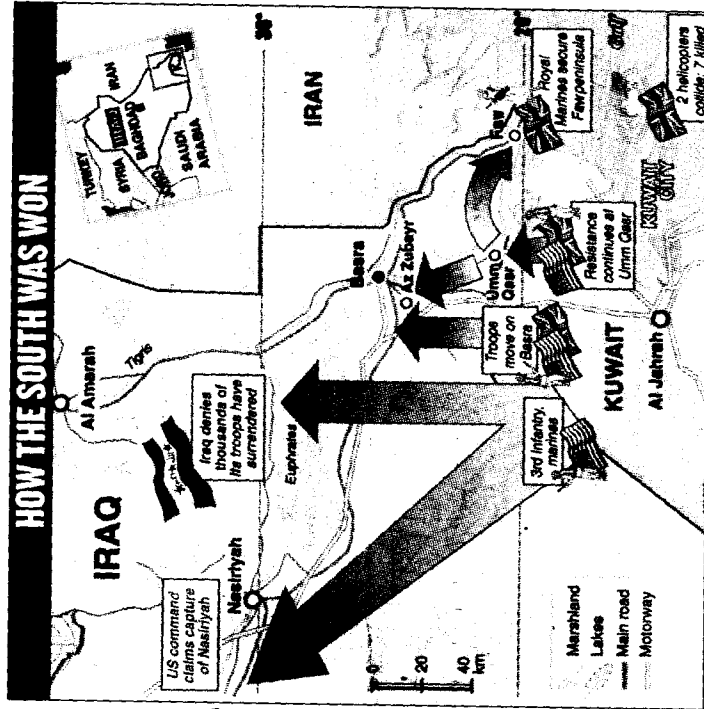
Allied forces have taken over the port city of Umm Qasr on the outskirts of Basra along with the southern city of Nasiriyah, said the commander and deputy commander of Iraq's 51st infantry who surrendered. Some 1,500 soldiers were taken prisoners.

But President Bush maintained the war could be "longer and more difficult" than generally believed. As his forces rolled towards Baghdad, Bush convened his war council at Camp David and vowed to use "decisive force" to bring down the Saddam regime.

While the Marines pressed north, the British took charge of the fighting at Basra, saying they expected the city to surrender without a major battle. Groups of Iraqi soldiers came out to surrender on the highway while others held out against the allied convoys.

After military facilities around Baghdad were pounded at dawn and in the afternoon, air strikes resumed briefly after dusk. Iraqi forces had lit oil-filled trenches around Baghdad to create a smokescreen over the city to hinder strikes. At least two dozen fires raged around Baghdad, sending up plumes of thick, black smoke, but failed to deter the satellite-guided missile attack.

Iraqi authorities claimed downing a US warplane over Baghdad and capturing its pilot, who had bailed out. Three people were killed in the overnight bombing, said Iraqi Health Minister Umid Medhat Mubarak.



The Russian foreign ministry has sought more information from its embassy in Baghdad that's staying put with 25 diplomats and 26 correspondents despite the US bombardment.

The allies suffered further casualties with two Royal Navy Sea King helicopters colliding in mid-air, killing all seven crew members. While one helicopter was about to land, the other was starting out on its mission. Six of the victims were British, the other an American.

Four US soldiers were killed in central Iraq, according to a re-

porter from Britain's Sky TV, who was travelling with them. The reconnaissance scouts were ambushed while driving jeeps at the head of a column.

Anti-war protests continued to rage across the world on Saturday. One of the biggest was in London, where about 300,000 people took to the streets. There were huge demonstrations before US embassies in Asia. In Santiago, Chile, protesters set off a dynamite blast at a local branch of an American bank.

## Delhi cautious

AN ALL-PARTY meeting called by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee on Saturday failed to agree on a joint resolution against the US-led war on Iraq. The government rejected an Opposition demand to use the word "condemn" in the proposed resolution.

Detailed report on Page 4

War on Iraq: Pages 14 & 15

● BAGHDAD TAKES MORE HITS ● THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS SURRENDER

# U.S.-led forces move into Basra

**SOUTHERN IRAQ, MARCH 22.** United States and British troops moved into the strategic southern port city of Basra today and thousands of beleaguered Iraqi soldiers in the south surrendered in the face of the major push.

In Baghdad, more than 20 columns of dark smoke rose from points around the city after a day of intermittent explosions. Al-Jazeera television reported that the plumes were coming from fires that Iraqis had set to oil containers to obscure targets.

To the north, U.S. infantry and airborne units pushed over the desert toward central Iraq on the second day of the ground offensive.

U.S. aircraft bombed Iraqi tanks holding the bridges near Basra, a city of 1.3 million, and Iraqi forces responded with artillery fire. U.S. Marines captured an airport north of the city after a gunbattle.

Coalition forces moved through the southern port of Umm Qasr, a "relatively well-defended city," a U.S. military official said. There is still some artillery fire, but the aim isn't to secure and occupy the city, but rather move through it enroute to Baghdad, the official said.

Fighting in Umm Qasr included street-to-street battles against soldiers wearing civilian clothes and using guerrilla tactics, said the British military spokesman, Lt. Col. Chris Vernon.

Seeking to avoid further urban warfare, U.S. and British forces would not immediately storm Basra, Lt. Col. Vernon said. "Military commanders do not engage in urban areas unless they have to," he told a news briefing. "It was necessary in Qasr because of the port."

Earlier today, Baghdad was again targeted, one day after a massive U.S. aerial bombardment in which more than 300 Tomahawk Cruise missiles rained down on the capital. The nine-story Security Headquarters in the Iraqi capital took a direct hit, strewing bricks, masonry and glass across the street in the al-Salhiya neighbourhood.

As coalition troops advanced, an entire Iraqi army division — the 51st Infantry Division with 8,000 men and 200 tanks, a key



An assault convoy of trucks and armoured vehicles of the 101st Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team crossing into Iraq on Friday. — Reuters

unit in the defence of Basra — gave itself up, U.S. military officials said. This was the largest defection in a day when the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein's forces showed signs of crumbling.

American units advancing west of Basra have already secured the Rumeila oil field, whose daily output of 1.3 million barrels makes it Iraq's most productive.

Iraqis in the area mostly fought back with small arms, pistols, machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

Early today, more units were waiting in Kuwait to smash through any Iraqi resistance. Hundreds of tanks, armoured personnel carriers, Humvees and trucks were lined up in parallel columns waiting in single-file to cross the Iraqi-Kuwait border.

The U.S. and Britain suffered their first casualties on Thursday and Friday as they pushed into Iraq, with two U.S. Marines killed in combat and eight British and four American Marines dying in a helicopter crash that appeared to be accidental. There was no clear figure of Iraqi casualties.

A report from Ankara said Turkey had opened its airspace

to U.S. warplanes bound for Iraq after 24 hours of tense gamesmanship during which it sought to win approval for its own military intervention in northern Iraq.

The Turkish military said today it had completed preparations for moving into northern Iraq, but denied reports that it has already sent a new commando unit into the area.

The military statement comes amid growing pressure on Turkey to keep its forces out of the volatile region. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has repeatedly urged Turkey to avoid any unilateral move into the area. Germany said today it would pull its crews from radar

aircraft in Turkey if Turkish troops move into northern Iraq.

Turkey has said that its forces would enter the area to prevent any massive flow of refugees or to stop the creation of a Kurdish state. Turkey fears that a Kurdish state could inspire Kurdish rebels who battled the Turkish Government for 15 years, leaving 37,000 dead.

A report from London said tens of thousands of people marched in cities around the world or demonstrated outside U.S. military bases today demanding an end to the war in Iraq. — AP, AFP

More reports, photos on Page 14

## 'Over 4 lakh Iraqis flee their homes'

**GENEVA, MARCH 22.** An estimated 300,000 to 450,000 people have fled their homes in northern of Iraq, the United Nations said in its latest humanitarian situation report on Iraq obtained today.

Most of the displaced people had fled Kirkuk, Erbil and Dahuk to head to Sulaymaniya in the north east of the country, according to the U.N. Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq. Some people had left Sulaymaniya but were now returning to their homes, the report said.

However, an estimated 85

per cent of Dahuk's 120,000 inhabitants had deserted the city to stay in villages further east.

The report, released in Geneva, was dated March 21. "IDP (Internally Displaced People) movements in the north continue," it said.

"It is estimated that 90 per cent of the internally displaced people are staying with relatives and are not in need of immediate assistance," the U.N. added. The report also indicated that people were largely unable to flee into Kurdish rebel-controlled areas in the north — AFP



An Iraqi child, which suffered burns during the overnight bombing raid over Baghdad, in the arms of its mother at a local hospital on Saturday. — AP

## 'War will be on a scale never before seen'

**CAMP AS SAYLIYAH (QATAR), MARCH 22.** U.S. General Tommy Franks, in his first briefing since the start of the U.S.-led war against Iraq, said on Saturday that the campaign would be "unlike any other in history".

Mr. Franks spoke in Qatar, which is his command post. He said the assault on Iraq would be one of "shock, surprise, flexibility", using munitions on a "scale never before seen".

The campaign, the general said, was taking the fight "across the breadth and depth of Iraq" — aiming to secure bridges, airports and oil platforms. The allied war plan allows commanders to "attack the enemy on our terms", Mr. Franks said.

He said the U.S. military had opened a dialogue with a number of senior Iraqi military leaders both "in and out of uniform".

Mr. Franks said he "had no idea" where the Iraq President, Saddam Hussein was or whether he was alive, responding to unconfirmed reports that the Iraqi leader was injured or killed on the opening night of the war. — AP

# USA's 'war for peace' leaves Russia cold

## Congress shows 'unequivocal' support

## Moscow fears more terror

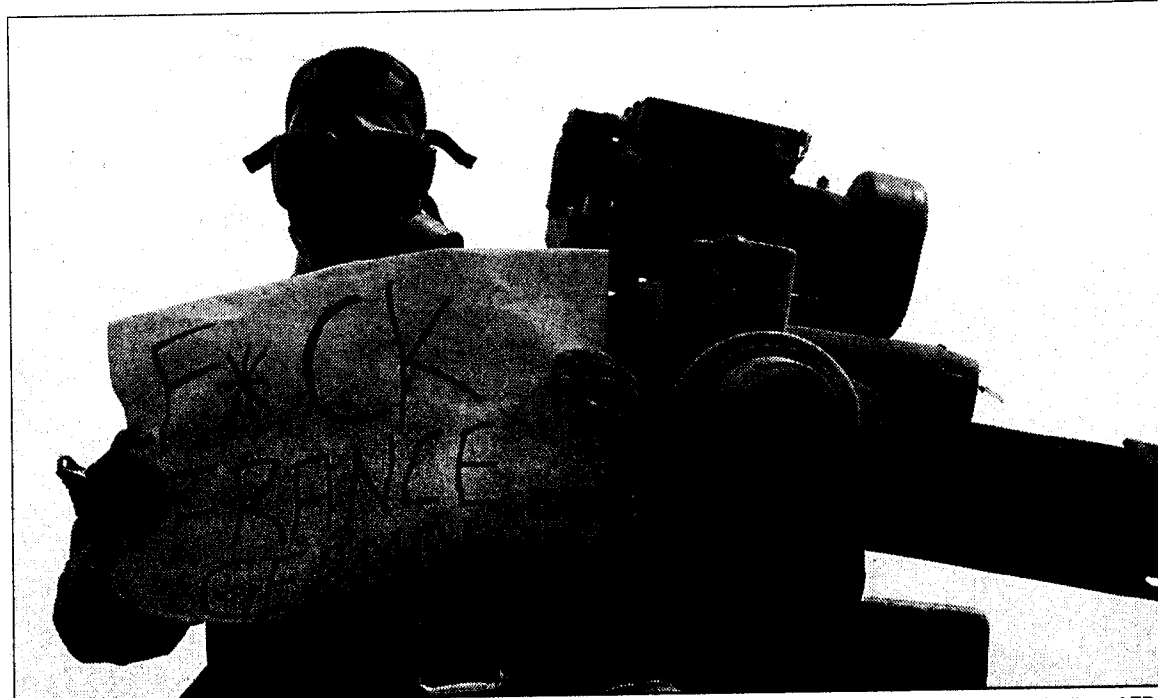
AP &amp; PTI

UNHQ/Washington/London, March 21. — Defending the military action against Iraq, USA has told the UN Security Council that it was a "necessary step" to protect America and the world from the threat posed by Baghdad and to "restore international peace and security in the area", US Ambassador to the UN Mr John Negroponte said in a letter to the Security Council.

He said the military action was "appropriate" as Baghdad had violated UN resolutions adopted since 1991.

A House resolution intended to show Congress' unified support for US troops in Iraq passed overwhelmingly early today, but angered a few Democrats who said they felt pressured into backing President George W Bush's decision to go to war.

They said the Republican House leadership was forcing them to offer "unequivocal support" to Bush "for his firm leadership and decisive action in the conduct of military operations in Iraq" or reject a resolution showing support for soldiers and their families at a time of war. In the House, representative Mr Randy Cunningham, a Republican, urged lawmakers not to let political differences damage a resolution to



THE AMERICA-EUROPE DIVIDE RUNS DEEP: A US Marine entering Iraq on Friday holds up a placard that says it all. — AFP

support the troops. He recalled how his mother passed out when she learned he had been shot down as a Navy fighter pilot in Vietnam.

"In my district and in your district, I bet you, there are children right now weeping for their parents," he said. "I know that different people believe certain ways. But let's not do it here, ladies and gentlemen."

Opponents of the resolution said they want to show support for American troops, but did not want to support a war they didn't believe in. Despite the differences, both the Senate and House resolutions passed with support from some lawmakers who had voted against a resolution in October authorising the war.

**Budget setback:** The US Senate

today voted to take \$100 billion over the next 10 years from President Bush's proposed new tax cuts to pay for the war with Iraq.

The 52-47 vote on Feingold's Amendment to a Budget resolution before the Senate was the first setback Mr Bush has encountered in seeking new tax cuts totaling \$726 billion over the next decade.

Agencies &amp; ANN

MOSCOW/KUALA LUMPUR, March 21. — President Vladimir Putin today said the Iraqi crisis could destabilise the former Soviet republics.

"The crisis has spilled beyond a local conflict. The war against Iraq is fraught with unpredictable consequences, including increased extremism," Mr Putin told a gathering of top security officers from the CIS, a loose grouping of former Soviet republics.

Foreign minister Mr Igor Ivanov, who has taken the lead in Russia's opposition to the use of force against Baghdad, told the lower house of parliament that a foreign occupation of Iraq without the Security Council's permission would be illegitimate.

"The question arises as to how the norms of international law will be observed in the course of this operation, in particular, the prohibition on attacking civilians and civilian objects, using non-precision weapons and harming the

environment," he said.

Other than Spain and Australia, which allegedly joined the coalition for political reasons, Mr Ivanov said the so-called members "were either silent or signalled indirectly that they don't oppose such actions". Mr Ivanov accused the US and its allies of staging an illegal military "occupation" of Iraq. "We have questions about the planned military occupation of Iraq," Mr Ivanov told lawmakers in the State Duma, lower house.

In spite of his harsh words, Mr Ivanov told lawmakers that the war must not be allowed to derail the anti-terrorist coalition cobbled together after the 9/11 attack.

"While solving the Iraq issue, we must not forget that we face global problems and we should not make the anti-terror coalition a victim of this problem, over which we and the USA disagree," Mr Ivanov said.

More Muslim countries could be targeted by the USA after it has finished its war against Iraq, Malaysian Prime Minister Mr Maha-

thir Mohamad said today. "Though it's not a war between Christians and Muslims, it is clear that Muslim countries are being targeted by the US government. "We know that Iran is included in the (US) 'axis of evil', so next could be Iran and then Syria, maybe Sudan and then Libya.

"They are all accused of having iron fist governments and the US aims to 'free' these countries from such iron fist governments, but the US is selective. We believe they have an ulterior motive.

"They allow assassination as a national policy and this is frightening. We don't know who will be the next victim. If we happen to do some thing wrong then we could be assassinated," said Mr Mahathir.

Malaysia will support efforts to convene a special sitting of the Geneva-based United Nations Human Rights Commission to discuss human rights and other related issues in the backlash of the United States-led war on Iraq, Foreign Minister Mr Syed Hamid Albar said today.

'SHOCK AND AWE' STRATEGY UNDER WAY; AIRFIELDS SEIZED; 30 OIL WELLS ON FIRE

# Bombs rain on Baghdad

WASHINGTON, MARCH 21. The United States launched a long-expected massive aerial campaign against Iraq on Friday night, officials said.

Enormous explosions were visible around Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, even as American officials continued surrender talks with senior Iraqi officials. The air campaign, which until Friday had been limited to selective strikes, escalated dramatically as U.S. ground forces rolled toward Baghdad. Pentagon officials have dubbed the aerial strategy "shock and awe" to reflect the goal of paralyzing the Iraqi military and compelling the regime of President Saddam Hussein to capitulate before U.S. and allied forces reached the gates of Baghdad.

One senior U.S. official said the aerial campaign might not be as intense as originally planned — at least in the opening hours — because there was still time for more surrender talks.

This official said Gen. Tommy Franks, the war's top commander, would "scale" the intensity of the bombardment in accordance with progress in the

surrender talks. Within hours, however, it would be too late to reach a successful conclusion to the talks, and then, without such a conclusion, the bombing would go full-throttle, the official said.

Another official said the assault was ordered after U.S. forces met some resistance earlier in the day, raising concerns that the Iraqi high command was regaining control. In the first hours of the war, administration officials had detected evidence that the Iraqi leadership was in disarray.

The ground campaign, led by the Army's 3rd Infantry Division and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, began on Thursday. Originally it was to follow the massive aerial bombardment, but Gen. Franks reversed the order, in part because of concern about Iraq setting southern oil fields afire, a senior official said.

The United States has an enormous fleet of Navy and Air Force warplanes primed for the aerial bombardment, including B-52, B-1 and B-2 stealth bombers and a full array of fighter-bombers.

There are roughly 250 strike aircraft on five Navy aircraft

carriers — three in the Gulf and two in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. These include F/A-18 Hornets and F-14 Tomcats. The Air Force's fighters are based mainly in Kuwait and Qatar, but there are many others in the region.

All of these aircraft are capable of launching precision-guided bombs and missiles.

American and British troops encountered both hostile fire and white flags in their sprint across the desert Friday. Iraqi defenders offered stiff resistance in some pockets, firing intense artillery barrages that were answered in kind.

## First casualties

A U.S. marine with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in a gunfight as his unit advanced on the oil field. Hours earlier, eight British and four American soldiers died in a U.S. Marine helicopter crash that a British military spokesman said was an accident.

Troops seized two airfields in far western Iraq, known as H-2 and H-3, without much resistance from Iraqi troops, defence officials said. But they called control of the installations "tentative."

They are important partly because Saddam Hussein is believed to have Scud missiles there. The H-3 airfield has been one of Iraq's primary air-defence installations.

## Strategic port captured

U.S. Marines seized the strategic southern port city of Umm Qasr today and took Iraqi soldiers captive but were still mopping up pockets of Iraqi resistance, U.S. military sources said.

Umm Qasr, located along the Kuwait border about 460 kilo-



An explosion rocks Baghdad during the U.S.-led air campaign on Friday night. — AP

metres southeast of Baghdad, would give U.S. and British forces access to a port for military and humanitarian supplies and hasten the end of Iraqi resistance in the south.

The U.S. Marines described the Iraqi prisoners as being draftees who were in very poor condition rather than "top-notch" Republican Guard types.

"I kind of felt sorry for them," the military official said. "A lot of them looked hungry. They

haven't been fed in a while." In London, the British Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, said British and American forces began the operation to take Umm Qasr early today while British Marines secured the tip of the nearby al-Faw peninsula, Iraq's access point to

the Persian Gulf and the site of major oil facilities. He said the British Army's 7th Armoured Brigade — the Desert Rats — had crossed into Iraq early today, providing flank protection for the coalition thrust, and had engaged with Iraqi forces. Mr. Hoon said four Iraqis were

killed in a "small-scale engagement" on the al-Faw peninsula.

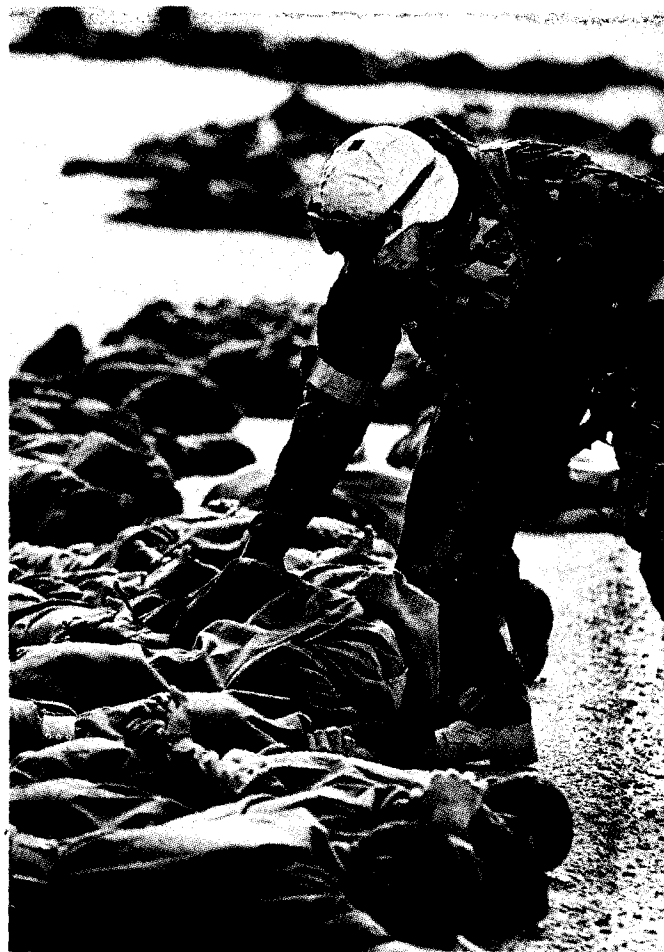
Mr. Hoon added that up to 30 oil wells had been set afire, but said these were among hundreds in southern Iraq. — AP

3,000 places on target: Page 14

## Saddam shown on TV?

BAGHDAD, MARCH 21. The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was shown on State TV on Friday, meeting his son Qusay, who heads the Republican Guard, and the Defence Minister, Sultan Hashem Ahmad, on the second day of the war.

The television gave no details about the meeting, but the broadcast came after the White House said it had "no concrete" information on Mr. Hussein's fate following the first bomb attacks on Baghdad. U.S. media reports had earlier said that Saddam may have been wounded in the first pre-dawn raids on Thursday. Witnesses saw Mr. Hussein being carried away from the wreckage of the compound with an oxygen mask over his face, ABC reported.



A U.S. Marine checks Iraqi soldiers lying on the ground in southern Iraq on Friday. Some 200 Iraqi soldiers allegedly surrendered to a U.S. Marine unit an hour after it crossed the border from northern Kuwait. — AP

## Anti-war protests swell across globe

TOKYO, MARCH 21. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators shut down airports and banks, snarled traffic with bicycles and called for boycotts of American products on Friday, the second day of global protests against the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Two persons were shot dead and dozens more injured as police clashed with some 30,000 demonstrators chanting "Death to America!" who were trying to storm the U.S. embassy in Yemen. An 11-year-old Yemeni boy was killed in a shootout between police and protesters in the capital, Sanaa.

Security sources said three policemen were wounded in the clash that erupted after police stopped about 3,000 people from marching on the U.S. embassy in the Arab state.

In Cairo, at least 5,000 Egyptians protested against the war, gathering outside the city's historic al-Azhar mosque after noon prayers.

A four-hour nationwide strike in Greece brought the country to a standstill. More than 1,500,000 people demonstrated in Athens, and more than 60,000 outside the U.S. consulate in the northern port of Thessaloniki.

The strike shut down airports, banks, mass transportation and stores. Consumer unions called for a boycott of all American products, from clothes to movies. The Socialist government openly supported the protests.

More than 5,000 rallied in the streets of Melbourne after the Australian military confirmed its special forces were in Iraq with British and U.S. forces identifying targets for coalition aircraft and monitoring enemy troop movements.

Dozens of activists converged on the American embassy in Thailand. About 7,000 Muslims in Kota Bharu in eastern Malaysia burned British and U.S. flags as well as effigies of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

In China, police watched as two dozen foreigners carried protest placards in a Beijing park.

In Britain, scores of anti-war protesters on bicycles shouted anti-war slogans as they rode by Blair's office on their way to blocking Parliament Square in central London, where they caused havoc in a "Pedal for Peace" protest. — AP



The mother of an Iraqi soldier cries at the Friday noon prayer in Baghdad. — AFP



# 3,000 sites in Iraq identified for bomb attack

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 21. Finding the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq digging in and defiant and with the "right" people not coming forward to surrender, the United States military has started the "shock and awe" campaign.

A massive air assault on Iraq is now under way with the heavy duty B-52s said to be taking the lead in the assault that is intended to give a "punishing blow" to the regime in Iraq.

Unnamed officials said the "shock and awe" policy was expected to continue for three to four days. The capital city of Baghdad is under heavy bombardment. But there are plans to hit as many military and government targets all over the country, especially in Saddam's home area of Tikrit.

It is said that at least 3,000 sites have been identified and will be attacked by an assortment of missiles and bombs from the air, land, ships and submarines. Leading the strike on Baghdad on Friday were not only the B-52s but also the Stealth aircraft, the B-2s and the F-117As. And scores of Tomahawk cruise missiles have already been unleashed with television footages showing huge balls of fire upon impact.

A senior unnamed U.S. official was quoted in an agency as saying that the Commander running the war, Gen. Tommy Franks, would "scale" the intensity of the bombing over Iraq; and that if there was no forward movement in the surrender talks, the bombings would get into "full throttle". There are as many as 1,000 strike aircraft in and around Iraq with about 300 in the five aircraft-carriers in the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean.

After meeting Congressional leaders at the White House, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, said the U.S. would stay on the task in Iraq "until we've achieved our objective, which is to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and free the Iraqi people so they can live in a society that is hopeful, democratic and at peace in its neighbourhood".

Asked if Saddam Hussein was dead or alive or of how things were going, he would go no more than saying, "Secretary Rumsfeld will be briefing today".

In the first two days of the start of the military campaign, the Pentagon was making it clear that one reason why the "shock and awe" campaign had not yet been effected was out of a belief that victory could be still



Iraqi soldiers surrendering to British Royal Marines in southern Iraq on Friday, in this television image. — AP

achieved without a major loss of Iraqi lives and large scale damage to property.

"The days of the Saddam Hussein regime are numbered", the Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, said at the Pentagon. "We continue to feel that there's no need for a broader conflict if the Iraqi leaders act to save themselves and to prevent such further conflict", the top ad-

ministration official remarked. The assessment is that there is a serious communication problem between Saddam Hussein and his top commanders, with some officials here not quite sure if the military has been getting any instructions at all.

One impression is that the U.S. is in close touch with at least three Commanders of the Iraqi Republican Guard, goad-

ing them to lay down their weapons or to turn against the Saddam regime. While Washington is keen on finishing the operations in a short period of time, it clearly does not wish to go overboard and bring about the destruction on a magnitude that will further fuel criticism in the international community, especially in the Arab world.

## Arab regimes worried over reaction

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MARCH 21. While the start of the U.S. military campaign against Iraq has triggered some street protests in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, the bombing is yet to stir the "Arab street".

In the Persian Gulf countries — most of which have provided military bases for the U.S. forces to attack Iraq — the mood in the street is tense, unhappy but not violent.

The Arab regimes, however, apprehending that the patience of the Arab masses may not be endless, want the war to end as quickly as possible.

The Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, in a conversation with the U.S. President, George Bush, called for a quick cease-fire.

In Saudi Arabia, the Foreign Minister, Saud al-Faisal, spoke of the "kingdom's hope for a



Protesters chant slogans against the U.S., Israel and some Arab leaders near the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, on Friday. — AP

quick halt in military action and for the return to peaceful efforts". Mr. Al-Faisal

expressed "deep concern" and regret over the U.S. military operations.

Jordan's King Abdullah II joined Saudi officials in rejecting any attempt to

undermine Iraq's territorial unity. Iranian leaders, without siding with the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, denounced the U.S. for launching the war.

The Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on Friday blasted the attack as "satanic" and called on Iranians to get ready for an economic and cultural war.

He condemned the "arrogance and prejudice of the American rulers and their belligerency", but added that he did not support Mr. Hussein's "dictatorial" regime.

Iran, he said, did not defend the Iraqi leader but "the Iraqi nation, and believes that the future of Iraq must be decided only by the Iraqi nation".

Kuwait, key launch pad for the U.S. attack on Iraq, flayed Thursday's Iraqi missile attacks and lodged a formal protest against the Iraqi action with the Arab League.

## Blair admits 'deep divisions'

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 21. At the end of the first day of the war, denounced here by critics as a "day of shame" for Britain, with eight British troops already killed, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, admitted that the country was deeply divided over his decision to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq but insisted that "removing Saddam will be a blessing for the Iraqi people".

His remarks, in a TV broadcast to the nation, came as thousands of Britons took to the streets in anti-war protests amid heightened fears for the safety of British troops following casualties on the very first day of the campaign. As fears grew that extremists could try to arouse passions by portraying it as a war on Islam, prominent Christian and Muslim religious appealed for tolerance and said now that the conflict had started, "there is an even greater responsibility for Christians and Muslims to maintain bonds of harmony." Jolted by British casualties so early in the campaign, Ministers abandoned the pretence that it was going to be a swift, surgical operation.

The Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, said the death of eight British and four American soldiers was an "illustration of the risks" ahead and he had no comfort to offer to those calling for a quick end to the war. "We all hope and pray that the campaign will be over quickly but you can never tell, so we do also have to have greater patience," he said.

In his broadcast, Mr. Blair said it was time to bury the differences and get on with the job.

"I know this course of action has produced deep divisions of opinion in our country. But I also know the British people will now be united in sending our armed forces our thoughts and prayers".

"I hope the Iraqi people hear this message. We are with you. Our enemy is not you but your barbarous rulers. Our commitment to the post-Saddam humanitarian effort will be total".

The Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, told MPs that the war was making "steady progress" and said the helicopter crash was not caused by enemy fire, though the causes were being investigated.



# CRY PEACE

■ Protests flare across globe as US strikes Iraq

TOM MULLIGAN  
LONDON, MARCH 20

A WAVE of anti-war protests began to roll across the US, Europe and West Asia on Thursday after the opening salvos of the war against Iraq sparked angry demonstrations in Asia and Australia.

Dozens of people were arrested in the US when they took out marches against the war. Demonstrators in Washington, New York, Boston and San Francisco railed against war while the clock ticked toward the 8 pm deadline.

In Boston, police arrested 36 people at a federal building and outside the Boston Stock Exchange.

During a midday march to the UN in New York, 45 anti-war demonstrators were taken into custody and charged with disorderly conduct.

In Australia, a crowd that organisers put at 40,000 brought Melbourne to a stand



(Above) Demonstrators march to Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld's home in Washington on Wednesday. Another protester is dragged away by Thai police from in front of the US Embassy in Bangkok on Thursday. Reuters

schools and workplaces, and began gathering in public places. In Spain, several hundred chanting demonstrators gathered outside the US Embassy in Madrid.

In the Gaza Strip, Palestinian children set fire to Israeli and US flags. Anti-American sentiment was stronger in Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan, where many saw the attack as the beginning of an American campaign to subjugate the Islamic world.

In Pakistan there were scattered but peaceful rallies against what some called "American terrorism". Indonesia's biggest rally was in Jakarta, where 2,000 people chanted anti-American slogans outside the heavily-fortified US Embassy. There were also protests in the cities of Bandung, Yogyakarta and Melbourne. Reuters

from Berlin's Alexander Platz past the guarded US Embassy and through the Brandenburg Gate. In France, a string of organisations planned a 1700 GMT rally outside the US Embassy in Paris though the mission was barricaded.

In Italy, anti-war activists and labour unions staged demonstrations and downed tools. Thousands more were expected to take part in a march to the US Embassy in Rome in the afternoon.

British anti-war campaign-

# Reduce the wages of war

Speed is of the essence: End the war, protect civilians, reconstruct Iraq

**T**HE critical difference between peace and war is that, in the former case, sons bury their fathers, while in the latter, fathers bury their sons. It is, therefore, incumbent on both sides in the Second Gulf War to ensure that it ends quickly, with minimum casualties, and with the least possible pain to the innocents. Unfortunately, the history of wars of the last century does not provide the confidence that the greater accuracy of weapons and consciousness about casualties, have actually translated into reducing the costs imposed on non-combatants and economic assets. If anything, the civilian to military casualty ratios in the wars of the 20th century had reversed with the passage of time. Even the last Gulf War had resulted in unacceptable levels of deaths. This makes it even more important to ensure that "collateral" damage—ugly term as it is—is reduced to the irreducible minimum.

The termination of the war at the earliest possible moment, therefore, must now assume the greatest importance. The international community needs to address the issue with urgency. It is to be hoped that the differences that erupted among the great powers in the run up to the war would not be allowed to intrude into the discharge of their duty to restore international peace and security. On the face

of it, this may appear to be an impossible task in the midst of what is likely to be a vicious combat. But that is exactly the challenge that the international community, especially the UN Security Council, must not shy away from. Whether US unilateralism would make the UN irrelevant or not remains to be seen. But what is certain is that the UN Security Council remaining comatose in the face of the challenges of this war would push the august body toward obsolescence.

The linked issue is the reconstruction of Iraq, as and when the war ends. Many political issues would need to be resolved in a country whose population and institutions have been victims of nearly a quarter century of wars, conflict and deprivation. More than one million children have already died as a consequence of UN sanctions, and double that number may have suffered due to malnutrition and lack of adequate medical facilities. The US, as the sole superpower, continues to carry the responsibility for initiating measures that would put reconstruction and normalisation on the fast track. This should be given concrete shape by an unambiguous declaration that all sanctions would be lifted and a massive reconstruction programme put into action, preferably under an UN dispensation or a new coalition of the willing by the time the war ends.

21 MAR 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Oust Saddam Criminal Bush

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, MARCH 20

FOLLOWING is the text US President George W. Bush's speech on an attack on Iraq:

"My fellow citizens, at this hour American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger.

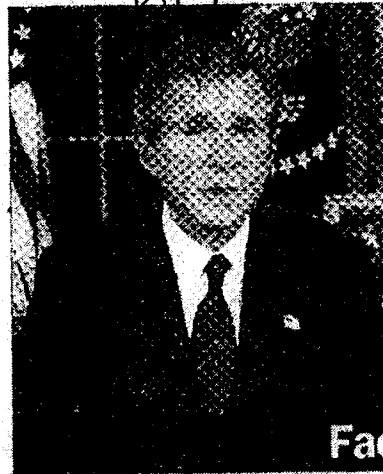
Coalition forces have begun striking targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are opening stages of a broad and concerted campaign.

More than 35 countries are giving crucial support to help with intelligence and logistics, to the deployment of combat units. Every supporting nation has chosen to bear the duty and share the honour of serving in our defence.

To all the men and women of the US armed forces now in West Asia, the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you. The enemies you confront will know your skill and bravery. The people you liberate will witness the honourable and decent spirit of the US military.

In this conflict, America faces an enemy who has no regard for conventions of war or rules of morality. Saddam has placed Iraqi troops and equipment in civilian areas, attempting to use civilians as shields for his own military; a final atrocity against his people.

I want Americans and all the world to know that coalition forces will make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm. A campaign on the terrain of a nation as large as California could be longer and difficult than some predict. And helping Iraqis achieve a united, sta-



Face-off

ble and free country will require our sustained commitment.

We respect Iraqi citizens for their great civilisation and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore its control to its people.

Our nation enters this conflict reluctantly, yet our purpose is sure. The people of US and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder. We will meet that threat now with all our might, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of firefighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities.

Now that conflict has come, the only way to limit its duration is to apply decisive force. I assure you, this will not be a campaign of half measures and we will accept no outcome but victory.

The dangers to our country and the world will be overcome. We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others, we will prevail. May God bless our country and all who defend her.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, MARCH 20

HERE is the text of Saddam Hussein's speech after US attacks began:

"In 1424 of Hijra (Muslim) calendar, the reckless criminal little Bush and his accomplices committed his crime, with which he had threatened Iraq and humanity. He carried out his criminal act — with those who cooperated with him — and has added with his accomplices to the series of crimes against Iraq and humanity a beginning of additional crimes.

Oh Iraqis and brave men in our nation. For your sake, the sake of our glorious nation, the sake of the banners of Jihad and its religion, precious values, family and children. I don't want to repeat what should be and what must be done to defend the dear nation and everything that is sacred but I will say:

Each one of us in the family of the faithful patient, oppressed Iraq by its evil enemies must remember and not forget that these days will add to earning you the glory you deserve before God.

May the infidels, the enemies of god and humanity be shamed. You will be victorious and with you the sons of your nation. By God's will you will be victorious and your enemies will be ashamed and dishonoured, God willing.

Unsheathe your sword without fear, and let Saturn bear witness, unsheathe your sword, the enemy is smouldering, no one can (intrigue) him but a prudent hero, saddle the horses and unleash them, for in their wedding there is hope, let lightening echo at the night of fire, so that truth appears and injustice is defeated, shine in darkness as it turns deeper, whereas the frail and the weak, spark your lighter and keep the fire glowing, draw your sword and make it gleam, make the banner fly on each pole, pray to God, the wound will heal.

Oh brave men, opposers of evil in the world. You have noticed how the reckless Bush made light of your opinion against war and your call for peace and committed his terrible crime today.

I pledge to you that Iraq will carry out jihad with the army in the Iraq of civilisation, history and belief; we will fight the invaders and drive them, God willing, to...lose their patience and their way...

They will suffer the defeat that every jealous faithful and lover of humanity. Iraq will be victorious and our nation and humanity will be victorious and evil will be hit to the extent that it will no longer be able to carry out crimes committed against nations and peoples, mainly our glorious Arab nation.

Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar. Long live Iraq and Palestine. Long live our nation and lovers of peace, security and right of people to live freely on the basis of Justice. Long live jihad. Long live Palestine.

21 MAR 2003

NOIAN EXPRESS



## IRAQ / SMALL-SCALE FIGHTING PERSISTS

# Saddam aide arrested

**BAGHDAD, APRIL 19.** The Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein's Finance Minister was arrested and a top scientist turned himself in, U.S. officials said today, raising hopes of a breakthrough in the search for the toppled regime's wealth as well as any biological and chemical weapons.

In Baghdad, there were signs of progress in a city struggling to emerge from war and lawlessness. Iraqi police worked alongside U.S. troops, and hundreds of demonstrators exercised their new freedom to march, demanding that the foreign troops withdraw. Shia Muslims prepared for their annual pilgrimage, a practice discouraged under Mr. Hussein's Sunni Muslim regime.

Whiskey and beer — banned in public by Mr. Hussein — was being sold on the streets of Baghdad for the first time in years.

But in a reminder that small-scale fighting still persists more than a week after the collapse of Mr. Hussein's regime, U.S. troops faced small-arms fire at a palace in Tikrit. No one was hurt or arrested.

U.S. Central Command said today that members of the newly revived Iraqi police force arrested Hikmat Mizban Ibrahim al-Azzawi, who was Mr. Hussein's finance chief and a Deputy Prime Minister, in Baghdad on Friday and turned him over to U.S. troops. He is among the 55 ex-Iraqi leaders on the U.S. most-wanted list.

A Central Command spokesman, Marine Capt. Stewart Upton, said Mr. al-Azzawi's arrest showed that Iraqi police "are going after regime leaders."

Capt. Upton suggested that Mr. al-Azzawi should know where the regime kept its wealth hidden. "It's money for the people of Iraq, and we seek to have that for the building of the future of Iraq," he said.

### 'Nerve agent expert' surrenders

Also on Friday, Emad Husayn Abdullah al-Ani — depicted as the mastermind of Iraq's nerve agent programme — turned himself in to the Americans. Mr. al-Ani may be able to provide information on any chemical or biological weapons in Iraq, or evidence of links between Mr. Hussein's regime and the Al-Qaeda terrorist group.

U.S. officials say he was involved in Iraq's development of the deadly nerve agent VX. He was also accused by U.S. officials in 1998 of involvement with a chemical plant in Sudan linked to the Al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden.

The Central Command also said that Khala Khader al-Salahat, a member of the Abu Nidal terrorist organisation, had surrendered to Marines in Baghdad. Abu Nidal, who died in Bagh-

dad last year under murky circumstances, led a terror campaign blamed for more than 275 deaths on several continents.

In northern Iraq, where Kurds run an autonomous region, scores of fighters forced to fight for Mr. Hussein were freed by their Kurdish captors and began their journey home after as long as three weeks in detention at a prison camp in a tranquil mountain valley.

In the southern city of An Nasiriyah, local police and firefighting forces are operating, with 200 Iraqis guarding "critical facilities" in the city and providing traffic control.

### Shia pilgrimage

Hundreds of Shia Muslims marched through the streets in a prelude to their annual pilgrimage to the Shia holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in southern Iraq. Thousands of Shias — who comprise 60 per cent of Iraq's 24 million people — are expected to make the pilgrimage on foot this year.

U.S. troops said fighting in the capital had all but stopped. Merchants were selling whiskey by the bottle and beer by the can on the streets. Hundreds of Iraqis swarmed the Palestine Hotel in hopes of obtaining jobs with the transitional government.

Later, about 500 people marched toward the hotel, carrying such signs as "No to occupation."

U.S. troops were clearing the city of unexploded ordnance. Four U.S. soldiers on patrol were injured today when an Iraqi girl handed them an explosive, a canister-size piece of a cluster bomb, and it blew up, U.S. officials said. The girl, who appeared to be about 7 years old, suffered hand injuries.

U.S. troops also have been guarding bank vaults in Baghdad that were blasted open by robbers using rocket-propelled grenades. One group of Marines, equipped with machine guns and tanks, has been standing watch over what they estimated was \$1 billion in gold.

A U.S. patrol came across an estimated \$650 million in U.S. currency, the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper reported today. The cash, believed to be authentic, was found in a Tigris River neighbourhood where senior Baath party and Republican Guard officials lived.

Meanwhile, Iraqi antiquities officials reported that a small number of artifacts looted from the National Museum — including pottery and metal pieces — had been returned. In Jordan, customs authorities seized 42 paintings believed to have been looted from the museum from people entering from Iraq's western desert. — AP



**Iraqi Shia pilgrims carrying flags with religious slogans walk towards the the southern city of Karbala on Saturday. For the first time in decades, the Shias are able to visit the holy city to mark next week's end of the 40-day mourning of the death of one of their most important saints, Imam Hussein. During the rule of Saddam Hussein, such rituals were banned. — AP**

# Bush mourns American deaths

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**WASHINGTON, APRIL 19.** The U.S. President, George W. Bush, mourned the loss of American lives in Iraq and has said that this year's holy season of Easter and Passover has 'special meaning.'

The President talked about the Iraq war in the context of the holy season in the course of his weekly radio address. Mr. Bush is spending the Easter holiday break at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, where he is expected to attend Sunday services at Fort Hood.

Mr. Bush is also likely to visit two pilots based out of Fort Hood who were prisoners of war in Iraq prior to being rescued.

"This year Easter and Passover have special meaning for the families of our men and women in uniform who feel so intensely the absence of their loved ones during these days. The holy season reminds us of the value of freedom and the power of a love stronger than death." Mr. Bush

said. For a President who places strong emphasis on religion, Mr. Bush said that America mourned "those who have been called home" and remarked that God's purposes were "not always clear."

Even as the President took to Iraq with a tinge of religion and reflection, the Democrats used their weekly Saturday response to lash out at the Republican budget and the tax cuts.

Mr. Bush called for \$726 billions in tax cuts but finally settled for \$550 billions, a figure that is still too high for many Democrats. Elijah Cummings, Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus argued that the Republican plan just amounted to saying that tax cuts to benefit wealthy Americans was more important than educating children or in making sure that all children had health insurance. Mr. Cummings argued that the Democrats had offered a plan that would have created one million jobs this year, or five times more than the Republican proposal.

# Anti-war nations in show of solidarity

United Nations, March 19

FOREIGN MINISTERS from France, Russia and Germany — staunch opponents of waging war against Iraq — flew to New York to address the United Nations on Wednesday in a symbolic display unlikely to affect Washington's resolve to topple Saddam Hussein.

"For us, the United Nations is the key authority," German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said late on Tuesday. "War is not justified."

Fischer, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin and Russia's Igor Ivanov planned to address the Security Council on wartime humanitarian relief and UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix's disarmament tasks.

Blix said inspectors were withdrawn on Tuesday under threat of war but had uncovered no evidence that Iraq had stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons, or that



Jacques Chirac

No change in stance

Iraq would use them.

"It's unlikely they will do that because world public opinion, which they study quite a lot, is against immediate war," Blix said.

Asked why Saddam's government would care about world opinion in the face of an American-led attack, he replied: "Some people care about their reputations even after death."

Wednesday's Security Council session was scheduled just hours before the 8 pm ET deadline set by President Bush for Saddam to step down.

The Security Council held talks throughout Tuesday, discussing regular business as well as last-minute arrangements for Wednesday's meeting. The council also adopted a measure saying its 15 members were prepared to discuss Secretary-General Kofi Annan's proposals for humanitarian aid to Iraq. Annan promised a letter outlining his suggestions.

About 60 per cent of Iraq's 22 million people rely on the UN oil-for-food program, enacted after the Gulf War. How that food programme would be administered during a war has not been resolved.

Blix was prepared to list on Wednesday questions that Iraq must answer to prove it is disarming peacefully. Despite the looming war, Germany's UN Ambassador Gunter Pleuger said it still "makes sense" for the council to discuss the matter.

AP

# First mission: benign occu

PATRICK E. TYLER

**Kuwait City, March 19:** One of the first major objectives in the war against Iraq will be to seize its largest southern city, Basra, and secure its port facilities and nearby oil fields.

Officials say they are aiming for a rapid and "benign" occupation of Basra that results in flag-waving crowds hugging British and American soldiers — all of which would create an immediate positive image of American and British war goals while undermining Iraqi resistance elsewhere in the country.

But things rarely go as planned in war, and as the onset of conflict appeared imminent on Monday, soldiers prayed and prepared to move. Everywhere a sense that the waiting was almost over was palpable among military units.

This afternoon, soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division's First Brigade Combat Team began

packing up and dismantling parts of a mobile command centre in the Kuwaiti desert. They packed their own bags, too. The division is to head for Baghdad and beyond.

"You could call it relief, almost, that something is happening," said Capt. Andrew J. Valles, the brigade's civil-military operations officer.

Later, beneath a moonlit sky, three soldiers began to sing a hymn: "Oh, give thanks to the Lord, because he is good."

As a military objective, Basra, a largely Shia city of more than 1 million people with no great affection for President Saddam Hussein's government, is thought to be vulnerable.

The Iraqi military command has ordered all of its front-line divisions to pull back to defend Baghdad, officials said, leaving poorly trained and equipped garrison units to protect the port city and the oil fields that straddle the border region with

Kuwait, just 40 miles south of Basra.

The city is a key to Iraq's southern oil region. Not all of the signals suggest that it will fall easily.

Last week Saddam appointed the most notorious member of his inner circle, Ali Hassan al-Majid, to direct the defence of southern Iraq.

Majid, known as "Chemical Ali," has been accused of war crimes for his use of mustard and nerve gases against the Kurdish population in northern Iraq in 1988.

American officials are not certain whether Saddam appointed Majid, a close relative, to ensure that the restive Shias of southern Iraq remained loyal to Baghdad, or whether Majid has been entrusted with executing a military strategy devised to blunt or undermine the American-British invasion.

"We fully recognise his image and his track record," a

military official said.

One fear is that Saddam, by appearing to expose Basra to easy occupation, is preparing to surprise American and British forces by attacking them with chemical or biological weapons.

"All I can tell you is that the Marines will be wearing their chem suits," the official added, referring to the protective clothing and gas masks designed to protect troops from attacks with chemical or biological weapons.

The fate of Basra is viewed as critical. "The first image of this war will define the conflict," said Maj. Chris Hughes, a Marine Corps spokesman.

Military officials said the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, under the command of the British Royal Marines, had been designated to take Basra.

An early success, if secured, would inoculate the military to some extent against any setbacks that occur in Baghdad, where a powerful American



20 MAR 2003

20 MAR 2003



## SANDSTORM MAY DELAY MILITARY ACTION

# U.S. troops advance towards Iraqi border

**IN THE KUWAITI DESERT, MARCH 19.** Long columns of U.S. troops, armoured vehicles and trucks advanced through swirling sand towards the Iraqi border today, positioning themselves to invade on short notice.

With just hours left before the United States President, George W. Bush's deadline for the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, to leave his country expires, increased air activity — helicopters and jets — could be heard near the border.

At sea, combat pilots and others on the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt were ordered to snooze through the day so they could work through the night. Those on the USS Harry S. Truman remained on day duty, thus providing round-the-clock combat capability.

Maj. Gen. Buford Blount III, commander of the 3rd Infantry Division, ordered his 20,000 soldiers and 10,000 tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and fuel trucks to line up near the border.

The 3rd Infantry Division is the only armoured force in the region and is likely to attack Iraqi defences head-on in the event of war. A strong sandstorm swept in today, affecting several units and hampering

movement and visibility. The winds later died down, but a lot of haze remained, with visibility a little less than 2 km.

Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division, said: "We always watch the weather because it has an effect on flying conditions and really a lot of the activities you can see. Everything takes a little bit longer".

"It'll slow things down somewhat, but our soldiers will get everything done in the end," he added. — AP

### Psychological warfare on

By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA, MARCH 19.** The U.S. has begun psychological operations aimed at sapping the will of the Iraqi troops. A U.S. warship has been broadcasting messages on the procedure that Iraqi soldiers, seeking to surrender, should follow. For instance, Iraqis wishing to lay down their arms should turn their tank turrets downwards and park their vehicles in a single direction. There has also been sustained talk about the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, flee-

ing to Kurdistan and a similar action having been taken by the Iraqi Vice-President, Taha Yassin Ramadan, who has not been seen in public in the last three days.

The U.S. military commanders in Kuwait, meanwhile, expressed apprehensions about the Iraqi soldiers deployed in southern Iraq using chemical weapons against the advancing U.S. and British troops. Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan warned against any such tactics and said it would be a hugely bad choice on the part of any Iraqi leader or commander to employ chemical weapons.

Responding to the 48-hour ultimatum issued by Mr. Bush to Mr. Hussein, and his two sons to leave the country, the Iraqi Parliament went in for an extraordinary session on Wednesday. The Speaker, Saadoon Hammadi, rejected the idea of Mr. Hussein going into exile as "absolutely unthinkable".

The Information Minister, Muhammed Said Kazim al Sahhaf, told presspersons that the U.S. troops were "fooling themselves" if they thought invading Iraq would be "like a picnic".

"Any aggression against our

country or our people will be met with resistance," he said. A parliamentary member advised Mr. Bush to "stay away from Iraq if he wanted to save his skin".

Inside Baghdad, there were clear signs that a war was round the corner. Baghdad has been fortified by trenches and sandbags. Some of these trenches have reportedly been filled with

oil. Once ignited, the burning oil could form a smokescreen that could impede targeting by U.S. fighter jets and bombers. The tactic, however, may not work against the satellite-guided bombs, that the US air force might deliver in larger numbers during the war.

Keen to open a second front, the U.S., has continued to mount sustained pressure on

Turkey to open its bases to U.S. planes and missiles, as well as permit its forces to transit into northern Iraq. Relenting somewhat to the U.S. exhortations, the Turkish Government said it would ask its Parliament to let the U.S. use Turkish airspace in the event of war but would not immediately ask its lawmakers to approve the entry of American troops.

In case the Turkish lawmakers approve this proposal, it would greatly add to the formidable U.S. firepower.

The U.S. warships based in the Mediterranean Sea would also be in a position to join the multi-directional assault on Iraqi targets with Tomahawk cruise missiles.

More reports on Pages 11, 12, 14 and 15

## Bahrain's offer to Saddam

**MANAMA, MARCH 19.** Bahrain, a United States ally, today offered sanctuary to the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, in a last-ditch bid to avert a war, Bahrain's official BNA news agency reported.

King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa made the offer at an emergency meeting of the cabinet in Bahrain. "Bahrain...is ready to host the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, if he wants to reside there with all dignity," BNA

quoted him as saying.

"The king said this initiative from Bahrain came as part of its national responsibility to preserve regional security and stability and assure that the region lived in peace, in addition to sparing Iraq and its brotherly people war," the agency added.

Earlier this month, the United Arab Emirates floated a proposal that Mr. Hussein should go into exile to avert war. — Reuters

## 15 Iraqi soldiers surrender

**IN THE NORTHERN KUWAITI DESERT, MARCH 19.** Fifteen Iraqi soldiers today crossed the border into Kuwait and surrendered to the U.S. troops, a U.S. officer said here.

They were handed over to the Kuwaiti police after they laid down their arms, at about 2030 IST, said Captain Darrin Theriault, headquarters company commander of the First Brigade of the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division. "We anticipate more (surrenders) as this continues to develop."

He stressed that the Kuwaiti police had custody of the Iraqi soldiers and "no enemy prisoners of war are under U.S. control". — AFP

20 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2003

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19/3  
AN UNJUSTIFIABLE WAR  
W. Amie  
graw

WITH THE U.S. President, George W. Bush, having given Iraq's President, Saddam Hussein, and his two sons 48 hours to surrender power and go into exile — a demand that is almost certainly going to be rejected — the outbreak of war in West Asia is imminent. Mr. Bush, in a brief address on Monday, has declared that the U.S. will initiate military action at the time of its own choosing should Mr. Hussein and his sons fail to meet the deadline. Justifying his decision to use force to settle the confrontation with Baghdad, Mr. Bush has stated that Iraq (on account of its weapons of mass destruction potential) posed a threat to the national security of the U.S., that the U.S. Congress had overwhelmingly endorsed such a course of action and that pre-existing United Nations resolutions provided sufficient legal basis for the initiation of such action. None of these justifications stands up to scrutiny but the manner in which the U.S. President has been economical with the truth in respect of the relevant U.N. resolutions symbolises the weakest part of the case he sought to make. If prior U.N. resolutions did indeed provide a sound enough legal basis there would have been no need for the efforts mounted over the past several weeks to get the Security Council to specifically endorse the course of action now being contemplated. The U.S. and its handful of allies withdrew the draft resolution which they were trying to get passed — not, as they claim, because France had threatened to exercise its veto under all circumstances — because it was not just unsupported but actively opposed by an overwhelming majority of international opinion. In by-passing the U.N. to threaten war against Iraq, the U.S. is on the verge of destroying the hopes of a future in which the global community will be governed by institutions and rules drawn up through multilateral agreement and not by the imprimatur of the hyper-power.

Mr. Bush has inveighed against those countries that stoutly resisted the efforts to get a war

resolution passed at the U.N. for lacking the will to implement the mandate of the world body. In doing so, Mr. Bush conveniently overlooked the fact that Washington's charge, that Iraq posed a clear and present danger to the U.S. or others, has not carried conviction. As best put by Robin Cook, the senior British Minister who has resigned in protest against his Government's unstinted support for the U.S. position, Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of that term — namely, a credible device capable of being delivered against strategic city targets — though it probably does have stocks of biological and chemical munitions. Neither has Washington made a persuasive case that the Iraqi regime has such ties to the global network of terror that there exists a potent threat that these munitions will be handed over to the handymen of this clandestine menace. To paraphrase Mr. Cook again, the military strategy being contemplated against Iraq is based on the premise that Mr. Hussein is weak and yet, at the same time, the pre-emptive action is being justified on the basis that he is a serious threat.

While the U.S. has let it be known that the weapons it is planning to deploy against Iraq will be even "smarter" than the high-tech munitions that it used in 1991, the first axiom of war is that plans do not survive the first contact. With the planned military strikes bound to involve the use of explosive power of a magnitude hitherto unknown outside the non-conventional dimension, the casualty rate is likely to be horrendous even among civilians. While the U.S. has promised to provide the aid that would help build a peaceful, democratic Iraq after the war, reports from the country tell of people having embarked on an arms buying spree in preparation for the internecine strife between ethnic groups, sects and tribes which they believe will be the more likely outcome. A war that can produce such horrific results can never be justified especially at a time when an attempt to disarm Iraq in a peaceful manner had just begun to work.

19 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

# Clock ticking away for Saddam Hussein

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 18. The U.S. President, George W. Bush, has issued an ultimatum to the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, giving him and his sons 48 hours to leave the country or face war.

"All the decades of deceit and cruelty have now reached an end. Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in a military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing," Mr. Bush said, asserting that "instead of drifting along towards tragedy, we will set a course towards safety."

That 48-hour clock started ticking at 8 p.m. (local time) on Monday. Mr. Bush also gave notice to all the foreign nationals, including journalists and inspectors, to leave Iraq immediately for their safety. Speaking at primetime from the State Floor Cross Hallway of the White House, Mr. Bush was direct in his remarks aimed at audiences in the United States, Iraq and the international community. He did not spare the United Nations Security Council. "For the last four-and-a-half months the United States and its allies have worked with the Security Council to enforce the Council's long standing demands. Yet some permanent members of the Security Council



U.N. inspectors who were evacuated from Baghdad arriving at the Lamaca airport in Cyprus on Tuesday. — AP

have publicly announced that they will veto any resolution that compels the disarmament of Iraq. These Governments share our assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it," he said, stressing, "the United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities. So we will rise to ours." Mr. Bush also had an impor-

tant message for the people of Iraq. He said that should the U.S. unleash military action, it would not be directed at them. "If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you," he said. In the event of the coalition dismantling the present scheme of things in Baghdad, it would also

be bringing in food and medicine and building a new Iraq that would be prosperous and free. "In a free Iraq there will be no more wars of aggression against your neighbours, no more poison factories, no more executions of dissidents, no more torture chambers and rape-rooms. The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near," he assured

them. Mr. Bush used the occasion to give advice and warning to members of the Iraqi military and intelligence services. "... if war comes, do not fight for a dying regime which is not worth your own life."

"In any conflict your fate will depend on your actions. Do not destroy oil wells, a source of wealth that belongs to the Iraqi people. Do not obey any command to use weapons of mass destruction against anyone, including Iraqis. War crimes attract prosecution. War criminals will be punished. And it would be no defence to say I was just following orders."

Mr. Bush cautioned Americans that in the event of a military conflict, the country could be a target for terrorists, alongside which there was an assurance that adequate steps were being taken to meet the threats. "... we will not be intimidated by thugs and killers. If our enemies dare to strike us, they and all who have aided them will face fearful consequences," he said.

Before his address, Mr. Bush met with Congressional leaders in the White House. On Monday, he talked to several world leaders, including those of Britain, Spain, Australia, Bulgaria, Israel and Senegal. On Capitol Hill, Democrats were unhappy at the manner in which diplomacy had failed and the fact that the U.S. was now on the brink of war. "I'm saddened — saddened that this President failed so miserably at diplomacy that we're now forced to war," remarked the Senate Democratic leader, Tom Daschle.

## Contingency plan to evacuate Indians

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18. The Government has drawn up a contingency plan to evacuate over 50,000 Indians within a week from Kuwait should the need arise in the event of a U.S.-led war on Iraq, the Civil Aviation Minister, Shah Nawaz Hussain, has said.

Speaking at the inauguration of a duty free shopping festival at the Indra Gandhi International Airport, he said that while immediate evacuation was not needed, arrangements are in place to evacuate people at a very short notice.

Should the war start, it would spell trouble for India by causing huge financial losses to the civil aviation and tourism sectors. The air space of three airports in the Middle East — Dammam, Bahrain and Kuwait — would be closed leading to suspension of all commercial flights.

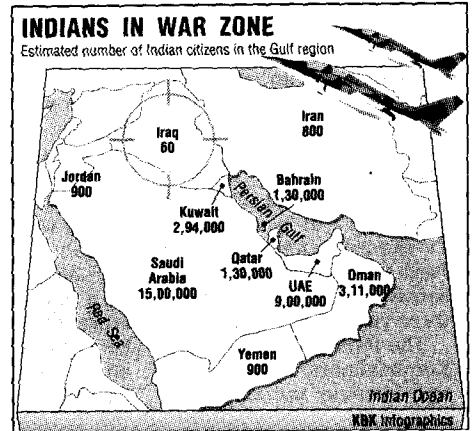
Since Air India operates eight flights to Dammam, six to Bahrain and seven to Kuwait, and Indian Airlines runs seven flights to Bahrain and Kuwait, the cumulative loss from suspension of operations was expected to be Rs. 75 crores.

Mr. Hussain said that due to the creation of the "war zone", all 13 flights per week of Air India bound for the U.S., three to Frankfurt and one to London would have to take a diversion, which would add over an hour to the travel time. Avoiding flying over Iraq and Iran they will have to take a detour via Iran which would lead to an additional fuel cost of between Rs. 10 lakhs and Rs. 15 lakhs per flight.

The Minister said since Air India had been forced to avoid Pakistani air space due to the diplomatic stand-off, all its flights to Europe and North America were already taking an hour extra for covering the route, and this, he said, was causing a loss of Rs. 40 crore per year to Air India.

The Iraq war would only make matters worse and increase the loss by another Rs. 100 crore per year.

"If the war escalates and the entire air space over Iran is also closed, then Air India will be forced to fly to USA and Europe via Jeddah and the flying time would then increase by about 2 hours and 15 minutes." The Minister said this would further increase operation costs and force the authorities to terminate these flights in Mumbai as the aircraft cannot fly for more than 11 hours at a stretch.



## 'It is Bush who should leave'

BAGHDAD, MARCH 18. The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, rejected a U.S. ultimatum today to go into exile or face war, and Iraqi television said the country was ready to repel any invaders.

Mr. Hussein was shown on television making a rare appearance in military uniform, chairing a meeting of his Cabinet after the U.S. President, George W. Bush, issued a 48-hour ultimatum yesterday in Washington. "The meeting stressed that Iraq and all its sons were fully ready to confront the invading aggressors and repel them," the television report said, quoting a statement released after the Cabinet meeting.

"Iraq does not choose its path on the or-

ders of a foreigner and does not choose its leaders according to decrees from Washington, London or Tel Aviv, but through the will of the great Iraqi people," the statement added.

Earlier, Mr. Hussein's eldest son, Mr. Uday, also rejected the ultimatum for Iraqi leaders to go into exile or face war.

"The proposal... comes from a person who is not completely capable or fit," Mr. Uday said in remarks issued by his office. "The proposal should be that Bush leaves office in America, he and his family," Mr. Uday said. Mr. Bush also directed his exile ultimatum at Mr. Hussein's two sons, Uday and Qusay.

"The wives and mothers of those Amer-

icans who will fight us will weep blood, not tears," Mr. Uday said. "They should not imagine that they will have a safe spot inside the land of Iraq or outside it".

Meanwhile, Iraq's Foreign Minister, Najib Sabri, today criticised the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for withdrawing U.N. weapons inspectors and humanitarian workers from Iraq, saying the world organisation had abandoned its duties.

He also criticised the decision to pull out U.N. monitors from the Iraq-Kuwait border as a violation of U.N. resolutions that cleared "the path for aggression."

"This is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations," he told a press conference. — Reuters, AP

## Two more quit Blair Govt.

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 18. The political crisis facing the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, deepened today after two more Ministers resigned protesting his decision to support an invasion of Iraq without a fresh U.N. mandate, but, much to his relief, the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, who had also threatened to quit was persuaded to stay on.

The Home Office Minister, John Denham, and the junior Health Minister, Lord Hunt, quit this morning even as the Government was still smarting

from the resignation of the Leader of the Commons, Robin Cook, and his blistering attack on Mr. Blair's Iraq policy. Some more junior Ministers were also reported to be "considering" their positions.

The resignations came ahead of a crucial vote in Parliament over Iraq amid threats of a massive revolt by Labour MPs who planned to defy the party whip and oppose the official motion. Though there was no danger to the Government because of Labour's huge majority in the Commons and support from the Tories, Mr. Blair's own political authority would be greatly

damaged by a sizeable show of defiance by party MPs at this juncture.

But a defiant Mr. Blair, braving interruptions from his own MPs, told the Commons that there was no question of a "retreat" and claimed that it was in the interest of Britain's national security to disarm Iraq. He called the divisions in Europe over the issue "misguided and dangerous".

THE HINDU  
wishes its readers  
A HAPPY HOLI



Australian speedster Brett Lee being congratulated by teammate Andy Bichel (right) after he dismissed Sri Lanka's Marvan Atapattu in the World Cup semi-finals at Port Elizabeth in South Africa on Tuesday. Australia beat Sri Lanka by 48 runs in the rain-affected match. — AP

## PM hopes for peace

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18. The countdown for a U.S.-led war against Iraq may have begun, but the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Tuesday exuded confidence that peace would still reign supreme and the "demon of violence" would be consigned to the flames. "We still hope peace will reign supreme and the menace of violence will be burnt away," Mr. Vajpayee said a few hours after the U.S. President, George W. Bush's ultimatum to Iraq's President, Saddam Hussein, to go into exile within 48 hours or face military action.

Speaking after the Gandhi Peace Prize function in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Prime Minister said that while a peace prize was being awarded here, elsewhere in the world ultimatums were being issued and people were being thrown out of their country. He, however, expressed the hope that peace would reign supreme and "hinsa ki holika ka dahan hoga (the demon of violence will be burnt)". — UNI



Saddam believes he belongs on centrestage. So, although no he has his eye on history, and to cut and run would be a major

# Saddam is where he

**B**ENEATH the sombre, seemingly calm facade, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein gets rattled by stress. He loses weight and sleeps less than his customary five hours a night. His rhetoric becomes defiant, his behaviour aggressive. His calculations turn out to be gross miscalculations. But one thing he never does in the face of crisis is blink and back down. To do so, in a region where words often carry more weight than actions and style is as important as substance, would be to lose face. That humiliation would be unthinkable, analysts say, for a man convinced he is destined to unite and lead the Arab world and sees himself as a modern-day Saladin, the warrior who defeated the Crusaders and regained Jerusalem in 1187.

Western and Arab diplomats see no chance that Saddam would accept exile nor much likelihood that he will destroy any weapons of mass destruction that allegedly fortify his dreams of power. With more than 200,000 US troops at his doorstep, diplomats expect him to play for time, his ego fed by shouts of support from the Arab street and fractures on the UN Security Council. He is, after all, exactly where he believes he belongs — on centrestage, in the spotlight of world attention.

Iraqi television in recent days has repeatedly shown the leader meeting with military commanders, appearing calm and puffing on cigars as he receives their praise and offers folksy advice in exchange. His every statement underlines his determination to remain in power and his conviction that Iraq will fiercely fight any onslaught, that Iraqis will not allow themselves to be ruled by foreigners and that the US and Britain will pay a very high price if they dare to invade.

"While he is not a martyr, he

Saddam's political and personal behaviour for the CIA. "When conflict begins, and not before, I think he will probably use chemical weapons against allied forces in

the invaders. Through a Western lens, Saddam seems foolhardy, unpredictable, perhaps unbalanced, certainly ruthless. But to dismiss him to the realm of madness, Post



**The Stalinist-style dictator believes his destiny and that of Iraq are one. Any excess is justified in the name of protecting Iraq. What the world calls terror, he calls expediency. What others call betrayal, he calls enforcing loyalty**

the field as well as against Israel. He could set Iraqi oil fields afire, as he did Kuwait's in 1991. 'If I can't have the oil, no one can,' he'd say. Then the question becomes: To what degree would his senior officers follow his orders?"

Pushed into a corner, Saddam and the Iraqi leadership will defend to the last breath, but

said, would be a misinterpretation. Saddam shows no symptoms of psychiatric disorders and over 34 years of leadership has revealed himself to be quite predictable and "a judicious political calculator, who is by no means irrational, but is dangerous to the extreme."

An Arab ambassador in Washington added: "This is Russ-

18 MAR 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

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tage. So, although not a martyr, he will not accept exile for  
run would be a major blow to his image, says David Lamb

# here he wants to be

the invaders. Through a Western lens, Saddam seems foolhardy, unpredictable, perhaps unbalanced, certainly ruthless. But to dismiss him to the realm of madness, Post



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said, would be a misinterpretation. Saddam shows no symptoms of psychiatric disorders and over 34 years of leadership has revealed himself to be quite predictable and "a judicious political calculator, who is by no means irrational, but is dangerous to the extreme."

An Arab ambassador in Washington added: "This is Russian roulette, and what he is doing is quite rational. I don't support it, but it's rational. On one hand, he believes he's America's target, no

matter what he does. Therefore, there's no logical reason to cooperate quickly. On the other, he knows if he doesn't cooperate by disarming, he becomes everyone's target. So he manoeuvres to keep from falling into the cracks between the two. He presents himself as the macho warrior who stands up to a superior force."

At 6-foot-2, 210 pounds, Saddam towers over his shorter, chubbier generals and sycophantic aides. Image is everything. He dyes his hair jet black and won't wear his reading glasses in public. He swims daily to keep fit and doesn't let Iraqi TV film him walking more than a few steps, to camouflage a slight limp that is the result of a slipped disc. Paranoid — for good reason — about security, he has not been seen in public since a military parade in January 2001.

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text of Iraqi politics, the fittest meant survival of the most brutal, the most cunning and, above all, the most violent."

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"One course in the face of such traumatising experiences is to sink into despair, passivity and hopelessness," Post said in his CIA profile. "But another is to etch a psychological template of compensatory grandiosity, as if to vow, 'never again shall I submit to superior force'. This is the developmental psychological path Saddam followed."

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18 MAR 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

P.T.O.

(2)

Saddam believes he belongs on centrestage. So, although not a martyr, he will have his eye on history, and to cut and run would be a major blow to his image.

# Saddam is where he wants

**B**ENEATH the sombre, seemingly calm facade, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein gets rattled by stress. He loses weight and sleeps less than his customary five hours a night. His rhetoric becomes defiant, his behaviour aggressive. His calculations turn out to be gross miscalculations. But one thing he never does in the face of crisis is blink and back down. To do so, in a region where words often carry more weight than actions and style is as important as substance, would be to lose face. That humiliation would be unthinkable, analysts say, for a man convinced he is destined to unite and lead the Arab world and sees himself as a modern-day Saladin, the warrior who defeated the Crusaders and regained Jerusalem in 1187.

Western and Arab diplomats see no chance that Saddam would accept exile nor much likelihood that he will destroy any weapons of mass destruction that allegedly fortify his dreams of power. With more than 200,000 US troops at his doorstep, diplomats expect him to play for time, his ego fed by shrills of support from the Arab street and fractures on the UN Security Council. He is, after all, exactly where he believes he belongs on centrestage, in the spotlight of world attention.

Iraqi television in recent days has repeatedly shown the leader meeting with military commanders, appearing calm and puffing on cigars as he receives their praise and offers folksy advice in exchange. His every statement underlines his determination to remain in power and his conviction that Iraq will fiercely fight any onslaught, that Iraqis will not allow themselves to be ruled by foreigners and that the US and Britain will pay a very high price if they dare to invade.

"While he is not a martyr, he certainly has his eye on history, and to cut and run would be a major blow to his historical image," said Ferrel Post, a Bethesda psy-

chiatrist who has treated Saddam's political and personal behaviour for the CIA. "When conflict begins, and not before, I think he will probably use chemical weapons against allied forces in

the invaders. Through a Western lens, Saddam seems foolhardy, unpredictable, perhaps unbalanced, certainly ruthless. But to dismiss him to the realm of madness, Post



**The Stalinist-style dictator believes his destiny and that of Iraq are one. Any excess is justified in the name of protecting Iraq. What the world calls terror, he calls expediency. What others call betrayal, he calls enforcing loyalty**

the field as well as against Israel. He could set Iraqi oil fields afire, as he did Kuwait's in 1991. 'If I can't have the oil, no one can,' he'd say. Then the question becomes: To what degree would his senior officers follow his orders?"

Pushed into a corner, Saddam and the Iraqi leadership will defend themselves to the last breath, but pragmatists within the regime may seek other options for their survival, especially after honour has been served by at least initially resisting

said, would be a misinterpretation. Saddam shows no symptoms of psychiatric disorders and over 34 years of leadership has revealed himself to be quite predictable and "a judicious political calculator, who is by no means irrational, but is dangerous to the extreme."

An Arab ambassador in Washington acknowledged: "This is Russian roulette, and what he is doing is quite rational. I don't support it, but it's rational. On one hand, he believes he's America's target, no

matter what he does. Therefore there's no logical reason to cooperate quickly. On the other hand, he knows if he doesn't cooperate quickly, he becomes every target. So he manoeuvres to avoid falling into the cracks between the two. He presents himself as the macho warrior who stands up to a superior force."

At 6-foot-2, 210 pounds, Saddam towers over his shorter, higher generals and sycophant aides. Image is everything. He has his hair jet black and won't wear reading glasses in public. He is so daily to keep fit and does an Iraqi TV film him walking more than a few steps, to camouflage a slight limp that is the result of a slipped disc. Paramount in his reason — about security, he has not been seen in public since a military parade in January 2001.

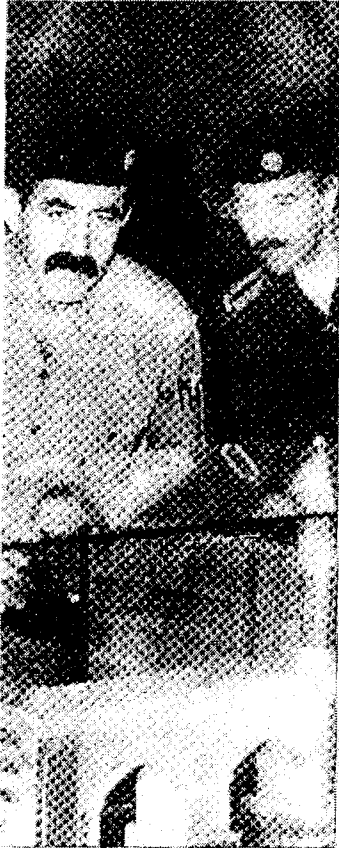
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"Saddam learned early in his first rule of street politics," said Post. "In his years as a young top aide in Baghdad, the late Tahseen, an Egyptian diplomat, once said: 'Advancement by violence is the name of the game. In the text of Iraqi politics, survival is

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INDIAN EXPRESS



# World will be our battleground: Saddam

**BAGHDAD, MARCH 17.** The Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, on Monday warned that if Iraq is attacked, it will take the war anywhere in the world "wherever there is sky, land or water." The U.S. President, George W. Bush, gave the United Nations through Monday to find a diplomatic solution to the standoff.

Amid fears that war is imminent, U.N. weapons inspectors flew most of their helicopters out of Iraq on Sunday; Germany advised its citizens to leave the country immediately and said it would shut down its embassy in Baghdad.

Residents of the Iraqi capital lined up for gasoline and snapped up canned food and bottled water. People mobbed pharmacies to buy antibiotics and tranquilisers. Workers sandbagged fighting positions outside government buildings.

With nearly 300,000 U.S. and British troops in the Persian Gulf ready to strike, Mr. Bush and the leaders of Britain and Spain met on Sunday at an emergency summit in the Azores Islands and said the U.N. must decide by Monday to support "the immediate and un-



**Volunteers from many Islamic countries undergo training at a military academy near Baghdad on Monday. They have vowed to fight to death against American forces.** — AP

conditional disarmament" of Iraq. Mr. Hussein made his own preparations, sidestepping the military chain of command to place one of his sons and three other trusted aides in charge of the defence of the nation. The decree issued late on Saturday placed Iraq on a war footing.

In a meeting with military commanders on Sunday, the Iraqi leader threatened a broadening war if the U.S. attacks. "When

more than a year," he told the Arabic satellite channel *Al-Arabia*.

Asked to comment on the Azores summit — which joined Mr. Bush and the Prime Ministers Tony Blair of Britain and Jose Maria Aznar of Spain — Mr. Sabri pointed to the stiff opposition at the Security Council to Washington's bid for authorisation of military action.

"There is a big impasse in which the Bush-Blair policies of war ... have fallen. This impasse is causing embarrassment day after day through widespread rejection of this policy". Mr. Sabri also complained about the U.S. and British military build-up in Kuwait and breaches in the fence along the Iraq-Kuwait border, which have been reported by U.N. military observers.

"In light of these flagrant threats and violations of the U.N. resolutions, the Iraqi authorities will take the necessary measures to exercise the legitimate right of self-defence," Mr. Sabri said.

The U.S. has sought an ultimatum for Mr. Hussein to disarm or face war. — AP

## We had WMD, admits Saddam

**BAGHDAD, MARCH 17.** The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, recognised today for the first time that Iraq possessed arms of mass destruction in the past, but insisted it was no longer the case.

"We have a real intent to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in our region and everywhere in the world," Mr. Hussein said, quoted by his son Uday's Youth television channel.

"We had such weapons to defend ourselves when we were at war for eight years with Iran and the Zionist entity threatened us, as it continues to do," he added, referring to his country's 1980-1988 conflict with its neighbour which cost an estimated million lives on both sides.

Under intense pressure to secure a second U.N. vote effectively authorising military action, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, suggested last Wednesday amending a draft ultimatum before the Security Council to include six demands which Iraq must meet within days to show it was fully disarming. — AP

## Russia, China call for political solution

**BEIJING, MARCH 17.** Amid signs of an impending U.S.-led attack on Iraq, China and Russia on Monday insisted that the Iraq issue should be resolved politically within the framework of the United Nations.

"China still insists on a political solution to the issue within the framework of the U.N.," the newly-appointed Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhaoxing, said during a telephonic conversation with his Russian counterpart, Igor Ivanov.

"The Iraq issue is now at the most crucial juncture of war or peace and China will spare no efforts to avoid war together with the international community," Mr. Li, who was appointed Foreign Minister earlier in the day, was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua news agency.

Mr. Ivanov briefed Mr. Li on Russia's view of the current situation, saying relevant parties should make the utmost effort to solve the problem through political means.

The two Ministers also talked about bilateral ties. Mr. Ivanov said the Russian-China relationship has entered a new stage of development thanks to the efforts of both sides. — PTI

# Anti-war nations seek meet

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 16. With the crisis in Iraq seemingly in the last stages of diplomacy, three members of the Security Council have called for a ministerial meeting next Tuesday with a view to identifying the remaining key tasks in the disarmament process for the top weapons inspector, Hans Blix, and his team.

Russia, France and Germany have called for the meeting and there is no formal word from the Bush administration.

The three have been instrumental in keeping the tempo of the anti-war sentiments at the world body and have made it clear that the inspections process should continue.

## Firm on veto

France and Russia have further maintained that they would not hesitate to exercise their veto status to block any resolution that automatically authorised the use of force. That said, the leadership in these two countries have also indicated flexibility in dealing with the issue, especially as it pertained to time lines.

In their joint statement, Russia, France and Germany have said there was no justification for war as long as the inspections were working, a stance Britain and the U.S. question. The Bush administration, without explicitly calling the inspections proc-

ess a waste of time, has been maintaining that the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, has not yet taken the "strategic decision" to disarm.

At Saturday's high profile meeting of the Security Council in discussing the report of Mr. Blix, the French Foreign Minister suggested a meeting of the leaders of nations represented in the Council.

The Bush administration quickly rejected the idea, calling the French move "grandstanding". Subsequently, Washington has also been cool to the idea of a meeting of world leaders — not just the ones sitting on the Council — to solve the Iraq crisis.

The U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, was one of the first to come up with this idea.

Some diplomats at the U.N. are not sure what the ministerial meeting would achieve, over and beyond repeating the same themes that have been heard in the last six weeks.

On at least two different occasions the nations not sitting on the Council have asked to be heard, resulting in days of "speeches".

One argument is that a ministerial meeting will have something concrete if there was indeed a move away from the existing postures of the major powers.

There is one definite view that the Bush administration has been intransigent, especially as it pertained to how much longer it

would allow the weapons inspections in Iraq to go on.

That is precisely where the breakdown point among nations is. The U.S. is willing to give no more than a "few days", as opposed to between three and four weeks suggested by a number of nations, including Canada, Chile and even France.

## Move to withdraw resolution?

One impression that is gaining currency in the backdrop of the emergency summit in Azores is that the U.S., Britain and Spain may decide to withdraw the pending resolution from the Security Council.

Legally, the administration has been making the point that it needs no fresh authorisation from the Council to start military operations against Iraq; and this position would have been strengthened in the absence of any resolution that has been vetoed.

Politically, the Bush administration would not have given France the "satisfaction" of vetoing the present resolution.

Diplomatically, the undecided non-permanent members would have heaved a sigh of relief of not being asked to "show their cards". There was obvious discomfort among the so-called U-6 (the Undecided Six) to raise hands publicly, even while "assuring" Washington privately of support.



**OLDING THE CAUSE OF PEACE: An activist holds a sign with the picture of a young girl during an anti-war rally held in Sacramento, California, U.S., on Saturday. — AP**

# We don't need a second resolution, says Powell

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

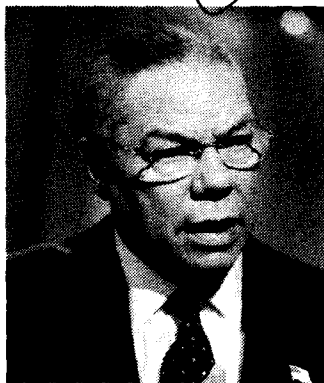
WASHINGTON, MARCH 16. The United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said today that Washington really did not need a second resolution on the use of force in Iraq; it pushed for one to help friends who were in "political difficulties".

As the U.S. President, George W. Bush, headed to the Azores for a summit meeting with the Prime Ministers of Britain and Spain, Gen. Powell said the U.S. opposed giving the Iraq President, Saddam Hussein, additional time to disarm.

"We have had timelines; we have had deadlines; we have had benchmarks. The problem is Iraq is not complying and playing some of our friends in the permanent membership of the Security Council like a fiddle," he maintained. And, no new proposal could come after the emergency summit, he added.

The Bush White House had, on earlier occasions, said that France, for instance, had rushed to reject American proposals even before Baghdad had had a chance to respond. The administration also stressed that the U.S. indeed had the legal authority for a military conflict with Iraq.

"Would I have loved to have seen others come to the same conclusion we did, that there is



a total lack of compliance on the part of Saddam Hussein, that all we're seeing is games? Of course," Gen. Powell said.

"Would I like to have seen a second resolution because it would have helped our friends with some of their political difficulties? Yes. Do we need a second resolution? No," he added.

Gen. Powell felt that it was generally a dangerous time to be in Baghdad not just because a military strike was looming but also because the Iraqi leader could take hostages.

"I think it is a dangerous time in Baghdad and that each person... has to take a look at whether or not it is not time to leave. It is a judgment each of them will have to make not just for the threat of potential military action, but from the threat of Saddam Hussein taking them as hostages," he said.

# Pressure mounts on Blair

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 16. Having failed to make the moral case, the British Government is now struggling to make a legal case for an invasion of Iraq without a specific U.N. mandate, and the Attorney-General, Lord Goldsmith, was under pressure today to disclose his opinion as the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, sat down with the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and the Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, in the Azores for what was widely seen here as a "council of war".

With a pre-emptive military action looking increasingly likely, the anti-war Labour MPs insisted that they be given details of the Attorney-General's advice which, according to the Government, was in line with its own view that legally a second resolution was not necessary to launch an attack.

However, in the past week a number of distinguished independent experts have questioned the legality of bypassing the U.N., and warned that Britain would be in breach of international law if it went to war without U.N. authority. They include legal academics from Oxford and Cambridge universities and the London School of Economics, and practising lawyers from the Prime Minister's wife, Cherie Blair's chambers.

The MP's call for a detailed statement came amid confusion over claims by Ministers that even if a second resolution was defeated in the U.N. Security Council, a war could still be declared invoking the resolution 1441 which warns Iraq of serious consequences if it fails to disarm.

These claims were apparently not shared by the Attorney-General who reportedly told the Government that the legal case for a war could be weakened if a second resolution

was put to vote and lost. He believes that the existing resolutions on Iraq, including 1441, give Britain and US sufficient authority to act.

The pressure on Lord Goldsmith to go public with his advice was so great that in a rare departure from convention, which bars him from discussing his opinion in public, he agreed to make a statement on why he believes a military attack on Baghdad, without a second U.N. resolution, would not break international law.

Amid the legal wrangling, the Liberal Democratic leader, Charles Kennedy, warned that any military intervention in Iraq without the U.N.'s backing would 'undermine' its authority and set a bad precedent. Speaking at his party's spring conference, he also warned that there was a "real danger" that the Muslim opinion in Britain would be inflamed by any such action.

## Zoran Zivkovic named Serbian Prime Minister

BELGRADE (SERBIA-MONTENEGRO), MARCH 16. Serbia's Democratic Party moved quickly to replace the slain Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, on Sunday, in an effort to keep his assassination from plunging the country into new turmoil.

The party nominated Djindjic's deputy, Zoran Zivkovic, as its candidate to replace him. Mr. Zivkovic promised to uphold Djindjic's policies, which included standing close with the West and cracking down on crime and corruption.

"There is no dilemma for us," said Mr. Zivkovic, who also becomes acting party leader. "Djindjic has shown us the way on virtually every issue." — AP

# Nations battle pandemic

HONG KONG, MARCH 16. Health authorities across Asia battled on Sunday to contain an outbreak of a mysterious pneumonia, which is believed to have killed at least nine people and sparked a worldwide alert.

As the World Health Organisation issued a warning about Severe Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), an atypical pneumonia, some Governments urged citizens to avoid Hong Kong and southern China where the illness first emerged.

More than 150 cases and four deaths have been reported in the past week in Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines,

Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. Many of those affected are healthcare workers.

The flu-like symptoms appear to be similar to those of a sickness in southern China's Guangdong province in mid-February which infected 305 people, killing five of them.

The WHO said it had issued "emergency guidance for travellers and airlines", and that the Geneva-based body was coordinating with health officials across the region in an attempt to trace the cause of the illness.

"The world needs to work together to find its cause, cure the sick, and stop its spread," said the WHO

Director-General, Gro Harlem Brundtland.

The latest victims were a nurse in Hanoi and two members of a Canadian family who died in hospital in Toronto following a recent visit to Hong Kong. Four other family members and a friend are also ill. "We know that all the members of this family went to Hong Kong before February 23," said a spokesman for the health department in the Canadian State of Ontario.

"We are trying to determine right now if there is a link between Hong Kong pneumonia and those cases," he said. — AFP

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# Iraq rejects British draft

By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MARCH 13.** Iraq has rejected a compromise proposal by Britain in the United Nations and described it as "an attempt to beautify a rejected aggressive project".  
Iraq's Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, told reporters in Baghdad that the British draft that set out six benchmarks to be met by Iraq to avert a conflict as an effort to "polish" an "aggressive project" that the majority of the Security Council members had already rejected. Mr. Sabri also said that a five-nation Arab League delegation's scheduled visit to Baghdad had been cancelled. Analysts say that the Arab countries comprising Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain and Tunisia, are deeply divided on the message that they should convey to the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, when they meet him.

Syria and Lebanon are opposed to urging Saddam Hussein to step down. Key Persian Gulf countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait however favour that he go into voluntary exile to avert a war. Mr. Sabri clarified that Iraq had not rejected the visit.  
The former Lebanese President, Amin Gemayel, who is known to be close to the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, and acquainted with the Iraqi President for years has said that he had been in frequent touch with Mr. Hussein. He, however, clarified that he had been contacting Mr. Hussein, as late as Monday, in his personal capacity, to avert a war and was not mediating on behalf of anyone else. Media reports suggest that Mr. Gemayel has been a back-channel contact between Europe and the United States and Mr. Hussein.

**Council meet today: Page 14**

14 MAR 2003

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# Arabs pulling in different directions?

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MARCH 12. Representatives of five key Arab countries are debating the timing and the message that they should deliver to the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, when they meet him in the coming days.

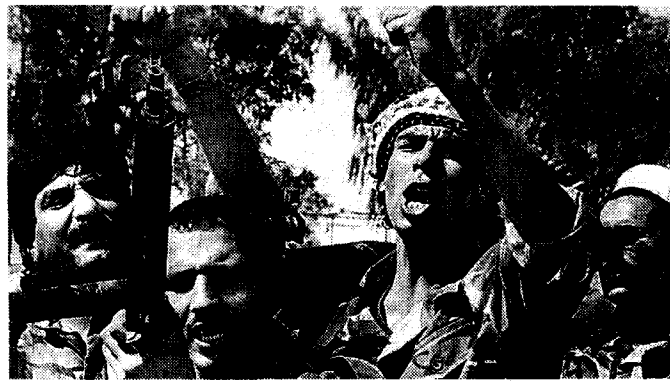
Foreign Ministers of five countries — Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain, accompanied by the Arab League Secretary-General, Amr Mousa, are visiting Baghdad shortly. The decision to send this delegation so that a collective message to avert war could be conveyed to Mr. Hussein was taken at the recent Arab League summit at the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm-el-Sheikh.

While all Arab countries oppose a war in Iraq, they are deeply divided on the way to achieve this goal. Syria and Lebanon are close to the Europeans — especially France and are asking the United States to allow the U.N. inspections to run their course, before considering war as an option. Egypt is arguably Washington's chief ally in West Asia outside the Persian Gulf zone while most of the six countries belonging to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) host major U.S. military bases on their soil that will be used for

a possible war against Iraq.

The divisions among the Arab countries are once again showing as the countdown for the visit to Baghdad begins. The bone of contention is whether Mr. Hussein should be asked to step down or not. Syria is opposed to seeking Mr. Hussein's abdication by urging him to go into political exile voluntarily. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), on the other hand, had proposed that Mr. Hussein should be asked to go into exile on his own in order to avoid war during the course of the Sharm-el-Sheikh summit. This idea that "regime change" in Baghdad can be accomplished peacefully through Mr. Hussein's voluntary exile has found considerable support among the Persian Gulf countries.

Syria and Lebanon are, however, unlikely to join a peace mission to Baghdad that pushes the exile proposal on the agenda. A report in the pan-Arab Saudi daily *Asharq al-Aswat* suggests that France and Russia are also encouraging the Arab countries to convey to Mr. Hussein to step down. Diplomatic sources, however, pointed out that this is unlikely to be the case. The French, according to this view, maybe keen to see Iraq taking bold steps to disarm and this suggestion might have



Arab "human bomb" volunteers undergoing training at a camp near Baghdad on Wednesday. — AFP

been made during a recent telephone conversation between the French President, Jacques Chirac, and Mr. Hussein.

Saudi Arabia is also reportedly proposing that Iraq could unilaterally declare a timetable for disarmament ahead of a U.N. Security Council debate on a British resolution. Apart from differences on the substance of talks, the Arab countries are also debating the possible dates for the visit.

Syria, for instance, would not like the visit to take place before the UN Security Council debates a new resolution on Iraq. Damascus is of the view that a visit to Iraq prior to the U.N. debate would only help to legiti-

mise a U.S. war on Iraq.

According to the Syrian reasoning, Iraq is unlikely to take dramatic steps to disarm.

The Arab countries, by timing their visit wrongly, can, instead of helping to avert a war, end up legitimising one. With preparations for the visit still incomplete, the five-member delegation is expected to converge in Bahrain on Thursday for another brainstorming session. The quintet has already toured the United States, where it met the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, but failed to find an audience with the President, George Bush, or any of the prominent members of his security team.

# U.S. tests 21,000-pound bomb

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

NEW YORK, MARCH 12. Designed to send a message to Iraq on the depth of what is in store in the event of a military showdown, the U.S. tested its largest conventional bomb, formally known as Massive Ordnance Air Blast, or MOAB.

Informally, this gigantic satellite guided bomb which would be dropped from a slow moving cargo plane is known as the Mother of All Bombs.

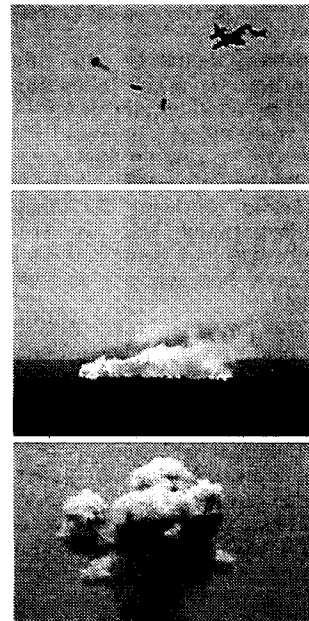
It weighs 21,000 pounds, is shaped like a missile, detonates above the ground and flattens almost anything and everything around it.

The MOAB is today's version of the Daisy Cutters extensively used during the Vietnam war to clear vegetation.

The Air Force tested the MOAB at a base in Florida and its impact was said to have been felt several km away.

The Pentagon has made no bones of the fact that the MOAB is intended to further add to the psychological pressure on Iraq in the larger framework of the "shock and awe" campaign that is in store in the event of a military showdown.

The MOAB may be the largest non-nuclear bomb in



The explosion and the aftermath of a Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) bomb are seen in this image released by the U.S. on Tuesday. — AFP

the military inventory today. But not for long — it is said that a 30,000-pound weapon called Big Blu (Bomb Live Unit) is being developed and could be used in a war with Iraq.

# Probe into U-2 plane incident

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

NEW YORK, MARCH 12. The U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, has said that a determination is being made on where exactly the "breakdown" took place over the incident involving two U-2 spy planes over Iraqi air space.

He said there was no breakdown in communication between the State Department and the Pentagon over the flights done on behalf of the UNMOVIC. The four tier 'chain' involves the Pentagon, the State Department, the UNMOVIC and Iraq.

Earlier in the day U.S. military officials said that two American U-2s were threatened by Iraqi jets and the mission had to be aborted "in the interest of safety".



A U-2 spy plane seen over Iraqi air space in this file photo.

According to one version here, there was supposed to be only one U-2 flight over Iraq; and Baghdad objected when the second plane undertook the mission. Diplomats here have attributed the incident to misunderstanding and the issue is being sorted out.

Officials in Baghdad have been quoted as saying that the UNMOVIC has apologised for the second surveillance flight calling it a "technical mistake"; and that it was only the weapons inspectors who ordered the U-2s to leave Iraqi airspace.

# Blair for giving 10 more days to Iraq

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 12. The list of conditions or "benchmarks" that the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has set forth is being circulated to the Security Council members here, but a formal and further amended draft resolution has not yet been finalised.

The Bush administration has indicated that it would want a final vote on the second resolution out of the way by the end of the week; and it remains to be seen if the latest proposals put forth by London will delay the vote at the Council.

Washington is hoping that matters will be cleared one way or the other by Friday. Also, it is being reported that the United States is only one vote away from the nine required; and the holdouts at this time are only Mexico and Chile.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, has spoken to the leaders of the two nations on Tuesday. In spite of what has been said in Pakistan, that country is seen as one of the supporters of the U.S. in the upcoming vote.

The three African countries — Cameroon, Angola and Guinea — are also with the U.S., it is claimed. But France and Russia are still adamant that they will veto any resolution that is linked to an authorisation to the use of force.

There are at least six conditions set forth by Britain: Iraq must allow its scientists out of the country for interviews; produce evidence of the destruction of Anthrax or surrender the stocks; accounting of all unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicles; destroy all missiles; identification of mobile labs and a public statement by the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

The White House has flatly rejected calls from a group of non-permanent members of the Council to give Iraq a 45-day deadline. At the most, the U.S. is willing to give Baghdad seven to ten days. But Britain may be looking at a slightly different and longer time frame.

It is suggesting that Iraq be given a ten-day period to show that it has made a "strategic decision" to disarm; and then a further smaller window to go about the verification process of disarmament.

The British proposal, according to one report, will have March 27 as the day the Security Council will have to formally decide if Iraq is in full compliance.

But some are apprehensive of this process for the simple reason that Britain or the U.S. could veto any finding that Iraq has complied. Another proposal has emerged from Canada and this plan will have a three-week deadline for Baghdad to show the Council that it is disarming and on a framework set by the weapons inspectors, not the U.S. or Britain.

It was a "day of speeches" at the Security Council on Tuesday as member-nations not represented on the Council gave their perceptions of the crisis and its resolution; and for the most part calling for the continuation of the inspections process.

The Iraqi envoy, Mohammad al Douri charged that the objective of Washington and London was "to lay their hands on our oil, to control the region, to redraw its borders". Mr. Al Douri further made the point that Iraq has indeed taken the decision to disarm, bringing about a prompt rebuttal from the Kuwaiti envoy.



# France rejects U.K. plan

By Vaiju Naravane

PARIS, MARCH 13. France on Thursday rejected out of hand the new British resolution on Iraq, provoking an angry reaction from the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw.

The French rejection has dashed any hope that the resolution might be approved by the United Nations Security Council before Friday.

The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, said in a statement: "It is not a question of giving Iraq a few more days before resorting to force, but of going forward resolutely along the path of peaceful disarmament laid down by the inspections, which are a credible alternative to war."

Britain had laid down six demands that the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, would have to fulfil if war was to be avoided, including an appearance on television to confess he possessed weapons of mass destruction.

France, which has consistently opposed an ultimatum, declaring last week it would use its veto to block any second res-

olution, on Thursday said the new text still contained an ultimatum.

"France supports the efforts of those Security Council members who, in the spirit of resolution 1441, want to give Iraq a specific time-frame in which to disarm effectively. The success of this disarmament demands the full and complete cooperation of the Iraqi authorities. We support the efforts of those calling for a work programme and timetable, while rejecting an ultimatum. This is the essence of the proposals France has made to the Security Council."

Britain, describing the French attitude as unhelpful, reacted strongly to Mr de Villepin's statement with Mr. Straw saying: "I find it extraordinary that without even proper consideration, the French Government has decided they will reject the proposals."

The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and the French President, Jacques Chirac, have a difficult relationship.

Now, with Mr Blair facing the possible resignation of some of his senior Ministers and a bur-

geoning revolt within Labour ranks, it is unlikely that Mr. Chirac will give him a helping hand.

The summit meeting between the two leaders was cancelled at least twice, before being held in a frosty atmosphere a few weeks ago.

France on Thursday continued to garner support for its anti-war stance with Mr de Villepin telephoning his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri.

France and Pakistan have agreed after consultations between their Foreign Ministers that the Iraq crisis should be resolved peacefully, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

Mr. de Villepin telephoned Mr. Kasuri on Wednesday to discuss the debate on whether to authorise war against Iraq to force it to disarm peacefully.

"The two Foreign Ministers reiterated their position that the problem of Iraq should be resolved peacefully in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions," a French Foreign Ministry statement said.

## Pak. reiterates stand

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 13. Sticking to its position, Pakistan has reiterated its opposition to war against Iraq and wants the U.K. and the U.S. to drop their guns and join the rest of the world for a peaceful resolution of Iraq crisis.

In what appears to be a calculated move to counter reports in the western press that Pakistan has agreed to side with the U.K.-U.S. second resolution on Iraq, the Foreign Office chose to publicise details of seven telephone calls received by the Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, from different parts of the globe. Among those who called Mr. Kasuri was the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin. The two Ministers discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments with regard to the Iraqi crisis. Mr. Kasuri supported the disarmament of Iraq in a peaceful way through inspections.

The Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, held a lengthy telephone conversation on Wednesday with Mr. Kasuri who briefed him on Pakistan's efforts to promote a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

## U.K. bracing for war

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 13. In the biggest political gamble of his career, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, today prepared Britain to brace for a war with Iraq irrespective of whether or not there is a U.N. mandate for it.

His defiant stance came as the Government admitted that the prospects of getting the U.N. Security Council's support for a second resolution looked extremely bleak. In what was seen as the start of formal preparations in the run-up to a war, Mr. Blair held emergency talks with the Leader of the Opposition, Iain Duncan Smith, today and told him that a second resolution was "probably less likely than at any time" because of the French decision to veto it.

Mr. Smith, speaking to journalists later, said: "That means essentially that military action has become more likely."

This was also the thrust of the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw's remarks to the media after a meeting with Mr Blair.

He denounced the French decision as 'extraordinary' and said that it made the 'process' of finding a peaceful solution to the Iraqi crisis 'more difficult.'

Even as last-minute efforts to win over the sceptics on the Security Council continued, Mr. Blair left his party and Parliament in no doubt that he had made up his mind to go to war

even if these efforts failed. "The reason why I believe it is important to hold firm to the course we have set out is because what is at stake here isn't whether the U.S. goes alone or not; it is whether the international community is prepared to back up the clear instruction it gave to Saddam Hussein with the necessary action."

That is why I am determined we hold firm to the course we have set out," he told MPs even as anti-war members of his own party remained rebellious and insisted he seek a vote in the Commons before plunging the country into a palpably unpopular and 'unwanted' war. Mr. Blair was prompted into a rear-guard defence of his stance after the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, piled on the pressure saying that America might go it alone if Britain was not able to make up its mind.

His remarks caught the headlines here and caused some embarrassment in Downing Street.

Within hours Mr. Blair was in the Commons making it clear that he would not leave America alone holding the baby.

Meanwhile, even as experts questioned the legality of attacking Iraq without a specific U.N. mandate, the Leader of the Commons, Robin Cook, told Parliament today that the Government would not do anything that was not legal or in accordance with international law.

## U.S. receptive to British proposal

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 13. The Bush administration is still determined for a vote on Iraq at the Security Council this week; but if the views of other Council members are anything to go by, a consensus, or for that matter, the magic number of "nine" votes, appears to be difficult to achieve.

Britain is still looking around for support for its proposal now called a "trial balloon" which would set six benchmarks for the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, to comply with. Desperate to get support in the Council, London has offered to abandon the March 17 deadline in the original resolution and instead talk of "serious consequences" if Baghdad refused to oblige. The U.S. seemed not in a hurry to accept the British plan, not formally presented to the Council but still doing the rounds as a position paper.

The top American envoy here, John Negroponte, while "commending the proposal" argued that he wanted to see how others viewed the plan before "we embrace it in its entirety." That apart, he stressed that if other Council members veered round to the British idea, Washington was prepared to

accept a "very brief extension" of the March 17 deadline. One suggestion has been that with a view to getting around deadlines in the official resolution — which has become a red rag to many in the Council — this may be placed in an non-binding "add-on", just to allay fears of any automaticity in the use of force.

The U. S. and Britain, which are eagerly looking for nine votes, are not finding any great enthusiasm for the latest ideas. And this is prompting some diplomats to question if there is going to be any vote at all. "It's still about war and peace. We are not convinced that this proposal takes care of our concerns. We will study it, but we see automaticity still there," the top Russian envoy to the United Nations, Sergei Lavrov, said.

Originally, a vote was scheduled for this Tuesday, later pushed to Thursday and now the talk is that a vote is likely to take place "not earlier" than Friday. In fact, one report has it that the vote might not take place at all — that the U.S., Britain and Spain might pull the resolution without a vote.

Another possibility is for the sponsors leaving the resolution "hanging" in the Council without moving for a formal vote.

The U.S. is likely to press for a final vote only after it is assured that it has nine votes needed for passage. If it is vetoed, Washington will declare a "moral" victory and go about its way. What has to be kept in mind, however, is that a no-vote or if the vote is defeated through a veto, there is no sanctity behind the March 17 deadline. Even if no "deadlines" are being talked about explicitly, a period of seven to 10 days is kept in mind if the currently debated version of the resolution is to pass.

The chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, was asked in the Security Council's meeting if 10 days would be sufficient to report on Iraq's compliance with the "benchmarks". Mr. Blix reportedly told the Council, "We could give a report after 10 days, but certainly not in two days."

Meanwhile, in Washington, the President, George W. Bush, is continuing with his telephone diplomacy, calling world leaders including, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf. "The President is going the last mile for diplomacy. We shall see if the other nations on the Security Council are willing to entertain that last mile," the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said.

## U.S. not likely to press for vote

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 13. Even as members of the Security Council are getting ready to meet later this afternoon, word from the Bush administration is that the United States may not press for a vote this week; and that the vote could come only next week, if it is going to come at all. "It may conclude tomorrow. It may continue into next week," the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer said.

The new found flexibility is intended to try and breathe new life into a British proposal that set six benchmarks for Saddam Hussein's disarmament. The

British idea is getting nowhere with permanent members such as France and Russia adamant on a veto.

On Capitol Hill, the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said Washington was still in consultations with other Security Council members. "We are still talking to members of the Council to see what is possible," he told the House Appropriations Sub-Committee, making the point that the options under consideration include "to go for a vote and not to go for a vote". At the White House, Mr. Bush met with the Irish Prime Minister and thanked that country for support on Iraq.

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## ALTERNATIVES BEING EXPLORED

# U.S. delays voting on Iraq

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

12/3

**UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 11.** Faced with tough positions and a certain defeat if the second resolution is put to vote, the United States has delayed voting in the United Nations Security Council earlier set for today. A vote could now come on Thursday or Friday, say diplomats.

At the closed-door session of the Council on Monday evening, the sponsors of the second resolution which set a March 17 deadline for Iraq found the going quite tough, resulting in Britain and the U.S. forced not only to abandon the "early" vote sought by them but to look at alternatives.

According to diplomats attending the session a number of ideas to resolve the stalemate were explored and were under active consideration.

Britain and the U.S. have said that they are willing to not only move back the March 17 deadline for Saddam Hussein, but to further amend the draft resolution.

"We are busting a gut to see if we can get greater consensus in the Council. We are examining whether a list of tests of Iraqi compliance would be a useful

thing for the Council. It doesn't mean there are any conclusions," maintained the top British envoy here, Jeremy Greenstock.

### British proposal

Britain has proposed a two-phase approach to a new draft resolution: first, the Iraqi leader would be given about 10 days or so to show that he has taken a "strategic decision" to fully disarm with a set of benchmarks established; second, the verification of this disarmament would begin.

"There is a two-stage process. One is to be convinced that Iraq is cooperating. The other is to

### Iraq threatens U.S. flights

**WASHINGTON, MARCH 11.** Iraq forced the suspension of U.S. surveillance flights, threatening one of two planes already in the air, a senior U.S. official said today.

The Iraqi threat was fresh evidence of Baghdad's unwillingness to cooperate with U.N. inspectors, another U.S. official said. Two American U-2 planes were already in the air. —AP

disarm Iraq completely," Mr. Greenstock said. But diplomats are making the point that Britain is willing to go no later than the end of March for completion of the whole process.

It remains to be seen if the March-end deadline that is being talked about is still acceptable to the undecided non-permanent members of the Council.

According to the present scheme of things, nations not represented in the Council will address open meetings of the Council giving their ideas and suggestions. It will give an opportunity for the Council members to intensify the efforts behind the scenes and get consensus over the next two days.

France has said that any resolution, irrespective of the phases and time lines, that had automaticity for use of force would be vetoed. But in softening up the language, the U.S. is keen on picking up the "undecideds" and then hoping that Russia and China will abstain. If France still ends up vetoing a resolution that has the backing of at least nine members, the U.S. will declare a "moral" victory and go about its business.

More reports on Page 14

SEE INDEX

1 2 MAR 2003

# Battles for Baghdad

By V.R. Raghavan

*The battles that will need to be fought for the soul of Baghdad after the military one would be the most difficult.*

40-10  
1713

**T**HE ENDGAME for the possession of Baghdad is about to begin. The military and political pieces are being positioned on the Middle Eastern chessboard. The adversaries are busy planning the final moves for taking and defending Baghdad. Saddam Hussein is not going to give in to threats of war until they are actually implemented. The U.S.-led coalition is still forming and there are disparate voices from within, showing lack of conviction about the war option. A global spread of citizens is clearly against the war. Once the war starts, a period of uncertainty will begin, the end of which is becoming more difficult to foresee by the week. It is clear that there are many battles to be fought for Baghdad in the months to come. The battles are not all going to be with military forces. The ones that will need to be fought for the soul of Baghdad after the military one would be the most difficult. These would also be the ones to decide the future of the Middle East.

Any professional military analyst with an understanding of the Iraqi military, Mr. Hussein's military thinking and Western military capabilities would have foretold the unfolding military scenario. The force levels required to take over Baghdad can only be mustered by the U.S. The long haul movement of such forces from the U.S. and the U.K. and the logistic build-up needed for the Baghdad offensive could not have been ready before the middle of March. Military commanders always demand — U.S. Generals are no exception — to be fully ready before the battles start. They do not like being politically hustled into a campaign before they are ready. Colin Powell's pronouncements as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are proof enough of this sound military principle. It was, therefore, apparent that all the Bush-Rumsfeld bluster could not have been translated into a military campaign from a cold start. Between the threat of war and its commencement, an interregnum was inevitable which the U.S. could not have compressed. Mr. Hussein has effectively used this time cushion to build an alternative discourse on the legitimacy of military action. He has combined it skilfully with grudging but visible

signs of disarming his WMD (weapons of mass destruction) capabilities.

The military campaign for the possession of Baghdad will necessarily be a multi-pronged one. The territorial space for the launch points is in Islamic states. Their Governments and rulers cannot disregard the lasting and unpredictable political costs of allowing the U.S. forces to operate from their soil against Mr. Hussein. The dilemma of Turkey's leadership in choosing to acquiesce on the U.S. military presence in its country, against the popular will demonstrated by its Parliament, is evidence of the hard choices facing Islamic leaders. Arab dissension on Mr. Hussein making way for another leader shows up another dimension of managing Baghdad after the campaign is over.

Mr. Hussein cannot be removed from Baghdad without taking the city from him. That requires defeating armed resistance and occupying the ancient city by force. The easiest part of the campaign would be the destruction of Iraqi military hardware. The absolute dominance in electronic and air operations, combined with munitions of astounding accuracy, will take out every Iraqi military equipment that is in the open and under cover. That does not however guarantee entry into and control of Baghdad, so essential for managing a post-Hussein Baghdad. He may disappear and continue to issue commands and directives to his army. Iraqi commanders would not know if and how to terminate the conflict.

There is unlikely to be a formal surrender of the Iraqi Army or its leadership. In its absence, there would be doubts and confusion on when and if the battle for Baghdad has been won or lost. There would be enough resistance in the city from small arms-carrying units and soldiers and civilians. The installation of a new government and its functioning in the chaotic conditions with rumours, conflicting commands, and rival Iraqi factions battling for supremacy would make for many a smaller battles in Baghdad. Attempts to subdue this fighting

by air operations or heavy weapons would bring about collateral damage to innocent civilians and other nationals who intend to be in Baghdad. All this would be reported on international television and radio channels and on internet sites hosted from inside Iraq.

Coalition plans would undoubtedly take into account these contingencies. In the face of minimal military opposition and possessing overwhelming military advantage, coalition forces would lead the ground advance from north and south through Turkey and Kuwait. If Turkey is not bought off with massive aid, military help and promises of control of oil fields in Kurd-held Iraqi territory, the land-based advance would be mounted from Kuwait to sweep to the west and north of Baghdad. Airborne operations would be mounted to close in on Baghdad. Having reached the outskirts of Baghdad, tank and track-mounted infantry, supported by helicopter gun ships and ground attack aircraft, would attempt to isolate the palaces and governing centres of Mr. Hussein from the rest of the city. Baghdad itself would be divided into military zones to prevent regrouping and reinforcing by Iraqi forces.

These operations would involve occupation of chosen ground in and around Baghdad. Troops occupying ground or built-up space would however continue to face sporadic fire and resistance and suffer casualties. In the American way of war, such resistance and attacks would be met with massive retaliation and punitive action, resulting in innocents getting killed. All this would take place, unlike Afghanistan where misdirected fire could be explained away, in the face of irrefutable evidence being produced by independent observers.

Coalition military plans would therefore be largely predicated upon a widespread, popular uprising against Mr. Hussein and his regime, in Baghdad and the other major cities. These assumptions may prove to be misplaced when the time comes

for the revolt to occur. This is because such assumptions are based on an insufficient understanding of socio-economic linkages created in the Iraqi polity. Facile beliefs about the Sunni-Shia divide, the north and south Iraqi antagonisms, and the role of the Tikriti clans from which Saddam Hussein draws his critical mass of control and support, are likely to prove ephemeral when it comes to obtaining a public response against his regime. In all segments of Iraqi society, the regime has built over thirty years a deeply entrenched system of economic and political benefits to the adherents of the Baathist regime. The bulk of this regime-adherent element transcends the traditional Shia-Sunni, cleric-lay citizen, north-south, business-trader-consumer, military-non-military layers of Iraqi polity. Through a carefully crafted and diligently implemented policy of political and socio-economic linkages resting on favours and privileges, a unique societal structure has been engineered. This structure permeates all walks of Iraqi society, from intellectuals to clan groups and down to civil and military groups that have benefited from being part of the adherent group. Even the Tikriti critical mass is an amalgamation of smaller groups watching over each other for the larger good of their leader.

A belief that there would be a socio-political revolution in Iraq immediately after the military attack commences would, therefore, be misplaced. There is a greater chance that elements of the current regime would seize control and emerge as a powerful group to run the affairs of Iraq, even as Mr. Hussein is removed from the scene. In fact, they would be best suited to quickly re-establish order and effective governance in the post-Hussein regime. Giving up WMD capabilities would be a smaller price for such a combination of new leaders, who can claim to guarantee both continuity and change. This arrangement would ensure the rule by and a major role for the existing ruling groups and societal elements. The coalition, and particularly the U.S., will find it the easy way out for rebuilding Iraq, without the turbulence of new power centres having to be propped up in Iraq. Mr. Hussein would then have had the last laugh.

1 2 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

# Russia vows support

12/3  
By Vladimir Radyuhin

**MOSCOW, MARCH 11.** Russia has promised Iraq that it will reject any Security Council resolution that will authorise the use of force against that country.

The promise was contained in a message from the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, to the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, carried to Baghdad by the Speaker of the Russian Parliament Lower House, Gennady Seleznyov.

Mr. Seleznyov, who had a three-hour meeting with Mr. Hussein on Sunday, described his one-day visit as "very successful." "Iraq reaffirmed willingness to comply with all provisions of (Security Council) resolution 1441, and we reiterated that we will not pass any resolutions allowing the Americans and the British to invade Iraq," he said today upon return

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from Baghdad. Mr. Seleznyov, who is No. 3 in the Russian hierarchy after the President, is the highest Russian official to visit Iraq in years. The visit could reflect Moscow's growing confidence that war can be delayed, if not averted altogether.

Mr. Seleznyov is the Russian President's second envoy to meet Mr. Hussein in the past two weeks. Mr. Putin has used this lifeline between Moscow and Baghdad to fine-tune Russia's position on the crisis. Last month, the former Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, visited Baghdad to get Mr. Saddam's assurances about the destruction of Al-Samoud 2 missiles two days before Iraq announced its compliance with the inspectors' demand. The advance knowledge enabled Russia to cement the anti-war coalition with France, Germany and China ahead of a U.N. Security Council meeting.

1 2 MAR 2003

SEE FINDL



# Tottering on the brink

598 Saddam upsets calculations *ky*

The order of the Chief Weapons Inspector Hans Blix to the Iraqi authorities to start destroying Al Samoud missiles together with their engines, warheads, guidance and control systems, with effect from 1st March, gives some indication of the pressure under which the poor weapons inspectors are working in Iraq. The point to be made at the threshold is that the inspection team derives its authority from the Security Council and is mandated to report to the Council; this has happened twice already. It is no part of the responsibility of the team to issue orders to the Iraqi authorities to destroy any particular weapons system. It follows that if the finding that the missiles are capable of a range beyond the limit laid down, had been reported to the Council, Iraq would have had an opportunity of rebuttal and it would have been for the Council to consider both sets of representations and come to a decision. Instead Blix has been pressured to act as inspector, advocate, judge and executioner, all rolled into one. Somebody should point out to the Security Council that there has been a grave miscarriage of justice here.

The point being missed is that for the past many weeks, George W Bush has made no secret of his desire to go to war against Iraq; efforts to bully the French, the Germans, the Russians and the Chinese, not to speak of the Turks by a not so subtle mix of threats and blandishments could not have escaped notice. Verbal assaults in the Security Council asking for war to the accompaniment of attacks from the air over Iraq have become commonplace — the Americans are furious that Iraq is not patiently accepting the punishment meted out. Under such constant threats and pressures is it reasonable to expect that Saddam Hussein should deny himself his only means of defense, the ability to retaliate and make life a little uncomfortable for his tormentors? By proxy, George Bush is asking Saddam to put up his gloves and accept any punishment he chooses to dole out and not resist raining death and destruction on a defenseless population. No wonder Saddam has rejected the demand to destroy the missiles.

Bush's pet poodle, Tony Blair, is adding his voice to the din created by the Americans by laying down deadlines for war — mid March — has he not heard of the ides of March! According to the Bush/Blair plan here is proof that Saddam refuses to be destroyed and that is reason enough for the votaries of freedom, due process and democracy to start a war and divide up Iraqi oil reserves. Saddam is no angel but there is something heroic about his retort to debate the issue with Bush. The encounter between the greenhorn Bush and the vastly experienced Saddam would have been a treat to watch if the consequences were not so serious. The obvious next step is to go to war but the sheer audacity of Saddam Hussein has done two things — one it has vastly increased his presence in the Muslim world and among those accustomed to think for themselves. The unexpected challenge from Saddam may well induce rethinking in Washington along the lines that Saddam may have other weapons up his sleeve, which may dramatically upset calculations and force consideration of body bags arriving in the United States — a contingency that must induce a pause in plans. For the peace and sanity of the world, it is a possibility devoutly to be wished.

W. Amia (P) ...

# I won't destroy missiles: Saddam

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Feb. 25. — Mr Saddam Hussein indicated he will disobey UN orders to destroy his Al Samoud 2 missiles, but a top adviser said Tuesday that the order was "still being studied."

In a three-hour interview in the Iraq capital, CBS Television quoted Saddam as belittling an order from chief weapons inspector Mr Hans Blix to begin destroying the Al Samoud 2 system by the end of the week.

"Iraq is allowed to prepare proper missiles and we are committed to that," the network quoted him as saying. Asked whether the Al Samoud 2 missiles are "proper," the President was quoted as replying: "We do not have missiles that go beyond the proscribed

range."

But a top adviser, Lt. Gen. Amer al-Saadi, said today that Iraq still had not made a decision on the missiles. "Our stance is still being studied," he said.

Recent visitors have said President

Saddam Hussein appeared eager to cooperate fully with the UN inspectors in a bid to avert a US-led war.

Those include former US Attorney-General Mr Ramsey Clark and former Russian Prime Minister Mr Yevgeny Primakov.

Mr Clark said that Saddam sees



ADAMANT: President Saddam Hussein

little incentive to cooperate with the inspectors because he believes US President Mr George W Bush is set on war.

Mr Bush won't be satisfied even if Saddam does destroy the missiles, White House spokesman Mr Ari Fleischer said. He said stockpiles of sarin and VX nerve agent were still missing.

In the CBS interview, the Iraqi President also challenged Mr Bush to a televised debate via satellite linkup, along the lines of those in a US presidential campaign, the network said. "I am ready to conduct a direct dialogue - a debate - with your President," CBS quoted Sad-

dam as telling anchor Da "I will say what I want a say what he wants."

CBS said it had broadcast excerpts of the today and the entire interview tomorrow. But due to technical problems, today's segment had of Saddam speaking.

Rather described parts of the interview and said he had asked Saddam if the offer of a debate was a joke. He quoted the President saying, "this is something in earnest out of my respect for the people of the USA," Iraq rest of the world. "I call it a cause war is not a joke. A why don't we use this opportunity?"

Mr Fleischer said Saddam's comments on the missiles constituted an "open defiance" of the UN. Mr Bush wasn't taking the offer seriously.

# 'Iraq has missed final opportunity to disarm'

Press Trust of India

UNHQ, Feb. 25. — Declaring that the Iraqi President has missed a "final opportunity" to disarm peacefully, the USA, Britain and Spain submitted a second resolution seeking UN endorsement of military action against Iraq setting off stiff opposition from European allies which want more time for UN weapons inspectors.

British Ambassador to the UN Mr Jeremy Greenstock submitted the resolution on behalf of the three nations but the document does not mention any deadline. American and British diplomats made it clear that



Video grab of Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair at the House of Commons on Tuesday. Mr Blair continues his frantic diplomatic drive over Iraq - both on the home front with a statement to MPs and in a series of meetings with foreign leaders. — AFP

diplomacy has a very short window and hinted that they could press for vote on 7 March when UN chief weapons inspector Mr Hans

Blix is to present the report. France, Russia and Germany described the resolution as "premature" and circulated a memorandum ad-



USA



UK



Spain

## Split Wide Open

While USA, UK and Spain are lobbying hard for the resolution, Germany, France and Russia are criticising the rush to war and describe the resolution as 'premature'



Ger



Fra



Rus

vocating the strengthening of the inspection regime, giving more time to inspectors and exhausting all options under the Council resolution before considering the use of force. China did not sponsor the paper but supported it.

Talking to reporters after

the Council adjourned, ambassadors of 12 member states re their respective positions and diplomats said of 15 members more endorsed the French-German position favouring the urgency of force.

13 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

# Iraq destroys more missiles

## Agencies

**BAGHDAD, March 11.** — Iraq has stopped the production of banned Al-Samoud 2 missiles, a UN spokesman said today confirming the destruction of 55 missiles in 10 days.

"They have stopped the production" of Al-Samoud 2 missiles, UN inspectors' spokesman Mr Hiro Ueki told a press conference.

Mr Ueki said three more banned Al-Samoud 2 missiles, nine warheads and a launcher were destroyed under UN supervision today and added that the number of UN inspectors in Iraq had fallen to 71 from more than 100 at the end of February, but denied the fall was part of evacuation plans ahead of an anticipated US-led war.

"We have not brought down the number of our staff," he said, explaining that

## US warns UN

**WASHINGTON, March 11.** — Washington has warned the United Nations that if it fails to disarm Iraq, another international group will do so.

"If the UN fails to act, that means the UN won't be the international body that disarms Saddam. So this will remain an international action — just the UN will have chosen to put itself in the sidelines," White House Press Secretary Mr Ari Fleischer said. — PTT

many inspectors had left Iraq after the expiry of their three-month contracts and others had since arrived.

The latest Al-Samoud destructions raised to 55 the number of missiles scrapped since the process was



US troops enjoy a baseball game at Shoup Camp in Kuwait on Tuesday. — AFP

say were produced.

Twenty-eight combat warheads, two launchers, five

engines and components of the guidance and control systems have also been destroyed.

Iraqi officials say the country has produced about 100 Al-Samoud 2 missiles.

Iraq said UN weapons inspectors apologised for a second US surveillance flight over the country today and had called it a "technical mistake."

US officials said Iraqi fighter jets threatened two American U-2 surveillance planes, forcing them to abort their mission and return to base. In Baghdad, Maj. Gen. Hossam Mohammed Amin, the chief Iraqi liaison with UN weapons inspectors,

said the second flight by the American U-2 had not been scheduled today.

Both flights took place today morning and it was the UN inspectors that ordered the two planes to leave Iraqi airspace, he said.

Mr Amin said the second plane's entry point was over the Iraqi-Saudi border and not from Kuwait as it has been the custom since the flights began last month.

Multiple over flights in support of weapons inspections are permitted under a UNSC resolution. US officials claimed they had given advance notice of the flights to Iraq.

The US military had earlier said coalition aircraft enforcing a "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq early today bombed three unmaned, underground military communication sites.

## UN vote on Iraq delayed

### Press Times of India

**UNHQ, March 11.** — With France and Russia sure to exercise veto and six undecided members — Mexico, Chile, Cameroon, Guinea, Angola and Pakistan — of the UN Security Council still finalising their Iraq strategy, a vote on the resolution seeking 17 March deadline for Saddam Hussein to disarm or face war, has been delayed to later this week.

Though Washington tried to push the resolution to the Council today, it became clear last night that the US and its allies are well short of the nine votes needed to pass the resolution. White House spokesman Mr Ari Fleischer said a vote on the resolution is ruled out today as consultations were still on. It can come anytime later in the week, he said.

During the closed-door meeting last night,

## Indians stay put in Iraq

**DUBAI, March 11.** — A day after the Indian government advised its citizens in Baghdad to leave the country fearing an outbreak of a US-led war against Iraq, several Indians have stayed put in the city and more have been pouring in.

Indian Ambassador Mr BB Tyagi said: "There is no sense of panic here." The embassy staff will keep working and "we (the staff) have no plans to leave", he said from Baghdad over the phone. — PTT

launched on 1 March, roughly half the total number which Iraqi officials

diplomats said British ambassador Mr Jeremy Greenstock suggested allowing Iraq 10 days to make "strategic decision" to disarm, then some time to inspectors to verify the benchmarks set for it to fulfil before finally taking military action. The Council will hold an open debate on Iraq tomorrow. But some Security Council members say it would be futile as only known positions would be reiterated.

Despite their high-pressure campaign on telephone to seek support of undecided members for the resolution which Washington moved along with UK and Spain, President Bush and US secretary of state Mr Colin Powell have so far failed to get nine votes needed for the resolution to be adopted by 15-member Council.

As USA and UK met stiff opposition, they signalled their willingness to push back the deadline but only days and not weeks.

## Bush says sorry to Karzai

**WASHINGTON, March 11.** — US President Mr George W Bush called his Afghan counterpart Mr Hamid Karzai and apologised for the way he was treated at a meeting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a media report today said here. "President Bush called to say he was really sorry about how things had gone in the Senate, and that Karzai should not have been treated like that," a report in 'The Washington Post' said quoting Afghan officials.

During the conversation last week, President Bush offered to make his apology public but Mr Karzai declined, it said.

During the Committee's hearing, Republican Senator Chuck Hagel had warned Mr Karzai that if he told the committee that everything was going well in Afghanistan, "the next time you come back, then your credibility will be in question." Sen Hagel said later that he felt the Administration had "coached" Mr Karzai about what he should tell the Committee. — PTT

# Politically weak Blair swallows cabinet minister's insults

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**London:** Tony Blair's domestic political crisis widened and deepened on Monday morning, within hours of hearing himself described on radio as "extraordinarily reckless" by his outspoken, anti-war cabinet minister Clare Short, who threatened to resign from the government if Britain went to war without the United Nations' backing.

The minister, who resigned as the then opposition Labour Party spokesperson over the party's support for the 1991 Gulf War, said on Sunday night that she could not stay in government and "defend the indefensible".

But in a sign of Blair's perceived weakness within his party at the moment, the Prime Minister has been forced publicly to swallow his humiliation at the ministerial breach of his authority.

Unwilling to sack Ms Short, and



Tony Blair



Clare Short

make her into a figurehead of Britain's swelling anti-war movement, Mr Blair's official spokesman merely reported that the Prime Minister was "surprised".

On Monday afternoon, Mr Blair's officials said he remained "focused" on working towards a second UN resolution and would not be "diverted".

Ms Short's attack on Mr Blair comes soon after the resignation of Andrew Reed, a Labour MP with the title of parliamentary private

secretary, which is generally considered the first rung of the ministerial ladder.

Mr Reed, an MP virtually unknown till he resigned from the job few in Britain knew he had, is the first of a reported stream of threatened departures by junior ministers.

Ms Short's bold words and Mr Reed's resignation come within weeks of a revolt by 122 Labour MPs, a quarter of Mr Blair's parliamentary party, who defied the government and supported a rebel motion that argued the case for war on Iraq was "as yet unproven".

Mr Blair's Labour Party top brass, including cabinet minister Alan Milburn, home office minister Beverley Hughes and former Blair hatchetman Jack Cunningham have been publicly critical of Ms Short.

Commentators said it indicated the depth of the Blair team's hostility to a minister widely seen to rocking the boat at a difficult time.

1 2 MAR 2003



IRAQ / CHIRAC EXPLAINS STAND TO NATION

# France to veto resolution

W A (1) By Vaiju Naravane RD-17

PARIS, MARCH 11. France will vote against the United Nations Security Council resolution on Iraq proposed by Britain, Spain and America. The French President, Jacques Chirac, made the announcement on Monday in a live televised interview. This was the first time the French leader has directly addressed his countrymen since the beginning of the Iraq crisis.

"Whatever the circumstances France will vote no, because there is no need for war to disarm Iraq," Mr. Chirac said. He again called for further inspections adding that in his estimation, a draft resolution giving Iraq an ultimatum would fail to garner the qualified majority of nine votes. However, even if nine non-permanent Security Council members were in favour of such a resolution, France would vote "no", Mr. Chirac said.

The Spanish Foreign Minister, Ana Palacio, who was to have met her French counterpart, Dominique de Villepin, in Paris on Tuesday cancelled her visit. Mr de Villepin has just returned from a two-day trip to Angola, Cameroon and Guinea, three vacillating non-permanent members of the Security Council, in an attempt to lobby their support for the no-war camp.

On television, Mr. Chirac was calm and deliberate, attempting to explain France's anti-war stance. "I am convinced, at this point in time, that this resolution containing an ultimatum that gives the green light to war does not have the support of nine members of the Security Council," Mr Chirac said. He said Paris would not participate in any military action against Iraq but added that France would be present at the reconstruction stage which he felt should be carried out under the auspices of the U.N. However, he appeared to step back from his earlier suggestion that heads of state and Government should be present at the Security Council vote.



'UN'WAVERING STAND: Jacques Chirac

The United States President, George W. Bush, had rejected Mr. Chirac's call for such a meeting. "Of course, I will not go alone," Mr. Chirac remarked.

He was careful not to antagonise the U.S. in any way, insisting that America and France were friends and allies. He brushed aside suggestions that Washington could impose sanctions on France and boycott French exports, saying, "We live in a globalised world."

Mr. Chirac said such counter-measures were no longer possible because trade practices fell under the purview of the World Trade Organisation and because France was part of the European Union.

The French press has been overwhelming in its praise of Mr. Chirac. Polls indicate that 69 per cent of the population is in favour of France using its veto.

1 2 MAR 2003

LE FIGARO

# France unleashes diplomatic initiative

By Vaiju Naravane

PARIS, MARCH 10. The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, held talks in the Angolan capital Luanda on Monday with President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos before flying off to Cameroon and Guinea.

Ahead of Tuesday's crucial vote in the United Nations Security Council, France is making a final offensive to convince wavering non-permanent African members of the Council — Angola Cameroon and Guinea — to join forces with those opposing a second resolution on Iraq that would give the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, until March 17 to disarm.

Mr. de Villepin told reporters after his discussions with the Angolan President that the use of force against Iraq would be "paradoxical and contradictory" in the present context of successful ongoing inspections. But Mr. Dos Santos, who is also under intense pressure from the Americans, gave no hint of which way his country would vote in Tuesday's debate in the Security Council.

In a statement, the Angolan Foreign Minister, Joao Bernardo de Miranda, declared: "War is inevitable. What the international community needs to do now is prepare for what comes after the war."

Angola is slowly emerging from a 27-year-old civil war that pitted the country's socialist Government against U.S.-backed rebels. The country's oil wells and infrastructure were completely destroyed in the conflict. The U.S. has promised help to rebuild Angola's shattered economy, revitalise its oil industry and write off a large percentage of its \$10-billion foreign debt.

Tempted by promises of massive U.S. aid, Portuguese-speaking Angola, which does not have significant links with France, will probably side with "the coalition of the willing" in the war against Iraq, despite the fact that like Cameroon or Guinea, it too signed a declaration pleading for continued inspections during the Franco-African summit held in Paris on February 21.

Guinea and Cameroon are likely to prove more amenable to French persuasion. Cameroon's President, Paul Biya, has close links with Paris and the French President, Jacques Chirac, that go back many years. Paris is also likely to secure the Cam-



SEEKING SUPPORT: The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, with his Angolan counterpart, Joao Bernardo de Miranda (right), in Luanda, Angola, on Monday. — AFP

eroon vote with a substantial aid package. Guinea has had troubled relations with the French with the former Guinean President standing up to French neo-colonialism in the 60s. However, Guinea could side with the French because 90 per cent of its population is Muslim.

The country depends on Washington for debt relief and it is expected that France will offer whatever Washington has offered to pay. It could be swayed by French promises to lobby on its behalf for increased Guinean exports to the E.U.

The battle lines are clearly drawn as France prepares to defy the U.S.-led anti-Saddam coalition. France is clearly in a dilemma.

Reports suggest that the U.S. President, George W. Bush, has persuaded his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, not to use Russia's veto in the Security Council. Intense pressure on Mexico, Chile and Pakistan, all three directly in America's sphere of influ-

ence, could get the pro-war faction positive votes. The vote now clearly hangs by Guinea and Cameroon. Both may succumb to U.S. pressure.

If Russia and China abstain, France will be in a very isolated position and would be reluctant to use its veto against the rest of the Security Council.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, on Sunday warned France that any attempt to block tomorrow's resolution would have unpleasant consequences for that country. This could mean diplomatic manoeuvres to strip France of its veto by reshaping and reforming the Security Council, far-reaching changes in NATO, an embargo against the supply of high technology components for the manufacture of satellites and similar products and a U.S. boycott of French exports.

Mr. Chirac will address the nation late on Monday in an attempt to explain his position on Iraq.

## 'Difficult for Pak. to back U.S. draft'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 10. Amid tremendous pressure from within and without, the Pakistani Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, announced today that "it would be very difficult for Pakistan to support war against Iraq".

At a hurriedly convened press conference, Mr. Jamali said while Pakistan had very good relations with the U.S., its position on Iraq was based on "principles and national interest".

While the announcement of Mr. Jamali amounted to declaration that Islamabad would not back the U.S.-U.K. tabled second resolution on Iraq, the Prime Minister was not willing to say it in so many words.

Mr. Jamali's much-awaited announcement on Pakistan's position came after a special meeting of his Cabinet where the Foreign Secretary, Riaz Khokar, made a presentation. The Federal Cabinet unanimously decided to "continue to base Pakistan's position on Iraq on principles and the national interest. Pakistan has consistently stated that Iraq must comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Also that peace must be given a chance and all options for a peaceful resolution must be explored," an official statement said.

Interestingly, Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain, Parliamentary Leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) also attended the presentation as a special invitee.

Mr. Jamali told the Cabinet that Pakistan's position would be based on principles and not 'expediency'. He told the meeting that he would also be taking the nation into confidence shortly on this very important issue.

Earlier, the Foreign Office spokesman, Aziz Ahmed Khan described the U.N. Inspectors' report on Baghdad as positive and said Pakistan hoped maximum efforts would be made for a peaceful resolution.

"There is an opportunity to resolve this problem (Iraq crisis) peacefully (and) that is what the report of (UN) Inspectors has said and we feel that peace should be given a chance," he said.

To a question, he said Pakistan was discussing the matter with all the members of the U.N. Security Council and other friends.

## 'Russia will veto draft'

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, MARCH 10. Russia will use its veto right to block the U.S.-backed Security Council resolution setting a March 17 deadline for Iraq to disarm. The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, today said Moscow was committed to a peaceful settlement and no new U.N. resolutions were needed to achieve this. "Russia has openly declared that if the draft that has been submitted for consideration and which contains unfulfillable ultimatum-type demands, is put to vote, Russia will vote against this resolution".

# Saddam Hussein squandering the last chance: Powell

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

NEW YORK, MARCH 10. The Bush administration is keeping its focus on Saddam Hussein while maintaining that the opponents to this policy are entitled to their points of view.

In the view of the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, the Iraqi leader was "blowing out" his last chance by failing to come clean the one last time. Gen. Powell has ruled out any extension beyond March 17 for Iraq. But the administration has not said much on whether it would be amenable to further modifications in the draft now pending before the Security Council if that would "round up" nine votes and no permanent member exercised the veto option.

In the view of Gen. Powell, Saddam Hussein has been given "more than enough time" and it was time for the Security Council to make a decision this week. "If Saddam Hussein was serious, he would not be placing demands on the U.N., as he did Saturday. He would be saying: 'Here are all the people you want to interview; here are all the facilities that I have; here are all

the weapons that I have; here are all the documents that I have'", Gen. Powell remarked during a talk show. He was referring to Mr. Hussein's demand on Saturday that the U.N. lift all the sanctions against Iraq.

Gen. Powell stressed that being master documenters, the Iraqi regime has not come forward and if it has that has been only in a grudging manner. "They are doing it grudgingly and they are doing it only to keep us from getting to the truth", he maintained.

The Republican administration pulled out its senior foreign policy hands to do the rounds on the Sunday talk shows — besides Gen. Powell, the President's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, also took to the airwaves. Gen. Powell and Dr. Rice were elucidating the administration's point of view rather forcefully and along expected lines even if this line of thinking has little support among America's allies and is increasingly being questioned at home.

On Sunday, five protesters were arrested outside the studios of ABC where Dr. Rice was being interviewed; and several followed her to the studios

of CBS. On Saturday, thousands converged on the White House to express opposition to any war with Iraq. But senior administration functionaries are not willing to accept the depth of the protests in America seen only during the hey days of the Vietnam war.

Gen. Powell, for instance, made the point that he would like to be on the side of peace and that war is always unpopular; but that public opinion changed after creating a better way of life after liberation. The Bush administration is also being reminded of the economic cost of waging a war — the military conflict alone is estimated to cost \$ 85 billions. And with this, the constant reminder that unlike the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when allies picked up much of the tab, this time around in the face of near-isolation in the international community, the U.S. will have to pay the entire cost.

U.S. lobbying to garner support for resolution

### Lobbying on

The diplomatic showdown over Iraq is expected this week even as some senior diplomats here wonder if the Bush

administration will really push for the vote if it was sure of a humiliating defeat in the Security Council.

For all the confidence expressed by Gen. Powell that the U.S. was within "striking distance" of getting the second amended resolution passed in the Council, serious doubts remain. It is not merely the high profile lobbying done out of New York and Washington that is of major interest these days.

A lot of attention is being placed on some of the visitors that could be visiting Washington this week. And one of them is the Foreign Minister of Guinea, which is a non-permanent rotating member of the Council and happens to be the President of the Council for March.

Ms Rice, asked in the talk show whether the administration would be holding out economic incentives for support to the U.S. as it had done in the case of Turkey. "We're talking to people about their interests" she replied, even while being unwilling to list the countries that Washington was counting on for "yes" votes in the Security Council.

The pressure that is being piled on

non-permanent members in the show-down over the Iraq vote is seen as being "unfair" in some quarters here. An argument is being made that for the last five decades, the Permanent Five had "arrogated" to themselves the decision-making authority on critical issues. Now, in the face of extreme divisiveness on Iraq, the onus is being pushed on non-permanent members to make the final choice. This in turn weakens the structure and functioning of the Security Council, it is being maintained.

Meanwhile, the Democrats are coming out tougher on the Bush administration, making the point that it is far more dangerous for the U.S. to be isolated in the campaign against Iraq. "Our country has never been greater. And yet, we have never been more dependent on our friends and allies to keep our country secure", the top Democrat in the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, remarked. And the senior Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Carl Levin, argued that war with Iraq could threaten the U.S. by fanning anti-American sentiments.

# Iraq: UK ready to modify resolution

MIKE PEACOCK  
LONDON, MARCH 10

**B**RITAIN said on Monday it would be prepared to modify a draft resolution authorising war against Iraq in an attempt to gain support on the UN Security Council.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman said London and Washington would consider setting out a timetable of detailed disarmament moves for Iraq's Saddam Hussein to fulfil by a March 17 deadline in order to avoid war and possibly extending the deadline for compliance.

"The idea of putting key tests to key periods where Saddam needs to comply is one being floated by

some other Council members," he said. "We are considering detailed indicators which would outline what Saddam has to do before the deadline." The spokesman suggested the deadline, set by Britain and the US in an amended resolution, could be extended although not by much.

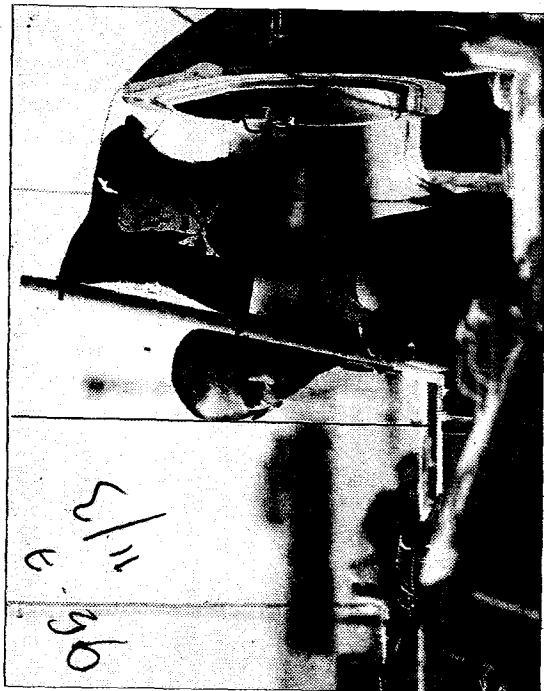
"March 17 is the only date down in the resolution. If other coalitions have other ideas we will listen to them," he said before stressing the need for a "tight deadline" to keep pressure on Saddam. To be approved, a resolution must win at least nine votes on the 15-member Security Council and there must be no veto from any of the five permanent members.

Britain and the US are keen to

press for a vote this week on the amended resolution, giving Saddam just seven days to prove he will disarm or face war. "My hunch is that it will be later this week rather than earlier," Blair's spokesman said of the UN vote.

Blair is working flat out to secure a second resolution, knowing he faces bitter opposition within his Labour Party and from the wider British public if he follows the US into war without UN authorisation. Officials said he has cleared his diary for a round of talks with key international leaders. "His focus remains resolutely on getting a second resolution," the spokesman said.

In Parliament, some 122 Labour legislators recently voted against war on Iraq. — Reuters



A US soldier adjusts a skull and crossbones flag on his vehicle at Camp Virginia outside Kuwait on Monday. Reuters

# Russia, France, Germany stick to 'no-war' stand

By Vladimir Radyuhin

**MOSCOW, MARCH 10.** The leaders of Russia, France, and Germany reaffirmed their support for a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi crisis ahead of a crucial U.N. Security Council vote on Tuesday on a U.S.-British ultimatum to Baghdad.

The President of France, Jacques Chirac, and the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, called the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, after a report in the U.S. *Time* magazine claimed that Mr. Putin had assured the U.S. President, George W. Bush, on Friday that Russia would not veto a U.S.-backed resolution authorising the use of military force against Iraq.

The Kremlin has not commented on the report, but the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Yuri Fedotov, said on Saturday that "Russia will do everything" to block the war resolution. Even if the resolution attracts enough votes, "it won't pass because Russia, France, Germany and China consider this draft extremely negatively and won't allow its adoption," the Russian diplomat said. The Kremlin press service said the Presidents of Russia and France "came out in

support of a peaceful politico-diplomatic solution to the Iraq problem."

In the conversation between the leaders of Russia and Germany, the sides "voiced satisfaction that the conclusions drawn by the international inspectors fully bear out the availability of real opportunities for a peaceful solution of the Iraqi problem."

The Speaker of the Russian lower House of Parliament, Gennady Seleznyov, was in Baghdad on Monday to meet Saddam Hussein and convey an undisclosed message from the Russian President.

Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, left for a tour of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan today to discuss the Iraq crisis and other regional issues. The visit is apparently designed, among other things, to refocus attention on Afghanistan, rather than Iraq, as the much more important target for the anti-terrorist drive.

A spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry said Moscow and Teheran shared the view that Afghanistan, "the regrouping of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda continued to pose a serious threat to stability (in Afghanistan)."

1 1 MAR 2003

SEE HINDL



Quit cloud looms  
over Blair Cabinet

London, March 9: British Prime Minister Tony Blair battled today to win world support for his tough stand on disarming Baghdad, as a resignation and mounting rebellion in his Labour government raised the stakes of his Iraq gamble.

Blair looked increasingly out on a limb as a Labour Party MP announced his resignation over Iraq, amid reports that four more could quit and some 200 party lawmakers could rebel if Britain waged war without UN backing.

Britain has already committed itself to military action by March 17 should Saddam fail to disarm and is attempting to secure UN backing for this deadline. However, the aides, all parliamentary private secretaries (PPSs), say they will resign if the Security Council does not back the British position.

Andrew Reed, PPS to environment minister Margaret Beckett, today said he would quit. "I fully support Prime Minister Tony Blair in his attempts to find a peaceful solution to the Iraq crisis through the UN route and do not want to do anything that undermines that effort at this stage," he added.

Three other MPs — Anne Campbell, PPS to trade secretary Patricia Hewitt, Michael Jabez Foster, PPS to attorney general Lord Goldsmith and Tony Wright, PPS to treasury minister Ruth Kelly — have indicated they would step down if action was taken without UN backing.

"There is a point where you have to decide whether this is right or wrong. This is about up-



Blair: In trouble

holding the authority of the UN," Foster said. "I have taken the view that I would find it very difficult to support the government unless there is a proper UN resolution. If it came to war without that, I would have to quit," Campbell added.

The fact that members of the government are prepared to threaten Blair publicly will fuel concerns that senior figures, possibly Cabinet ministers, may also resign in protest. Speculation continues to surround the position of Robin Cook, the Leader of the Commons, who is considered the most likely of any Cabinet member to quit over the issue.

The resignation threats follow the unprecedented Commons revolt, in which 121 Labour MPs voted against the government two weeks ago. If followed

through, they would be the most serious blow to Blair's authority since he was elected and could split the government from top to bottom. They highlight the risk that the Prime Minister is taking in backing President George W. Bush in waging war on Iraq regardless of the outcome of this week's crucial UN Security Council vote in New York.

London and Washington have refused to rule out the possibility that war could be launched this week — possibly as early as Wednesday — if they fail to win support for a second resolution. A British minister said: "There is a chance of that. We are going nowhere in New York."

In a last-ditch attempt to avoid war, Britain and America will this week offer Saddam Hussein a final chance to flee Iraq. The Prime Minister's official spokesman said: "The resolution has been put down but the option is there for Saddam to go into exile. It would mean we would have what we want."

Diplomats at the UN confirmed that the US and Britain were seeking to link the resolution setting Saddam Hussein the March 17 deadline with a declaration — possibly by the Arab League — calling on the Iraqi leader to avert war by going into exile. Saudi Arabia has led efforts by Arab countries to persuade Saddam and his entourage to accept asylum and exemption from charges of war crimes. Saddam, however, has until now rejected the offers, saying that he would die in Iraq.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH AND AGENCIES

10 MAR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2003

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10/3  
A POSITIVE ASSESSMENT  
WASH DC  
9/20/03

WITH THE HEADS of the United Nations weapons inspection teams making an assessment that Iraq's cooperation with the programme to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) potential has now become active, even pro-active, the rationale for a U.S.-led military strike against this West Asian country has been severely undermined. The head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Hans Blix, has described Iraq's destruction of 34 of the 100 Al Samoud-2 missiles that it is believed to possess as a substantial measure of disarmament. He also noted with approval that Baghdad has furnished additional documentation on ingredients used for the production of chemical and biological weapons and has expressed optimism that his teams would soon be able to interview, outside the country, Iraqi scientists and technicians involved with the WMD programme. While UNMOVIC would be able to present a compilation of the disarmament tasks that remain to be carried out only by the end of the month, Mr. Blix has made a broad assessment that his team's mission could be completed within a few months — neither weeks nor years, he specifically indicated. Mr. Blix and the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohammed ElBaradei, have decried the practice followed by Washington of declaring that its own intelligence agencies have found evidence of Iraqi misdoings without passing on such information to the U.N. agencies concerned so that these discoveries could be independently verified. In an indictment of this practice, the heads of the U.N. teams have said that they had not found evidence to support Washington's allegations whenever they have followed up on such leads.

With the U.S. having stated in unambiguous terms that its objectives with regard to Iraq are not confined to the eradication of Baghdad's WMD potential but include the further goal of changing the regime currently in place, it is not likely to be diverted or distracted from its purposes by the reports submitted by the U.N.

teams. Washington does not concur with Mr. Blix's observations that Iraq is cooperating in a wholesome manner with the process of inspections and insists that Baghdad has shown no signs of having taken the strategic and political decision to rid itself of a WMD potential. Washington has revived, and given a new twist to, an old and unsustainable argument that Iraq's possession of a WMD potential (a capability that has been substantially reduced through years of inspections) poses a direct threat to the U.S. homeland. The hypothesis that Iraq poses a direct security threat to the U.S. has been set within the framework of the recently propounded doctrine of a pre-emptive strike, and is being used to justify military action — including a resort to arms without the endorsement of the U.N. Other significant members of the U.N. — France, Russia, Germany — have found sustenance in the weapons inspectors' reports for their proposal that the inspections teams be given a few more months to complete their task. Washington however insists that an extension of the inspection process is meaningless and is soliciting support for a Security Council resolution that would demand that Iraq disarm fully within a short period of time. Given its declared intent of bringing about a regime change in Iraq, it would appear that Washington does not believe that Baghdad would be able to fulfil this demand and would thereby provide the justification for the initiation of military action against it.

With the U.S. and its few allies having substantially built up the military forces deployed in a threatening manner against Iraq, there is a grave danger that the move towards war will gather a momentum of its own. It is extremely unfortunate that the slide towards a military confrontation appears to be taking place without the global community being given the opportunity to seriously consider all aspects, especially the consequences of a war. It would seem that by far the larger part of world opinion does not support military action against Iraq at this juncture, especially a war that is not authorised by the U.N.

10 MAR 2003

THE HINDS

# Rape victim not CPM worker: Anil

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, March 8. — Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary today categorically denied that the woman of Ghokshadanga village in Cooch Behar, who had allegedly been gangraped on 22 February, is a party member or one of the accused has any links with the party as alleged.

Inquiries revealed the incident could be a fallout of some family dispute or love tangle, while local residents have "questions" about the lifestyle

of the woman who made the FIR, Mr Biswas said.

One of her in-laws, who lives close to the woman's house, also stated his whole family was wide awake till 2 a.m. on the day of the alleged incident and had not noticed any crime being committed.

Mr Biswas said for some time the Opposition parties and a section of the media have been making a slander campaign against the party by falsely implicating CPI-M activists in incidents of atrocities of women.

"The aim of these parties is to put the CPI-M on the dock in the public mind in order to shield themselves from accusations of criminalisation of politics they indulge in," Mr Biswas said.

In the past similar incidents were also engineered during the run-up to the panchayat elections and the "attempts failed with the alleged incidents turning out to be hoaxes", Mr Biswas said.

The CPI-M state secretary said he had instructed his party's district leadership to file

defamation case against the section of media which have "slandered against our party".

"This may expose the conspirators," he said. "We want to isolate criminals and expect other political parties not to malign their rivals with unfounded allegations," Mr Biswas asserted.

The Trinamul is going to demand a statement from the chief minister on the floor of the Assembly following the Cooch Behar rape incident.

The Trinamul's local unit has demanded a judicial inquiry in-

to the incident which has shocked political circles.

Mr Pankaj Banerjee, leader of the Opposition, said his party will move an adjournment motion in the Assembly on Monday and demand a statement from Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee as the latter has been "silent on the Dhantala rape too".

The state BJP also lashed out at the state government, saying that women will continue to suffer at the hands of the CPI-M and police till the CPI-M is in power.

**Malta votes in E.U. referendum**

VALLETTA (MALTA): Europe watched closely as Malta held a referendum on Saturday on this tiny island's membership in the European Union, a vote that comes as public support for E.U. expansion appears to be faltering. The vote is the first of nine referendums in nations aiming to join the E.U. next year. Recent polls showed that the Mediterranean island of 400,000, located south of Sicily, was about evenly divided on the issue. Some surveys showed that as many as 60 per cent of voters — many saying being a E.U. member would cost the country jobs and independence — were opposed to joining the 15-nation bloc. In exchange for billions of euros (dollars) in aid, new E.U. members are expected to open their markets and conform to E.U. rules and regulations. (The picture shows supporters of Malta's integration with the E.U. at a rally in St. Andrews, Malta, on Thursday). — AP

**Ivorian rebels for compromise**

ACCRA (GHANA): Ivory Coast's rebels will cede key Cabinet positions in a national reconciliation Government if the west African nation's President gives up rights to approve those new ministers, the insurgents said in a release Saturday. The rebel offer, if approved by President Laurent Gbagbo, could remove a hurdle blocking a French-brokered January peace accord meant to end Ivory Coast's five-month rebellion by launching a new, inclusive government. Ivory Coast's rebels and the country's top political bosses met this week alongside officials from the United Nations and a west African economic bloc, currently presided over by Ghana's President, John Kufuor, who called the meeting. — AP

**Beijing blasts suspect held**

BEIJING: Chinese police on Saturday claimed to have arrested the suspect responsible for the twin bomb blasts in two prestigious universities here last month which injured nine people. "The suspect, who triggered the blasts on the campus of prestigious Beijing and Qinghua universities in Beijing on February 25, was nabbed in Fuzhou, east China's Fujian province, early this morning," Deputy Secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China, Qiang Wei, said here. The 27-year-old suspect, native of Fuzhou, is a worker on a farm in the south China island province of Hainan. Mr. Qiang was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua news agency. — PTI

**New team for Columbia probe**

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE (NEW MEXICO): The board investigating the Columbia disaster is forming a new team to look into NASA's internal communications, including e-mails and management directives, a board member said. Kenneth Hess, an aviation mishap expert stationed at Kirtland, said on Friday the new team would aid three groups already investigating the structural design, operations and technical aspects of the shuttle. The shuttle was returning from 16 days in space when it broke up over

Texas on Feb. 1, killing all seven astronauts aboard. Investigators have theorised that foam or other debris that broke off the shuttle's big external fuel tank during lift-off damaged the left wing and allowed hot gases to penetrate and destroy the shuttle. In late January, while Columbia was still in orbit, flight controllers and engineers discussed the potential for severe damage to the wing but did not share their e-mails with top managers. The flurry of e-mails came after a formal engineering analysis by others concluded any damage by the debris posed no safety concern. — AP

**Anti-war wave in Bangladesh**

By Haroon Habib

DHAKA, MARCH 8. Thousands of people have staged anti-war demonstrations in Dhaka as the country's capital saw several biggest-ever anti-war processions chanting slogans against 'warmongers' the U.S. President, George W Bush, and the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair during last few days.

Incidentally, the first biggest anti-war rally was called by country's secular intellectuals, left politicians and cultural organisations while the other organised by the Islamic radicals and the ruling four-party alliance's backers from intellectual and religious lobbies. Besides several other Islamic organisations staged a number of demonstrations across the country in the wake of Bush-Blair's threat of war in Iraq.

On Thursday, thousands marched through the streets after a mammoth rally in Dhaka under the aegis of "The National Committee to Resist Aggres-

sion", where the people of all ages carrying anti-war placards and banners. Led by the Khatib of national mosque Baitul Mukarram — Maulana Obaidul Haq, the protestors chanted anti-war slogans, demanded peaceful resolution of the Iraq crisis to save millions of people from the holocaust of a possible war.

"Bush will be tried for war crime if he attacks Iraq", they chanted carrying banners like "Resist the War Mongers," "Attack on Iraq is Attack on all Muslims", "No War, No Bush, No Blood."

A section of the demonstrators beat and smashed an effigy of Mr. Bush to vent their anger. "If war breaks out, thousands of people will die and millions will become disabled," former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, Prof. Emajuddin Ahmed, said.

The Maulana known for his anti-American stance, called upon the countries opposing attack on Iraq to boycott U.S. goods if it attacks Iraq.

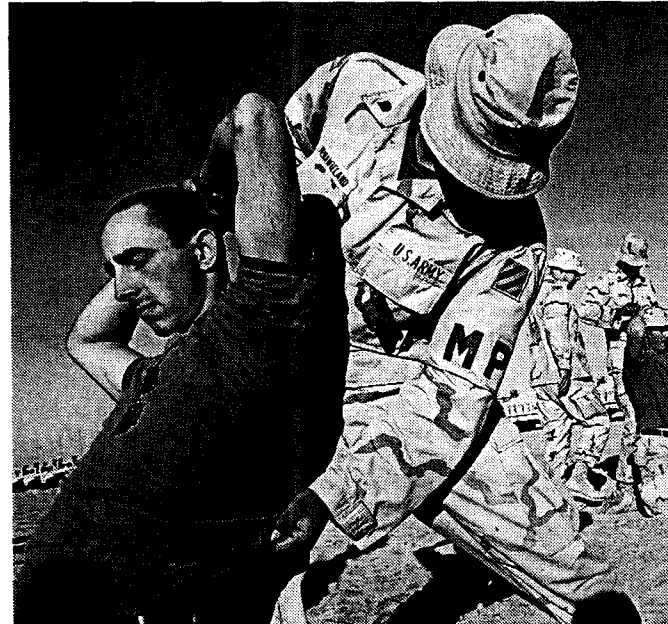
**Big powers poised for showdown**

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 8. A day after the high drama at the Security Council chambers when even protocol was set aside at times, the United States is finding that in spite of all its high profile lobbying, the numbers are still not adding up. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that the Bush administration has not won a single "convert" despite the passionate and perhaps aggressive pleas by the Secretary of State, Colin Powell.

Both inside and outside the Security Council, Gen. Powell disputed the optimistic assessments of the top weapons inspectors even while being careful not to question the quality or professionalism of the inspections process.

In the view of Gen. Powell, the Iraqi leader has not voluntarily taken a decision to disarm, or for that matter, made a strategic decision to disarm at all. What little had been offered by Baghdad had come about in a "grudging" manner, he maintained. "Now is the time for the Council to tell Saddam that the clock has not been stopped by his stratagems and machinations", the Secretary of State argued. Gen. Powell also said that



U.S. army personnel conduct prisoner of war training in northern Kuwait recently. — AP

there were members "who do not want to stand up to the requirements of that resolution and take action that was clearly intended in the absence of Iraqi compliance". Inside the Council chamber on Friday, the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France, Russia and China said

they were opposed to the use of force and called for the inspections process to continue.

These four nations represent the core of the anti-war coalition and are opposed to the amended resolution that gives Iraq until March 17 to comply with the demands or face war.

"Iraq will have failed to take the final opportunity... unless on or before March 17, 2003, the Council concludes that Iraq has demonstrated full, unconditional, immediate and active cooperation with its disarmament obligations", the amended draft introduced by Britain says.

"We cannot accept an ultimatum as long as inspectors are reporting cooperation. France will not allow a resolution to pass that authorises the automatic use of force", the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin said, a theme he is said to have persisted with in the three hours of the closed door Council meeting on Friday evening. Britain came out strongly in support of the United States on Friday.

At one point during his presentation, the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, looked at the French Foreign Minister and said, "Dominique said the choice before us was disarmament by peace or disarmament by war. Dominique, that is a false choice". Basically, the position has remained unchanged for the Bush administration in terms of support for its position on Iraq — only Britain, Spain and Bulgaria are on its side.

**Final phase of diplomacy on**

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 8. Foreign Ministers who had come for the critical United Nations Security Council session on Friday have started heading home after extensive consultations; and the United States has made it known that a vote on the amended second resolution could come anytime from Tuesday onward. And with this notice the hectic last minute lobbying has started in several capitals.

In fact France, at the meeting of the Council on Friday, suggested a Summit of Heads of State to discuss this Iraqi crisis — this was immediately brushed aside by the United States. There are many proposals doing the rounds as an alternative to war in West Asia. One in particular — for which no one has yet taken 'credit' for — is an offer of amnesty to all Iraqi officials who cooperate with inspectors.

The broader idea of this 'paper' is to en-

courage Iraqis to revolt. This paper will emerge as a full fledged alternative if there is backing, especially from the Arab and other Islamic nations.

The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, is likely to be rushing to Angola, Cameroon and Guinea in the hopes of persuading these three African nations to look at the amended second resolution from the French point of view.

The three are part of the "swinging six" which are also actively sought by the U.S. and Britain. In Washington senior members of the administration starting with the President, George W Bush, have started working the telephones and officials there are not ruling out visits overseas in the next few days to round up support.

The bottom line is that final phase of diplomacy is on. Mr. Bush has put nations sitting on the fence at the Security Council in an extremely difficult position.

But Washington is keen on placing on

record where nations stood when it came to the final showdown with Iraq.

Those nations had fervently hoped that the major powers would have the issue sorted out amongst themselves.

But it is crunch time and the political and economic stakes are very high to these non-permanent members.

The Bush administration was simply not willing to let the "fence sitters" have it both ways. The definite impression as of Saturday morning is that the U.S. does not have nine votes in the Council, forgetting for a minute about vetoes.

The Bush administration will not care if Russia, France and China veto the amended second resolution provided it has the backing of nine nations. Washington will then turn around and say a "majority" of Council members supported its position.

Defending the legality of military action, after a resolution has been vetoed is a different matter, at least for now.

**Britain defends ultimatum**

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 8. Despite continuing opposition from key players on the U.N. Security Council, the British Government today maintained that it was confident of getting enough support for a second resolution calling for Iraq to disarm by March 17 or face military action.

A nervous Downing Street rushed to defend the British and U.S. ultimatum to Iraq, even as anti-war MPs reacted with fury saying that it amounted to "pulling the trigger" without giving the U.N. weapons inspectors enough time to complete their work.

"We need some statesman-

ship from our Prime Minister to make sure (President) Bush does not go ahead with war on a predetermined timetable," a senior Labour MP and former Defence Minister, Peter Kilfoyle, said as pressure grew on the Government to seek a vote in Parliament before taking the country to war.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman flourished a list of questions about Iraq's "proscribed" weapons programme and said these had still not been answered. Iraq had still not accounted for stocks of anthrax, mustard gas and other chemical agents it was believed to have possessed. There was reported to be growing concern in

government circles over the political fallout of Mr. Blair's aggressively pro-U.S. line on Iraq which is completely divorced from public opinion, and the anti-war sentiment in his own party. The prospect of Mr. Blair plunging the country into a military conflict without a second U.N. resolution alarmed party managers as dissidents were quoted as saying that they would "move heaven and earth" to press for a vote in Parliament.

"I think the Prime Minister understands that his position is highly dependent on a successful outcome to the efforts to get a second resolution based on credible evidence," one former Labour Minister said.

**Breach of U.N. charter: Russia**

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, MARCH 8. Unilateral military action against Iraq would be a violation of the United Nations Charter fraught with serious international consequences, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, warned today. "If the United States launches unilateral military action against Iraq, this would be a breach of the U.N. Charter," Mr. Ivanov said upon return from New York where he attended a Security Council meeting on Iraq. "When the U.N. Charter is violated the Security Council must meet to discuss the situation and take appropriate decision."

The Russian Foreign Minister described the new U.S.-British draft resolution setting a March 17 deadline for Iraq to disarm as an "unjustified ultimatum," and said Russia considered its adoption "inexpedient." "Russia is strongly in favour of the (weapons) inspectors to continue their work and for all the necessary conditions to

be created for this," Mr. Ivanov said in an interview to Russian television. "Therefore we do not think it necessary to adopt any new resolutions at this point."

"The possibility of political settlement really exist," Mr. Ivanov said. "It would be wrong and dangerous therefore to ignore this, for the other option, the military one, is fraught not only with great human losses, but also with serious international consequences."

The Russian Foreign Minister drew attention to a "dangerous" shift in pro-war arguments from disarmament to a change of regime in Iraq. "This evolution of arguments is dangerous because it can destabilise and aggravate the situation, not only in Iraq and around it, but throughout the region," Mr. Ivanov said. "Such experiments are dangerous for the situation in the Persian Gulf, the Middle East and the Arab world as a whole is explosive in view of major outstanding problems, as well as latent and open conflicts in the region."

**Blix dossier indicts Saddam regime**

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 8. In a 173-page dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the chief U.N. weapons inspector, Hans Blix, says Baghdad may possess about 10,000 litres of anthrax, Scud missile warheads filled with deadly biological and chemical agents, and drones that far exceed the 150-km limit.

The report, obtained late last night by AP, traces the history of Iraq's weapons programmes and outlines the many areas where questions remain — many old but some new.

Mr. Blix told the Security Council earlier in the day that he planned to cull the document and compile a list of key remaining disarmament tasks by the end of March that Iraq must complete.

The table of contents reflects the scope of the unanswered questions: missile

technology, aerial bombs, spray devices and drones, mustard gas, sarin, chemical processing equipment, Botulinum toxin, ricin, genetic engineering and viral research — and the list goes on.

The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, described the document as "a shocking indictment of the record of Saddam Hussein's deception and deceit, but above all, of the danger which he poses to the region and to the world."

Britain and the United States, which are seeking Security Council approval for a war against Iraq, can find plenty of ammunition in the dossier to support their argument that Baghdad has failed to cooperate and fully disarm. But opponents of a rush to war counter that Iraq is starting to provide evidence, and therefore, U.N. inspections should continue. — AP

**Bush slaps sanctions on Mugabe, aides**

WASHINGTON, MARCH 8. The U.S. President, George W Bush, has imposed economic sanctions on the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, and 76 other high-ranking Government officials, accusing them of undermining democracy in the impoverished southern African country.

Following the lead of the European Union, Mr. Bush issued an executive order yesterday freezing their assets and barring Americans from engaging in any transactions or dealings with them. The sanctions take effect immediately.

"Over the course of more than two years, the Government of Zimbabwe has systematically undermined that nation's democratic institutions, employing violence, intimidation, and repressive means including legislation to stifle opposition to its rule," Mr. Bush said in the order. Mr. Mugabe has been under fire from the West over the alleged rigging of an election last year and the persecution of political foes, as well as the sei-

zure of white-owned farms. The U.S., the Commonwealth and the European Union have imposed travel, aid and economic sanctions on Zimbabwe.

The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has been particularly critical of Mr. Mugabe, spearheading opposition to the Zimbabwe Government in the E.U. In a statement, White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said the situation in Zimbabwe "endangers the southern African region" and threatens to undermine democratic reforms throughout the continent. The White House stressed that the sanctions were not aimed at the people of Zimbabwe, and that it was "working diligently" to ensure that adequate food supplies are made available to Zimbabweans in need.

The U.N. World Food Programme has said that while food aid helped to stave off the threat of starvation in the region, more than 7 million people face severe shortages in Zimbabwe. — Reuters

**Pakistan agonisingly weighs its options**

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 8. As Pakistan agonisingly weighs its options with regard to the second resolution on Iraq, the Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), alliance of six religious parties is all set for the second 'million march' tomorrow in Rawalpindi to protest against possible U.S. attack on Iraq.

The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, has been under tremendous pressure from within and without on the second resolution tabled by the U.K.-U.S. combine setting the deadline of March 17 to 'disarm' or face war. So far Islamabad has stuck to the middle path

and only time would tell whether it could resist pressure from Washington to vote in favour of the motion in the United Nations Security Council.

The dilemma faced by Pakistan on the subject was evident when Gen. Musharraf conceded in the course of a television interview that perhaps Islamabad would have been better off without a seat at the Security Council. Pakistan joined UNSC as a non-permanent member for a term of two years beginning January 1 this year.

Choice before Pakistan this time is not as straight as it was when the U.S. President, George W. Bush, asked it to decide whether it was 'with or against' America

before the military operations in October 2001. There has been groundswell of anti-American sentiment since Gen. Musharraf made the choice then though media and civil society supported him on the occasion. This time around there is hardly any voice in favour of the Americans.

In his interaction with Mr. Bush, on telephone and other senior functionaries of the Bush Administration, Gen. Musharraf has been harping on the theme that war against Iraq at this juncture could lead to serious problems in the Muslim world in general and Pakistan in particular. He has been emphasising the need for exhausting all

diplomatic options and the U.N. route.

Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.N., Munir Akram, in his presentation in New York on Friday said Islamabad was against any deadline that lead could lead to war with the Iraq. Implied in the statement was the suggestion that Pakistan would find it difficult to support the second resolution even in the amended form. "Pakistan believes that an agreed process must be evolved through consultation among Council members and U.N. inspectors. The best assurance in success and security in Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) disarmament peacefully is the unity of the Security Council", he said.

**Keep off, Kurds tell Turkey**

BRUSSELS (BELGIUM), MARCH 8. Hundreds of Kurdish demonstrators began assembling outside European Union headquarters on Saturday to demand Turkey keep its troops out of northern Iraq.

The protesters fear a Turkish incursion would overturn the de facto autonomy exercised by Kurds in northern Iraq since the 1991 Gulf War. "We call upon the E.U. to support the democratic development in Iraqi Kurdistan," said a statement from the organisers. — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2003



# Blix gives clean chit to Iraq

Press Trust of India

UNHQ, March 7. — In the face of stepped up belligerence of US President Mr George W Bush towards Iraq, chief UN arms inspector Mr Hans Blix today boasted anti-war efforts saying Baghdad carried out substantial disarmament and there was no proof of it hiding banned weapons in mobile laboratories.

He said there was also no evidence of underground chemical or biological production or storage facilities in Iraq.

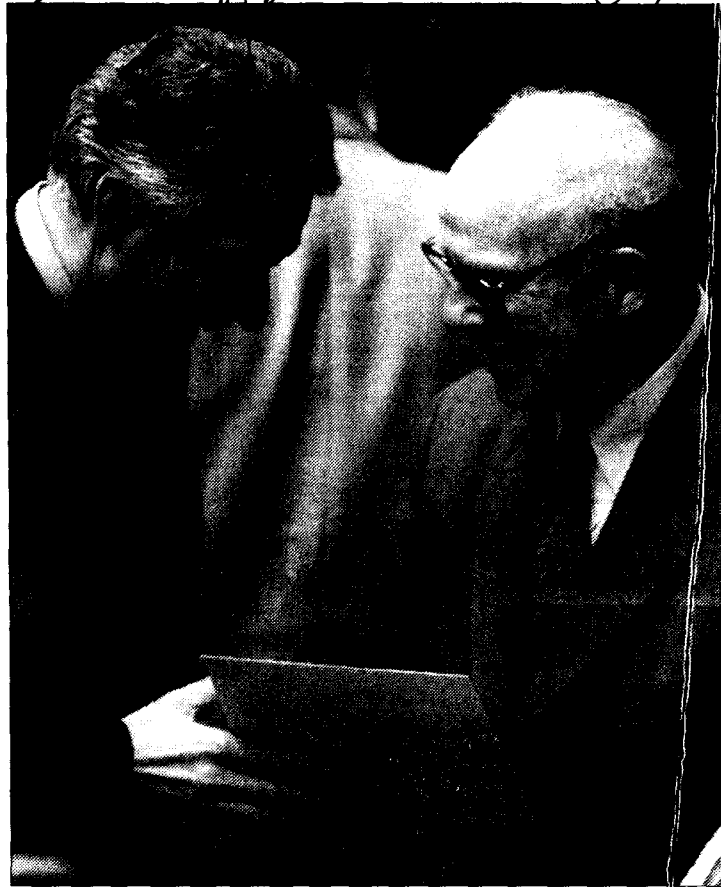
"Intelligence authorities have claimed that weapons of mass destruction are moved around in Iraq by trucks, in particular that they are mobile productions for biological weapons." "But inspectors have looked into several mobile facilities as well as large containers with seed-processing equipment, but no evidence of proscribed activities have so far been found," he said.

Describing the destruction of 34 Al-Samoud 2 missiles as a "positive development", he said this constituted a "substantial measure of disarmament." "We are not watching the destruction of toothpicks.

Lethal weapons are being destroyed," he said, adding Iraq is now providing inspectors with pro-active cooperation.

However, Mr Blix in his latest report to the UN Security Council also called for a "sober judgment" of the value of Iraq's cooperation with weapons inspectors.

UN atomic energy chief Mohamed ElBaradei said the



French foreign minister Mr Dominique de Villepin (left) laughs as he is given an envelope by chief UN weapons inspector Mr Hans Blix prior to a meeting on Iraq of the UNSC in New York on Friday. — AFP

inspections have revealed no sign of any prohibited nuclear activity at any inspected site in Iraq and no sign that Baghdad had imported any uranium since 1990.

Mr Blix said that a complete verification of Iraq's compliance with disarmament requirements would take months, not years.

He denied that there was any proof of US claims that Iraq had been concealing banned weapons in mobile laboratories to escape detection. Mr Blix said inspectors had discovered several mobile facilities as well as "large containers with seed-processing equipment."

## Colin Powell dismisses report

Press Trust of India

UNHQ, March 7. — US secretary of state Mr Colin Powell today dismissed as a "catalogue of non-cooperation" the UN chief weapons inspector Mr Hans Blix's report on Iraq, and demanded a vote on the second resolution on Iraq issue in "very near future".

Mr Powell told the UN Security Council that the "small steps" taken by Iraq can't be described as genuine initiatives as Baghdad's compliance was neither by its own will nor free. Mr Powell demanded a vote on the second resolution moved by the US and Britain "in the very near future".

## Germany backs peace

German foreign minister Mr Joschka Fischer said today that Iraq has made "important" progress in cooperating with arms inspections, demonstrating that a peaceful solution to the conflict was possible, adds AFP.

"In recent days cooperation has notably improved," Mr Fischer told the UN Security Council.

"This is important progress, it shows that it is a real alternative to war," he said.

8 MAR 2003

THE STATEMAN

# Blair to float compromise deal at UN

2/3  
14-15

## China opposes war on Iraq

Washington/New York,  
March 6

BRITAIN IS working behind the scenes for a compromise United Nations resolution as China joined France, Russia and Germany in opposing an early war against Iraq.

The British government, which expects to secure the backing of the US for the change, is to offer a reworked resolution that would give Iraq "a little more time" and set a deadline on which most of the UN Security Council could agree.

China on Thursday backed a statement by France, Russia and Germany vowing to block a UN resolution authorising war on Iraq, but the US said Baghdad had just days left to accept peaceful disarmament.

France, Russia and Germany said on Wednesday they would block the US-British draft resolution giving the go-ahead for war to disarm Iraq and oust President Saddam Hussein.

"China's position on Iraq is consistent with their joint statement," Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said on Thursday. "China endorses and supports their joint statement."

Like Russia and France, he sidestepped a direct answer to whether China would veto the resolution should the US secure the nine votes needed to pass.

An extra few weeks would push war back to the end of the month. Such a delay may be acceptable to the US, because its military timetable has been thrown into disarray by Turkish intransigence over troop movements.

A US official said: "We may add or subtract to the resolution but we will not do anything that detracts from

the substance of the resolution." The thrust of the resolution is to authorise war against Iraq.

The newfound willingness to compromise amounts to an admission that Britain and the US cannot win a majority in the Security Council for the resolution in its present form. It states that the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, had had his "final opportunity" to disarm.

When the resolution was tabled last week, Britain and the US indicated that it was set in stone and the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said he expected a vote on the resolution "in short order".

But only Britain, the US, Spain and Bulgaria support the resolution, and arm-twisting has so far failed to move the other 11 Security Council members. France, Germany and Russia, after a hastily convened meeting in Paris on Wednesday, issued a joint statement signalling that they will block the resolution.

### Iraq destroys 6 missiles

Iraq said on Thursday it had scrapped six more al-Samoud 2 missiles at a military base near Baghdad.

"Six al-Samoud 2 missiles have been destroyed on Thursday," an Iraqi official told reporters. He said the destruction took place at the Taji air base, 25 miles north of Baghdad.

Hiro Ueki, spokesman for UN inspectors in Baghdad, said a group of inspectors was overseeing the work. Baghdad has destroyed 34 out of some 120 missiles since a deadline last Saturday imposed by chief UN inspector Hans Blix.

Agencies

# Iraq cooperating a lot more: Blix

**UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 6.** In an upbeat preview of his report on Iraq, the chief United Nations weapons inspector, Hans Blix, has said that Baghdad is now cooperating "a great deal more" in providing evidence about its weapons programmes and he would welcome more time for inspections. But with 2,30,000 U.S. troops in the region preparing for a possible war against Iraq, Dr. Blix told a news conference on Wednesday that he had made contingency plans to evacuate the inspectors within 48 hours if necessary.

In a press conference, he said it was only under intense military pressure in the last month or so that Iraq had become "active, even proactive" in addressing disarmament issues. He expressed the hope that it was not too late to avoid war.

"There is a great deal more of cooperation now. The threat certainly has brought it there. I hope it's not too late," he said.

"If war breaks out, of course, I think that it is a serious failure for the approach through inspection to disarmament," he said. "The shadow falls upon us, upon the U.N. system and the Security Council, and divisions may follow from this."

Dr. Blix sidestepped a question on whether the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, still posed a danger to the world because of his weapons of mass destruction — an issue for some council members. But he said "everyone agrees that (the Iraqis) have a much, much smaller ... capability than they had in 1991" when they were routed from Kuwait by a U.S.-led coalition force.

With the Security Council bitterly divided, Britain was exploring the idea of giving Mr. Hussein a short deadline to completely disarm as a possible compromise to get the council to agree to a resolution authorising a war against Iraq, council diplomats said on Wednesday. Dr. Blix said he would welcome the continuation of inspections for some "more months". But he reiterated that he would not ask the council to let his teams continue their work because the council should decide this. — AP

**Powell says 'no' — Page 14**

W. Arab  
Qatar Crisis

# Anti-war trio to block US decree

(1-3)  
673

MARK JOHN AND  
GHAI DA GHANTOUS

Paris/Doha, March 5 (Reuters): France, Germany and Russia teamed up today to block a US-British draft resolution for a war to disarm Iraq, saying they will not allow it to be passed in the UN Security Council.

Flanked by his counterparts from Russia and Germany, French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin said: "We will not allow the passage of a planned resolution which would authorise the use of force."

The three ministers held a strategy session in Paris a day after the US said it was confident of securing the nine votes needed at the 15-member Security Council to pass the resolution.

US President George W. Bush seemed undeterred by the trio and pressed on with consulting allies and leaders about the UN draft resolution, which could be pushed to a vote next week.

"He (Bush) is confident in the end of the ultimate outcome here," said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer.

The US and Britain have more than 250,000 troops poised in the Gulf region along with dozens of warships and 600 strike aircraft for a possible military campaign to disarm Iraq and oust President Saddam Hussein.

Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov underscored the split in the five permanent members of the Council, saying China was also on the side of those who want to slow any rush to war. Each permanent member — the US, Britain, France, China and Russia — can veto a resolution. Both Paris and Moscow have left that option open.



French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin (centre) flanked by his Russian and German counterparts, Igor Ivanov (left) and Joschka Fischer, in Paris on Wednesday. (Reuters)

Asked whether France was ready to use its veto, Villepin said: "We are totally on the same line as Russia." Ivanov said in London yesterday that Moscow would not abstain in a vote on Iraq and could use its veto.

France, Germany and Russia have argued persistently that UN weapons inspectors, who returned to Iraq in November after a four-year hiatus, should be given more time.

UN arms inspectors have decried Iraq's lack of cooperation in disarming but noted a major development last week when Baghdad began destroying al Samoud 2 missiles.

The missiles were deemed illegal for breaching UN range limits. Iraq destroyed nine more today, bringing to 28 the number scrapped. Baghdad had about 120 of the missiles, with about 50 deployed.

The Iraq crisis has split the international community and among the most divided have been the Arabs. Bitter enmity between Iraq and Kuwait erupted in a slanging match today at an

Islamic summit in Qatar meant to unite the voice of the world's one billion Muslims against war.

Saddam's right-hand man, Izzat Ibrahim, denounced the representative of US-ally Kuwait as a "monkey" and a "traitor" and the closing statement by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference failed to even mention the Iraq crisis.



# Russia steps up efforts to avert war

By Vladimir Radyuhin

**MOSCOW, MARCH 4.** Russia is mounting efforts to delay, if not avert the war against Iraq, encouraged by the Turkish Parliament's refusal to allow American troops on its territory.

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, today described the Turkish vote as "the most important development in the past week."

The decision "may have come as a surprise to somebody, but not to Russia," Mr. Putin said in what could be a veiled reference to Russian diplomatic efforts.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, went to London on Tuesday to persuade the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, not to force a vote on the tough U.S.-British resolution on March 7, when the Security Council meets to debate the first U.N. inspectors' report on Iraq.

Ahead of the trip, Mr. Ivanov discussed the crisis with his counterparts in Germany and France, Russia's allies in the anti-war coalition.

The Foreign Ministers of the three countries "reiterated their unwavering support for resolv-

ing the crisis through politico-diplomatic methods," said the Russian Foreign Ministry.

If action cannot be prevented, Moscow hopes that growing international opposition to war against Iraq will at least discourage Washington from seeking a Security Council vote on its resolution giving green light to military action.

"We believe that bringing the British-American draft resolution to a vote in the current situation is increasingly unfounded and unjustifiable," said the Russian Deputy For-

eign Minister, Yuri Fedotov, describing the draft as "out of touch with the situation on the ground and the progress in fulfilling the Security Council resolutions on Iraq."

By persuading Washington to withdraw its war resolution from the Security Council, Moscow would avoid having to use its veto right and thereby save its anti-terror partnership with the U.S.

"The veto power ... is to be used in the most extreme situations. We hope that such an occurrence will not arrive," the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister was quoted as saying today.

THE HINDU

13 MAR 2003

5 MAR 2003

110-14 IRAQ / FOUR MORE AL SAMOUD MISSILES DESTROYED

# Bush despot of the century: Saddam

By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA, MARCH 4.** Iraq on Tuesday mixed defiance with cooperation, with its President, Saddam Hussein calling the U.S. President, George W. Bush, as the despot of the century, but at the same time persisting with the destruction of its Al Samoud missiles as prescribed by the United Nations.

In a prepared text read over Iraqi television to mark the Islamic new year, Mr. Hussein in an apparent reference to Mr. Bush, said, "The despot imagines that he is like God, capable of controlling the universe and doing whatever he wishes, but the devil has pushed him into the abyss of blasphemy."

"The tyrant", Mr. Hussein added, "thinks that he is capable of enslaving people and besieging their freedom, their decisions and their legitimate choices." But, "it is without doubt that the faithful will be victorious against aggression and against all things, against those who are faithful."

Mr. Hussein made these observations even as the U.S. deployed 200,000 forces in the Persian Gulf for a possible attack against Iraq.

Mr. Hussein's assertions, however, appeared to have factored in the setback to U.S. war plans on account of Turkey's decision not to allow its territory as base for

stationing and sending U.S. forces into northern Iraq. Turkey's move can delay the onset of the war, the timetable for which can now shift to April, observers say.

## Iran recipe to end crisis

**TEHERAN, MARCH 4.** Iran called on Tuesday for U.N.-supervised elections in neighbouring Iraq and urged the divided Iraqi opposition to reconcile with the President, Saddam Hussein, as part of a plan aimed at averting a U.S.-led war on Iraq.

The Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi, announced the plan in Teheran. "We want a referendum to be held in Iraq and the Iraqi opposition (to) reconcile with the current regime in that country under the supervision of the U.N.," Mr. Kharrazi said.

"The Iraqi Government should accept this plan," Mr. Kharrazi said. "We believe this is the only way for a peaceful change of Government in Iraq, which will prevent the break-out of a war in the region". — AP

Despite Mr. Hussein's defiance, the Iraqi authorities destroyed four more banned Al Samoud missiles. Baghdad on Monday, however, warned that it would stop further

destruction of these weapons in case it was confronted with a U.S. military attack.

Analysts here see Mr. Hussein's assertions as a virtual veto of what is seen as a U.S.-backed proposal circulating among a section of the Islamic countries seeking his consent to go into voluntary exile and the handing over of the Iraqi administration to the United Nations.

The six Persian Gulf States are expected to push the exile proposal, aimed at achieving "regime change" in Baghdad peacefully, before the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference that is currently meeting in Doha to discuss the situation in Iraq.

In related developments, seeking to override Turkey's decision on positioning U.S. forces, Washington is taking a hard look at pushing its troops into northern Iraq via Jordan. By opening a western front through Jordan, the U.S. is keen to enhance Israel's security by ensuring that Iraq does not fix missile launchers on the western side as that would bring Israel within its striking range. Besides, the presence of a western front can help in drawing Iraqi forces away from the heavily defended Baghdad-Tikrit complex.

The main thrust of a U.S.-led attack is likely to come through Kuwait, with an immediate focus on seizing the Iraqi southern oil fields around Basra.

THE HINDU

5 MAR 2003

IRAQ / TURKISH HOUSE REJECTS U.S. DEPLOYMENT

# Focus shifts to biological weapons

By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA, MARCH 2.** After starting the destruction of its Al Samoud missiles, Iraq, in a bid to avert war, began discussions on Sunday with the U.N. weapons inspectors for accounting its stocks of biological weapons, which it claims it has destroyed. Discussions in Baghdad revolved around the VX and an anthrax stock, which Iraq claims it had previously held but has subsequently destroyed.

The U.N. spokesman, Hiro Ueki, said earlier that Sunday's meeting would be "technical" where Iraq's proposal for the "quantitative verification" of VX and anthrax that it had unilaterally destroyed would be discussed.

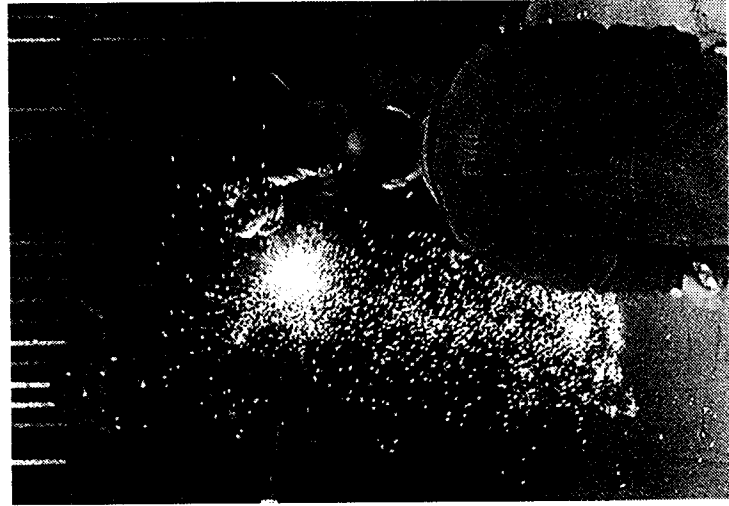
The U.N. inspectors said Iraq should either destroy its mass destruction weapons under international supervision or account for those weapons it claimed to have already eliminated on its own.

The recent Iraqi decisions are likely to strengthen the "peace camp" led by France, Russia and Germany as they illustrate that the U.N. inspections to disarm Iraq peacefully are working. These countries have pointed out that it was not necessary to use military force if the inspections were succeeding.

The chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix's comment on Saturday that Iraq's decision to destroy the missiles was a "significant piece of real disarmament" is also likely to buttress the standing of the anti-war camp.

Aware that time was running out and it had to quickly generate more support against war, Iraq on Saturday allowed the U.N. inspectors to conduct private interviews, without the presence of Iraqi "minders" or tape recorders, with a biological warfare scientist and a missile specialist.

In a major blow to the U.S. war plans to open a second "northern front" against Iraq, Turkish Parliament rejected a motion that would have allowed the U.S. forces to assemble and transit through Turkey into northern Iraq for an attack. The U.S. was banking on a positive Turkish decision, as it would have allowed its forces to quickly establish military control over Iraq's northern oil fields around Mosul and Kirkuk. But confronted by the unexpected Turkish decision, the U.S. military planners would now have to look at contingency plans, mainly by airlifting personnel directly into northern Iraq. Otherwise, the U.S. might have to attack only from its southern



**An Iraqi welder destroys a casting chamber of the banned Al Samoud 2 missiles in Rasheed, south of Baghdad, on Sunday.** — Reuters

launch pad in Kuwait and along the Jordanian-Iraqi border in the west. While imparting momentum to its disarmament efforts, Baghdad, over the past

week, has been firm in rejecting moves to accomplish "regime change" — the second U.S. core military objective — by dismissing the option opened by the United Arab Emirates that the Iraqi leadership could choose to go exile.

The proposal to make the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, leave the country peacefully was made at the Arab summit in Cairo.

However, this effort to accomplish peaceful "regime change" appears to have fizzled out, with the Iraqi Foreign Minister, U.S.-inspired and the Arab League declining to consider this proposal any further.

2023 MAR 3

3 MAR 2003

# Iraq says it has destroyed four Al-Samoud 2 missiles

BAGHDAD, MARCH 1. An Iraqi official said his country destroyed four Al-Samoud 2 missiles today, as ordered by the United Nations weapons inspectors, but a spokesman for the inspectors. The Iraqi official on condition of anonymity said the destruction occurred at 1 p.m. local time (0650 GST) near here at the Al-Taji area which has several factories involved in missile production.

Odai al-Taie, head of the Information Department at Iraq's Information Ministry, said a team of U.N. weapons inspectors also would seize a mould used to make solid fuel at the Al-Rasheed Company "in order to prepare it for destruction tomorrow".

A top U.N. weapons inspector, however, said the first Al-Samoud missile was "successfully destroyed" today in line with a deadline set by the United Nations.

"One missile was successfully destroyed. The destruction of the three other missiles is still going on. Hopefully all four would be destroyed later today," Dimitri Perricos, who heads the U.N. inspectors team told reporters.

Hiro Ueki, spokesman for the U.N.

inspectors, said the destruction of the proscribed missiles, components and related systems had begun at Taji military base, 40 km north of Baghdad.

"The U.N. inspectors supervised the work."

The Chief U.N. weapons inspector, Hans Blix, ordered the destruction of the finned, white rockets and all their components, fuel and design systems because tests indicated that some fly farther than allowed. He praised the Iraqi decision to comply with his order: "It is a very significant piece of real disarmament."

Earlier in the day, Mr. Perricos met the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's scientific adviser, Lt.Gen. Amer al-Saadi, to finalise details of the destruction.

The two sides discussed technical points and "agreed on a schedule and a work plan for the coming days". They also agreed on "the sites of destruction, the manner of destruction and the priorities".

Mr. Ueki said the inspectors had resumed interviews with Iraqi scientists on Friday, the first such interview since February 7, and that this was "positive news". — AP, Reuters

Not enough, says U.S.: Page 14



Turkey House rejects motion on deployment of US troops

# Iraq destroys four missiles

NADIM LADKI

Baghdad, March 1 (Reuters): Iraq started destroying its banned al Samoud missiles today under the gaze of UN inspectors, complicating an American push to win international support to go to war against Baghdad for failing to disarm.

US preparations for war suffered a further setback — possibly temporary — when Turkey's parliament first passed but then rejected a long-awaited motion allowing the deployment of 62,000 US troops in Turkey for a possible invasion of Iraq.

Four missiles with a range exceeding the 150-km limit set in UN resolutions were crushed under the supervision of UN inspectors today. "I can confirm now that four al Samoud missiles have been destroyed," a UN spokesman said.

Iraq is thought to have produced around 100 al Samoud 2 missiles, deploying about 50 in military bases around Baghdad.

Iraqi compliance had been seen as crucial before Blix addresses the Security Council late next week — after which the US and Britain want to bring to a vote a draft resolution that lays the ground for war.

The move to start scrapping Iraq's most advanced surface-to-surface missile was hailed as a "significant piece of real disarmament" by chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, but was dismissed by Washington as part of a "game of deception".

In Ankara, the parliamentary resolution, which would also have cleared the way for Turkey to send its troops to Iraq



A soldier from the 101st Airborne Division kisses an eagle at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, just before boarding a plane for operations in the Gulf region. (Reuters)

in any war, was narrowly rejected after hours of debate on an issue which has generated widespread opposition in Turkey.

The motion, approved by a simple majority but not the overall majority of MPs present, would have enabled the US to station troops in Turkey to establish a "northern front" which experts say would shorten any war.

Ankara fears the economic and political impact of any war in Iraq, but now risks losing massive US financial aid and any say in the future of northern Iraq, where it has key interests.

The government may try to put a similar motion to the as-

sembly again and gather the few extra votes it needs.

The pressure on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein came from an unexpected source today in the form of the United Arab Emirates, which became the first Arab state to call officially on him and his aides to go into exile.

Washington has said such a solution, proposed by the UAE at an Arab summit in Egypt, could spare the region another war. But Saddam said this week he would rather die than go into exile. Iraq's UN ambassador Mohammed Aldouri, asked on CNN today if it was likely Saddam

would step down, replied: "No, not at all."

Separately at the summit, Arab League chief Amr Moussa said member states opposed an attack on Iraq as a threat to Arab national security, and said their countries would not participate in any war. The mood in the region at street level was also strongly against US action.

In one of the biggest anti-war protests in West Asia, more than 300,000 Yemenis took to the streets denouncing the US, its main ally Britain and Israel as an "axis of evil" and urging Arab leaders to deny Washington help in a war.

In Turkey around 20,000 protesters took to the streets of Ankara urging parliament to reject Washington's request to use the country as a launchpad for an attack. The Vatican, which does not believe an attack on Iraq could be considered a "just war", said Pope John Paul would send a senior cardinal to Washington in the next few days on a personal peace mission.

Baghdad, which denies it has any weapons of mass destruction, had sent a letter on Thursday to Blix, saying it would obey his order to dismantle the banned ballistic missiles.

Hiro Ueki, the spokesman for the UN inspectors, said the destruction of the proscribed al-Samoud 2 missiles, components and related systems was taking place at the Taji military base, some 40 km north of Baghdad.

Uday al-Taei, a senior official of the Iraqi information ministry, said a "timetable and action plan" had been agreed for the coming days.

2 MAR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

# Iraq to destroy missiles, US unmoved

S. Rajagopalan  
Washington, February 28

IRAQ APPEARS to have thrown a spanner in the American works for the time being by "agreeing in principle" to destroy its Al Samoud 2 missiles as mandated by the UN weapons inspectors. However, instead of beginning the destruction by March 1, it has asked for a UN team to "establish a framework and timetable".

The US, alive to the possibility of an Iraqi manoeuvre, dismissed the move as inconsequential.

President Bush said "the rockets are just the tip of the iceberg" and nothing short of a complete disarmament will do. US officials said they will press ahead with the new resolution to clear the decks for military action.

The Iraqi willingness was conveyed to chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix just two days ahead of the deadline he had set for commencement of the destruction process.

In its letter, Baghdad spoke of its "acceptance in principle of your request despite our belief that the decision to destroy was unjust". It said the timing of Blix's request "seems to us to be one with political aims".

The UN weapons inspections office indicated that Iraq could

**AL SAMOUD-2**  
U.N. inspectors will hold technical talks with Iraq about its al-Samoud-2 missile on Saturday morning, after which the destruction of the weapons might begin

SPECIFICATION	
Length	7.5m
Diameter	500mm
Missile range	190km
U.N. range limit	150km
Payload	300kg
Propellant	Liquid
Inventory	100

**SIZE COMPARISON**  
Al-Samoud-2 missile  
Iraqi al Hussein Scud missile  
Human

Source: Jane's Information Group



An Iraqi man checks his AK-47 rifle in Baghdad on Friday.

not be playing for time for long as Blix's deputy, Dimitrios Pericos, was already in Baghdad and could provide the necessary clarifications for starting the destruction measures.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said the Iraqi response on the missiles issue "doesn't change our view of the situation in the

slightest". These missiles were prohibited and should have been destroyed long ago. "They (the Iraqis) have been stringing out till the very last minute".

Analysts, however, believe that a positive Iraqi response on the missiles issue will strength-

en the bid by France and Germany to extend the weapons inspections exercise by another four months. The 15-member Security Council held an inconclusive and a stormy meeting on Thursday on the parallel proposals of US, Britain and Spain

on the hand and of France and Germany on the other.

Angola, Mexico and Pakistan showed signs of buckling when each of their governments issued statements indicating a softening of their previous opposition to the war option.

## 3 cops killed in Karachi US consulate attack

Karachi, February 28

A LONE gunman shot dead three policemen and injured seven others guarding the US consulate in Karachi on Friday, in the second deadly strike outside the US mission here in eight months.

The shooting happened at 1.45 pm (2.15 pm IST) when a man, carrying his own pistol, grabbed a submachine gun from one of the police guards and sprayed the rest of the guards with bullets, according to a police officer who witnessed the attack.

"One policeman from the picket went across the road and the assailant followed him. The two apparently had a scuffle and the assailant shot the policeman and then grabbed his submachine gun," the officer said. "He opened indiscriminate fire at the rest of the policemen in the picket from across the road."

The attack comes amid a swelling tide of anti-American sentiment in Pakistan as a US-led war against Iraq appears more likely. The police believed the attacker targeted the guards.

"The policemen were hate targets because they were protecting the Americans," an intelligence officer said. Sindh province police chief Syed Kamal Shah said he believed the guards were hit "as no official of the US consulate was outside the consulate at that time".

A spokesman for the US embassy in Islamabad said no consulate personnel were injured.

Shah said the suspected attacker had been arrested. He appeared to be an Afghan national. US consulate-general John Baum told Shah a consulate security camera had filmed a man fleeing the scene after the attack.

The police post was one of three set up around the downtown consulate building to provide it with special protection.

## Sharon begins second term

Jerusalem, February 28

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon began a second term on Friday at the head of a hawkish coalition that includes fierce opponents of a Palestinian state and staunch supporters of Jewish settlement on occupied land.

Presenting his government to Parliament a day after President George W Bush said he would press for an Israeli-Palestinian accord after any war in Iraq, Sharon made clear Israel would not rush into peacemaking.

The Palestinian Authority predicted the new coalition government would try to undermine attempts by an international Quartet of mediators — the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia — to push their "roadmap" for peace.

In a speech, Sharon repeated his position that Palestinians waging a 29-month-old uprising for statehood must stop "incitement and terror" and implement deep democratic reforms before any peace negotiations can resume.

Reuters

## N Korea deepens nuke crisis

Seoul, February 28

NORTH KOREA, which is reported to have fired up a key nuclear reactor, now looks set to raise tensions further by preparing to start reprocessing plutonium and test a ballistic missile, officials and reports said on Friday.

As South Korea's new government expressed worries about suspect activity at the Yongbyon reactor, reports from Tokyo and Washington indicated the North might be moving

to cross what experts call critical "red lines" in the nuclear standoff.

In Washington, US officials and congressional sources said on Thursday North Korea was continuing to prepare a spent fuel reprocessing plant and could have it operating as a source of weapons-grade plutonium within a month.

Pyongyang's apparent determination to revive a fully operational nuclear arms programme is a huge headache for the Bush administration, which

is on the verge of war with Iraq and has tried to avert a confrontation with North Korea.

Although the diplomatic tensions go unnoticed on the streets of South Korea, the nuclear developments are likely to increase the drumbeat of calls from Seoul, Beijing and Moscow for the United States to talk directly to North Korea.

Washington has resisted this in favour of multilateral diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang.

Reuters

# Stung Blair renews offensive on Iraq

## No decision by Iraq to disarm, says Blix

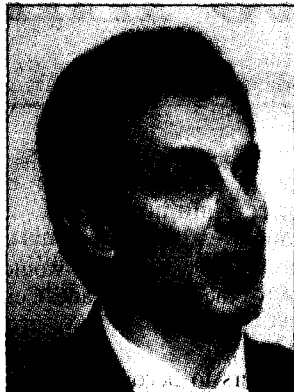
Associated Press

LONDON, Feb. 27. — Mr Tony Blair resumed the diplomatic offensive for disarming Iraq today after suffering a revolt within his party about his hardline policy.

The British Prime Minister was flying to Spain today to meet Prime Minister Mr Jose Maria Aznar, whose government has joined with Britain and the USA in proposing a second Security Council resolution declaring that Saddam Hussein has failed to meet demands for disposing of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Aznar was in Paris yesterday but failed to budge President Jacques Chirac from his opposition to a second resolution which could pave the way for war within weeks.

"We are opposed to all new resolutions," said Mr Chirac, who is calling for UN weapons inspectors to be given four more months.



Mr Tony Blair

On Wednesday, 122 lawmakers from Mr Blair's Labour Party voted for a motion which called the case for war "unproven". In all, 199 lawmakers supported the amendment, though the government mustered 393 votes to easily defeat it.

The revolt in the party was the largest since Mr Blair assumed power in 1997, and reflected deep divisions within Labour and the country at large over the Iraq crisis.

"There is no question that

as a result of this we will change policy," said foreign office minister Mr Mike O'Brien. "We are still in the business of trying to resolve this peacefully by putting pressure on Saddam."

In a TV appearance yesterday, Mr Blair acknowledged criticism of his policy from church leaders, including Pope John Paul II.

"I don't pretend to have a monopoly of wisdom, and these situations are the most difficult any Prime Minister takes, but in the end the only thing you can do is do what you believe to be right," Mr Blair told members of the audience who participated in the programme.

Under Britain's constitution, Mr Blair doesn't need Parliament's backing to go to war, but the vote does expose the Prime Minister's vulnerability within his party. Mr Blair's spokesman said today that the government "will hear people's views", but the PM would not change his position.

should have been deported. If he had been an American, he would have been home by now."

According to Tuladhar, people in Japan who do not know Mainali personally but still feel he has been dealt an injustice, have formed a society to take up his case. The Justice for Govind organisation is meeting the legal expenses and trying to petition the government into releasing Mainali, who is married and has a child.

Press Trust of India

UNHQ, Feb. 27. — In a remark that could give more ammunition to the US case for a war on Iraq, UN chief weapons inspector Mr Hans Blix has said Baghdad still has not made a "fundamental decision" to disarm.

Hours before he submitted a 16-page report on Iraqi cooperation to Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan yesterday, Mr Blix said a breakthrough in full cooperation by Iraq is still lacking. "I do not think I can say there is evidence of a fundamental decision to disarm, but there is evidence of increased activity," he said.

Welcoming Iraq's recent letters that had new information about its weapons programmes, Mr Blix, however, said they did not represent "full cooperation or a breakthrough". The Al Samoud 2 missile Iraq was asked to destroy "is a very important matter because there is a programme that involves a lot of hardware... so a positive response to that is an important thing, and I hope we will have it in time," Mr Blix said.

Diplomats noted a distinct change in the tone of Mr Blix since he presented his last report on 14 February.

His new report is bound to be on the lines of his remarks to the press and provide ammunition to the USA and its allies now seeking authorisation of military action against Iraq.

2 8 FEB 2003

THE STATESMAN

# US links war to W Asia peace and democracy

Washington/Jerusalem,  
February 27

PRESIDENT BUSH on Wednesday night promised a new US effort to broker an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

He gave a "personal commitment" to implementing a "road map" to peace and said Saddam's fall would provide an opportunity for peace.

The speech was designed to soothe growing anger in the Arab world over impending military action against Iraq. It also represented a personal favour to Tony Blair, who has long been urging Washington to give a higher priority to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, the address, to fellow conservatives in a Washington hotel, provided few new details of the "road map" Bush had in mind.

He reiterated that a new Palestinian state "must be a reformed and peaceful state that abandons for ever the use of terror".

He also repeated the demand he made last year for Israel to stop building settlements on Palestinian territory. But on Wednesday, he softened the demand, implying it could be a gradual

process, dependent on Palestinian efforts towards ending terrorist attacks and violence in general.

"As progress is made towards peace, settlement activity in the occupied territories must end," he said at dinner held by the American Enterprise Institute, a rightwing think tank.

Bush painted an optimistic picture of a post-Saddam world, in which democracy would be given a boost across the West Asia.

"A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region," the President said. In particular, the demise of a terrorist sponsor, who sent money to families of suicide bombers, would clear the way for moderates.

In Israel, Ariel Sharon sacked his arch rival Benjamin Netanyahu, as foreign minister in a move apparently aimed at reassuring the US that the hawkish new government being sworn in on Thursday is serious about reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu refused the offer of the less important finance portfolio but later made it known he was prepared to reconsider if he



# Blix ammo for Bush

S. Rajagopalan  
Washington, February 27

TIME MAY be ticking away for Iraq as chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix made it a point to remind Baghdad on Wednesday that destruction of its Al Samoud 2 missiles, beginning March 1, will be a key test of its cooperation.

In remarks that could cause jitters to the Saddam Hussein regime, Blix said there was no proof that Iraq has taken a "fundamental decision" to disarm, though there was some evidence of "increased activity".

Recent Iraqi letters contained new information about its weapons programmes, but these did not represent "full cooperation or a breakthrough", Blix said ahead of submitting a quarterly report on Iraq to the UN secretary-general. He will make a presentation to the Security Council on March 7.

His reminder on the Al

## Baghdad response in two days

UN/Baghdad, Feb 27

IRAQ WILL respond to a UN order to destroy its al-Samoud missiles within two days, an Iraqi official said on Thursday ahead of Security Council talks on a draft resolution laying the groundwork for war against Iraq.

An Iraqi official, who declined to be named, said Baghdad was "seriously and genuinely" studying a UN request that it destroy missiles, which inspectors say exceed range

restrictions, and would reply in the form of a letter to the Security Council within two days.

The response came shortly before the Security Council was to open discussions on a US-British-Spanish draft resolution that said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had "failed" to meet disarmament demands.

It also came one day after chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix criticised Baghdad severely.

Reuters

Samoud missiles came even as Hussein has taken a public stand that Iraq does not have any banned missiles. The missiles in its possession are well within the range stipulated by the

United Nations, he insisted.

Blix, however, favoured continued weapons inspections. Noting that inspections resumed only last November after a four-year break, he quizzed: "Is it the

right time to close the door?" The Security Council is to discuss on Thursday the proposal by France and Germany to extend inspections by four months.

The US, however, is keeping up its offensive for early action. On Wednesday, it rejected even a more moderate proposal by Canada to give Iraq time till the end of March to complete the disarmament tasks set out by the UN inspectors.

## Pak to back US

Pakistan has signalled to the US its willingness to support the latter's new resolution on disarming Iraq, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on Thursday.

In a despatch from the UN headquarters, the paper quoted a senior Pakistani official as saying: "We are very good allies of the US and value our relationship and want to see that blossom. The issue of Iraq will not become a problem between us."

28 FEB 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Labour revolt on war stuns Blair

London, February 27

TONY BLAIR'S Iraqi war strategy was shaken to the core on Wednesday night when 121 Labour backbenchers defied a three-line whip to join a cross-party revolt and tell the Prime Minister that the case for military action against Saddam Hussein is not yet made.

The vote, which came at the end of a six-hour debate in the House of Commons, dramatically reshapes the debate for the three crucial weeks ahead.

The scale of the revolt, the biggest within a governing party for more than a century, saw Blair's plea for endorsement of his pro-UN approach to disarming the Iraqi regime rejected in favour of a "not yet" amendment by 198 rebels, including 121 Labour MPs, 52 Liberal Democrats, 13 Conservatives and 12 nationalists. The vote against the amendment was 393, with Iain Duncan Smith leading most Tory MPs into the Blairite lobby.

The vote "demonstrates there is no public support for a war. The Prime Minister has failed to convince the public or the party. It's time for him to think again", said the Leftwinger Jeremy Corbyn.

But satisfaction was not confined to rebels. "This is a really sophisticated vote. Tony now knows he has to go along the UN route, which he didn't know on his own. It needed the demonstrations and this vote and



REUTERS

Tony Blair leaves Parliament after Wednesday's debate.

it's what Britain should do," said a senior minister.

The scale of the rebellion undermines Blair's belief that he can send 40,000 British troops into action even if an "unreasonable veto" by France or Germany denies him the vital second UN resolution. He remains confident that he will get it.

The one consolation for Blair was that moderate rebels such as Chris Smith, whose amendment it was, said they could still be persuaded. "There may well be a time for military action ... but at the moment the timetable appears to be determined by the decisions of the US President," Smith, a former minister, told MPs.

The vote may help Blair slow down what critics regard as the Bush administration's "rush to war" before Hans Blix's weapons inspection team traces all Iraq's lethal arsenal.

The Guardian

# Countdown at UN; big powers split on Iraq

EVELYN LEOPOLD  
UNITED NATIONS, FEBRUARY 25

WITH the big powers split on action against Iraq, the US and Britain scrambled for UN votes on Tuesday as France, Russia and Germany sought to stymie a push towards war. The division became acute after US, London and Madrid sought UN Security Council authorisation for warfare by introducing a new draft resolution on Monday declaring that Iraq had squandered its "final opportunity" to disarm.

The new draft recalled Resolution 1441 warning Iraq of "serious consequences" if it failed to disclose and destroy weapons of mass destruction. But the resolution's operative paragraph was simple, saying the Security Council "decides that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity given it in Resolution 1441."

The action opened an intensive period of diplomacy. France and Germany came

out against the draft and a shift to a "logic of war", circulating a proposal that would extend UN inspections for four months. Russia backed the French proposal as did China, with some reservations.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said the resolution would provide Iraq with a window of about "two weeks or so". No vote is expected until after Chief arms inspector Hans Blix reports to the Council again, on March 7.

US President George W. Bush's National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, pledged the US would attempt to turn around war opponents France, Russia and China. "We, the British and Spanish and the others will make an all-out effort to talk to various parties about the logic of this resolution and hopefully to bring people around to vote for it," she said.

The US and Britain have an uphill struggle to get the nine minimum votes needed for adoption among the 15 council members and then dare France, Russia



**A royal marine during combat manoeuvres at Camp Gibraltar in the Kuwaiti desert on Monday. Reuters**

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON, FEB 25

**I**RAQI President Saddam Hussein has challenged US President George W. Bush to a live, international television debate about the Iraq crisis, CBS News reported on Monday. The Iraqi leader also made it clear that he would not accept demands to destroy missiles which the UN says have a range longer than permitted.

CBS News anchor Dan Rather said he had an exclusive three-hour interview with Saddam and that the Iraqi leader envisioned a debate with Bush along the lines of US presidential campaign debates. "I am ready to conduct a direct dialogue — a debate — with your President. I will say what I want and he will say what

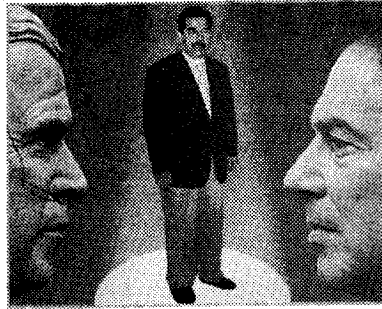


**Saddam wants live debate with Bush**

he wants," Saddam was quoted as saying. "This will be an opportunity for him, if he's committed to war, this will be an opportunity to convince the world."

"This is something proposed in earnest," Saddam said. "Out of my respect for the people of the US and my respect for the people of Iraq and the people of the world, I call for this because war is not a joke." "As leaders," Saddam said in his invitation to Bush, "Why don't we use this opportunity?"

Saddam also denied that any of his advanced Al-Samoud missiles are in violation of UN mandates, Rather said. "Iraq is allowed to prepare proper missiles and we are committed to that," Saddam said. "We do not have missiles that go beyond the proscribed range."



- ▶ How do you read the overwhelming global public opinion against war on Iraq?
- ▶ Does it reflect that some world leaders such as George W Bush & Tony Blair are adopting extreme positions?
- ▶ Is the message from people urging Bush to follow a non-military solution?

## MANI SHANKAR AIYAR CONGRESS MP LOK SABHA

NOT since the Suez misadventure in 1956 and the Vietnam imbroglio, has there been such an outpouring of world opinion as we are now witnessing.

The issue at hand is less Iraq than whether the same international law applies to all of us. Is the UN Charter only for the lesser breed? While the United States of America asks whether Iraq is complying with UN Security Council resolution 1441, the world is anxious to know whether the United States will comply with that resolution, which does not authorise the kind of unilateral declaration of war which the US is bent upon.

Iraq was co-operating even with intrusive inspections. Co-operation was withdrawn only when Bill Clinton bombed Iraq in 1998 to distract attention from Monica Lewinsky.

Four years on, there was no great world concern over the halt to inspections because there were no grounds for believing that an impoverished, sanctions-ridden Iraq could embark on a hostile weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme. Nor was there any political powder keg imminently in danger of being blown up by Iraq. The initial unilateralism lay entirely in US paranoia leading to the United States deciding as a matter of domestic politics to make an issue of a non-issue.

Their pitch was ruined when Iraq signalled Syria that it had no objection to the resumption of inspections, thus paving the way to the unanimous adoption of resolution 1441. The Americans tried to paint this as a diplomatic victory, but it was a wholly Pyrrhic victory.

For not only did it give Iraq the opportunity of flinging millions of words in Arabic at the Americans to establish they had no weapons of mass destruction programme, the UN inspectors led by Hans Blix have proved that they are not willing to constitute themselves into a kangaroo court. They are assiduous in sticking to their mandate and insisting that Iraq cooperate but they are not in the game of twisting the truth. As of now, no evidence has been unearthed to show that Iraq is in violation of any of its WMD commitments. In fact, both the groups of inspectors have asked for more time as evidence is insufficient to establish anything at all.

The world has watched with horror this

evolution of personal vengeance ("That man tried to kill my Dad") into state policy. It recalls the worst excesses of Italy in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) and of Japan in Manchukuo (now Manchuria) where these two aggressors flaunted the League of Nations in the way the United States over Iraq is readying to flaunt the United Nations. There is also revulsion at the naked pursuit of the quest for dominance. The freedom of all of us is in peril if Bush is not stopped before he does the equivalent of the occupation of the Rhineland.

The world believes that if it does not stop Bush in his tracks — and as of now there is little hope of stopping him — the consequence of the forthcoming US invasion and occupation of an Arab country will be an explosion in West Asia more deafening than the explosion which occurred after Suez.

The Arabs are no more the Bedouin of the desert that they once were. Educated at the best universities in the west, the US is going



to confront, as the British did in India, a sophisticated new Arab elite brought up on the values taught them at Ivy League colleges. And even as it was the children of Macaulay's Minute on Education who led the revolt against British imperialism, so is it that in the test tube of American universities are being hatched the forces which will deny the United States the *Pax Americana* it seeks to impose in the Middle East.

The single worst consequence, however, of the Bush team doing what they are planning to do is that it will give new respectability to terrorism. A million Osamas are being spawned. The innocent American citizen will be the worst hit. When a leading British right-wing politician said at an international conference (to peals of laughter from the largely right-wing audience) that a survey in Muslim Upper Nigeria had revealed that 80% of the male children born after 9/11 bore the name "Osama", I asked whether the gentlemen in question had estimated what percentage of Arab children born after the US invasion of Iraq would be named "Saddam".

All this, I think, explains the unique world-wide protest against the Iraq policy of the United States. It is a view backed by most governments, including NATO members France and Germany. It is, however, a voice that does not seem to penetrate the White House. In the few days remaining before the United States hits Iraq, it is unlikely that a new-found wisdom will dawn on Washington. It is George W Bush's March of Folly.

## I K GUJRAL FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

THE enormity of public opinion and protests against the imminent US-led attack on Iraq is, to my mind, quite unprecedented. Both the United States and Britain cannot but take cognisance of such sentiment expressed across the world. Anti-war protests and agitations have been seen from time to time but they are mostly treated as routine in nature, and the aggressor, whether justly or otherwise, looks at it as something to be expected.

But this time it is different. The sheer scale of demonstration and protests, especially in Britain and the US, is something world leaders can wish away only at their own peril.

At least George W Bush can claim to have got the endorsement of the US Congress. But the British Prime Minister Tony Blair faces a

divided Labour Party before him. His own party is not sure whether war should be supported. Besides, Europe itself is deeply divided with France and Germany not in favour of war. In fact all the veto powers, except United States and Britain, are against a military invasion of Iraq.

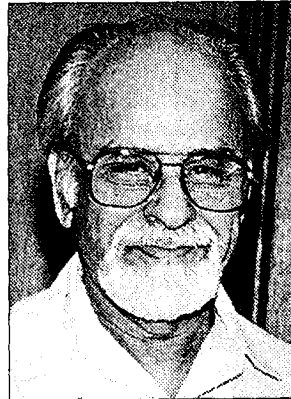
The reasons for such deep divisions, both in the international community and among the people at large, are obvious. Nobody is convinced of the evidence gathered so far. The two inspection groups, one looking at evidence of chemical and biological weapons and the other examining nuclear devices, have asked for more time as very little evidence has been found. Given this situation the United States will have problems justifying a war on a unilateral basis, bypassing the United Nations.

My feeling is the United States will go for a war in mid-March but before that it will be under pressure to get some soft resolution passed in the 14-member UN Security Council to gain moral legitimacy. Technically any of the Security Council members can *suo motu* move a resolution seeking an explicit clearance for an attack on Iraq. The US would resist a specific resolution to that effect fearing a veto from countries with veto power. The US might lobby for a wishy-washy resolution which will allow it to do what it wants. The earlier resolution 1441 — seeking UN-led inspection — took several weeks of hectic lobbying to formulate.

Therefore, any resolution specifically seeking to dilute the war effort will be stoutly op-

posed by the US. Also realpolitik would dictate that countries like France, Germany, China and Russia will oppose war but will not directly confront the United States. It will be very tricky in this respect.

The other possibility is that the United States will unilaterally declare war if it is unable to negotiate the issue in the Security Council. Though ambivalence among European nations and the widespread protest against war is something George W Bush cannot disregard, he is far gone in committing his nation to a war. He has no option but to go to war as he has to face elections next year. If he withdraws at this stage he is sure to lose face. If he manages to dethrone Saddam Hussein in a short and swift operation, as is being predicted, he will gain his people's support. But America and the rest of the world will then have to contend with further radicalisation of Islam in many Muslim countries. It could be dangerous in the medium term exposing the world to greater risk of terrorism.



For instance, Islamic radicalism had increased in Iran in the sixties when the US had installed the Shah of Iran, after dethroning Musaddaq. Then too oil was a motivation as Musaddaq had nationalised the oil companies by throwing the multinational oil companies out.

Thus a long term vision would dictate that a non-military solution is explored so as to contain further radicalisation of Islam. But Bush will be driven more by immediate political compulsions. However, he will have to contend with opposition. Unlike in 1991 when there was full support, even among Islamic countries, for evacuation of Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, there is no consensus this time. I was a foreign minister then and I don't remember any country which has supported Saddam's action then. Iraq had attacked Kuwait without any provocation, and this was widely condemned. In sharp contrast, there is very little hard evidence against Iraq this time for the United States to launch a full scale war.

Finally, history of the 20th century tells us that whenever super powers have got deluded by their might and invaded another country, they have not succeeded. I was an ambassador in Moscow when Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan. I remember the optimism in the Russian establishment that with all its might it would be a picnic to run over Afghanistan. What happened later is known to everyone. The US invasion of Vietnam is another example that comes to mind. So history tells us that a military solution is never the best one.

## MUCHKUND DUBEY FORMER SECRETARY MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

THERE is an overwhelming opinion in the world, shared by both governments and public, against a war being declared on Iraq. This was manifested in the Security Council debate on the UN arms inspectors' reports and in the largest anti-war demonstrations across the world seen in recent years. The demonstrations are designed to give vent to humankind's natural abhorrence of war. Besides, over the last few years, a massive coalition of civil society movements, mostly based in developed countries, has been formed.

While being a product of globalisation, particularly the internet revolution, this coalition is anti-globalisation, anti IMF-World bank, anti-WTO and anti-transnational corporations. This coalition is also lending its full

weight behind the anti-war protests. There has also been a simmering resentment at the popular level in Europe against US unilateralism reflected among others, in its refusal to accede to the Kyoto Protocol and the Statute of the International Criminal Court. This wave of anti-war protest is also against this unilateralism.

The demonstrators have also taken heart from the fact that some of the most important governments of Europe are defying the US

and exerting hard to prevent an assault on Iraq. In the case of the Kosovo operation, which decimated Yugoslavia and which was also undertaken without the UN Security Council authorisation, the anti-war groups were lying dormant because the European governments were unitedly behind the operation and pro-actively tried to influence public opinion in their countries. Besides, in spite of the devastations inflicted by the Kosovo bombardments, it was nowhere near acquiring the dimensions of human tragedy that the war against Iraq is likely to.

There is no doubt that the measures that the US government is contemplating constitute a flagrant violation of international law. There is no provision in international law justifying pre-emptive use of force. Besides, the consequences of another gulf war are mind boggling, both in economic and humanitarian terms. It can plunge several countries in an economic crisis and result in a prolonged global recession. If some of the major oil fields are destroyed by Saddam himself it may take a long time to repair them and oil prices could

go through the roof. This is bound to aggravate the already existing recessionary conditions across the developed world.

Short of legal or moral justification, the US is determined to resort to a pre-emptive strike only by virtue of its overwhelming superiority of force. This will set a very dangerous precedent which can be used against any country. This also carries the danger of creating a human tragedy of staggering dimensions. It is, therefore, the moral duty of every government and every individual to protest against the US move. The overwhelming opinion in the world is in favour of finding a solution to the problem in Iraq, by peaceful means, without using force. However, the Bush administration is unlikely to heed the message emanating from four corners of the globe. It is by now too far committed to bring about a regime change in Iraq, to be deterred by public demonstrations.

On the other hand, Saddam Hussein is unlikely to abdicate. So war is lurking round the



corner. The United States can afford to ignore the demonstrations because they have not assumed the same proportions in their own country as they have in Europe. There is also a bipartisan support for toppling Saddam Hussein and bringing to power Iraqi leaders who broadly conform to the world order shaped by the US. Thanks to the advances made recently in conventional weapon technologies, the US seems to be confident of not getting bogged down

in Iraq and keeping the consequences of war within limits by not allowing any great human tragedy to happen. In this attempt, the US hopes to take advantage of the ethnic and religious divisions plaguing Iraq for centuries and the large scale discontent against the repressive regime of Saddam Hussein.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has reasons to be more worried not only because of the size of the anti-war demonstrations in the United Kingdom but also the sharp decline in his popularity rating. The anti-nuclear demonstrations witnessed across the Atlantic during the early 90s were also quite large and widespread. But they receded after the INF Treaty of 1987 and almost disappeared after the end of Cold War. Besides, resentments, however widespread, centred on a single issue do not always translate themselves into a comprehensive vote of no-confidence in a general election against a government in power. Tony Blair must be taking comfort in these calculations while remaining resolute in his decision to join the United States in the campaign against Saddam Hussein.



# Iraq hints at complying with U.N. fiat

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, FEB. 24. Iraq's key presidential adviser has said that Baghdad would quickly decide whether to comply with a United Nations order to destroy its Al-Samoud 2 missiles and its components.

"It is being studied very carefully and the channels (with U.N. arms inspectors) are still open between us and we will come up with a decision quite soon," Gen. Amer al-Saadi told reporters after talks with a South African disarmament delegation.

The U.N. chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, wrote to Iraq last week that Baghdad should begin destroying Al-Samoud 2 missiles by March 1 as these weapons had exceeded the 150-km range limit set by a 1991 U.N. resolution.

Baghdad says these missiles had been designed to stay within the stipulated range. Iraq said on Sunday that Mr. Blix's demand was under "serious" study and that it hoped to settle the issue through "cooperation and agreement" between the two sides.

The Iraqi response to Mr. Blix's directive is being seen as a test case across the globe that could swing the debate on

whether the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was complying with the U.N. Security Council resolution 1441.

A negative report by Mr. Blix to the Security Council could become the trigger for a U.S.-led attack. Iraq has signalled that it was willing to disarm by currently hosting and seeking the advice of a South African team of experts that had earlier worked with the U.N. to destroy Pretoria's atomic arsenal built under the apartheid regime.

The U.N. weapons inspectors also visited at least 12 sites on Monday, including four missile-related facilities around Baghdad. Ballistic teams have been busy over the past week, taking

an inventory of the Al-Samoud 2 missiles and components. On the diplomatic side, Iraq is lobbying hard with countries belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement to put across its point of view.

The Iraqi Vice-President, Taha Yassin Ramadan, prior to his departure for the NAM conclave in Kuala Lumpur, said he was carrying with him documents and tapes to convey to the leaders of the developing world, "the truth of what is happening in Iraq" and apprise them of "Iraq's cooperation with the U.N. disarmament inspectors."

Iraq's diplomatic activism has also included a fresh dialogue with Russia, which sent

its former Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, to Baghdad for talks with Mr. Hussein on Saturday. The Iraqi President also met Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. attorney general, who has been an opponent of war against Iraq.

While indicating its intent to cooperate with U.N. inspectors, Mr. Hussein asserted on Sunday that the U.S. would fail to humiliate Iraq.

He charged the U.S. President, George W. Bush, with behaving without "manhood and chivalry" towards Baghdad.

"The Iraqi (citizen) is not easy when he is angry. The Iraqis are angered by the behaviour of their enemy that has not kept within the minimum of manhood and chivalry," Mr. Hussein told a visiting Lebanese delegation on Sunday.

"Tell your brothers that the Americans can damage and destroy buildings and facilities, but they will fail to humiliate Iraq," Mr. Hussein said.

Striking a defiant note, he said the Iraqis would emerge victorious in their resistance against any U.S.-led aggression.

"Fighting a war (against U.S.-led forces) will settle a host of things, and will enable Iraq to regain its glory," he said at a Cabinet meeting.

## Turkey nod for U.S. troops

ANKARA, FEB. 24. Ending a high stakes diplomatic standoff, Turkey's Cabinet Monday agreed to the deployment of tens of thousands of U.S. combat troops ahead of a possible war in Iraq. The measure is now being sent to Parliament, where it is expected to face a vote on Tuesday.

The announcement followed a more than six-hour Cabinet meeting, a sign of the deep difficulties during the U.S.-Turkish talks. The basing agreement has been delayed by weeks of tense negotiations. The deadlock was finally broken late last week, when Washington offered Turkey \$5 billions in aid and \$10 billions in loans to cushion the Turkish economy from the impact of any war. — AP

## U.S. steps up pressure on Iraq

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 24. As the leadership in Iraq is said to be mulling over the latest "order" from the top weapons inspector, Hans Blix, the Bush administration is increasingly making the point that the last weeks of the Iraqi showdown is around the corner.

First, all eyes are on the written report that Dr. Blix has to submit to the United Nations Security Council on March 1; and this will be followed six days later by a more crucial assessment on whether or not Baghdad has complied with the order to dismantle and destroy its Al Samoud-2 missiles, warheads, components and everything else that went along with this system. By March 1, Iraq has to start destroying the missiles as per the letter of Dr. Blix.

"Once he (Dr. Blix) has made that report (of March 7), everybody will have one last

opportunity to make a judgement. And shortly after that, judgement will have to be made as to what the Security Council should do", the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has said while travelling in Asia.

In the next two days or so, the U.S. and Britain are getting ready to present a "new" resolution to the Security Council, which is expected to be straightforward in its language, but minus threatening phrases like "dangerous consequences".

The resolution is not expected to have a specific deadline for Iraq but will remind the Saddam Hussein regime that it is in "further" material breach of its commitments and obligations of U.N. resolutions. The heat is already on the regime in Iraq to start complying with Dr. Blix's instructions and start the destruction of the Al Samoud missiles.

The U.N. weapons inspections team, according to one assessment, is in "no mood" to start a lengthy debate with Baghdad with

a view to arriving at a compromise of sorts. Simply put, the message from New York to Baghdad is that the missiles would have to go. "They have to destroy the weapons... If they refuse to destroy them, the Council will have to take a decision on that", was the response of the U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

France, which went out of its way to call for continued weapons inspections, has said in no uncertain terms that Iraq will not be given a pass on these missiles.

"It is necessary for Iraq to act and meet its obligations, in this case the destruction of these prohibited missiles", the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, has said.

The Bush administration, which has all along been saying that time is running out for the regime in Iraq, is trying to stress that what is now before the Security Council could be the final days before a military showdown.

25 FEB 2003

# Iraq test-fires missile for UN inspectors

HASSAN HAFIDH

*W. Amin*  
*Q. A. 2A/2*

**Falluja (Iraq), Feb. 23** (Reuters): Iraq test-fired a rocket engine today to show UN inspectors the *Al-Samoud 2* missile could not violate a 1991 range limit set by the United Nations.

UN arms experts stood a few metres away to watch the test at the Falluja site 70 km west of Baghdad. "It is an experimental test of the Iraqi *Al-Samoud* missile. This is the fifth time that the arms inspectors see such a test," Colonel Ali Jasim Hussein said.

UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix has ordered Iraq to start destroying its *Al-Samoud 2* missiles by March 1, saying they exceed UN limits. Baghdad says the missile was designed to stay within the permit 150-km range.

Iraq said today that Blix's demand was under "serious" study and that it hoped to settle the issue through "cooperation and agreement" between the two parties.

"We are studying the letter (of Blix) about destroying the missiles in depth and in a serious and comprehensive way," General Husam Mohammad Amin, head of Iraq's weapons monitoring, told a news conference.

"We hope that this issue will be resolved without interference from the Americans and the British. I believe that we will be able to resolve this issue without any intervention by those with evil intentions," he added.

He refused to answer direct questions on whether Iraq would destroy the missiles. "Destroying these missiles will affect our defence capabilities but would

not completely terminate them."

Amin said Baghdad believed it "was not necessary" for Iraqi scientists to be interviewed abroad — a nagging demand by the UN which insists experts on banned weapons should be debriefed on neutral ground to avoid government intimidation.

On the diplomatic front, former Russian Prime Minister Yegheny Primakov was in Baghdad today on a mission for President Vladimir Putin aimed at averting an attack by the US which wants Iraq to disarm.

Primakov, a Middle East expert and a long-time friend of Saddam, was expected to meet senior Iraqi officials before leaving later today.

Amin said UN weapons inspectors have conducted their first interviews with Iraqi scientists without using audio recordings, adding that Iraq had submitted new names of scientists to be interviewed.

He said UN weapons inspectors have searched 635 sites since they began in November and would use a French Mirage warplane in the coming few days during inspections. Baghdad also allowed a German drone to fly in search of prohibited weapons.

Amin said a technical team from United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission would arrive in Baghdad on March 2 to verify sites where biological material was destroyed and buried in 1991.

A South African team of disarmament experts was also due to arrive in Baghdad later this evening to give advise to Iraq on disarmament issues, the Iraqi official added.

24 FEB 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

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# U.N. order under scrutiny, says Iraq

BAGHDAD, FEB. 23. Iraq is studying a U.N. order to destroy its Al Samoud 2 missile programme, but has made no decision, the chief Iraqi liaison to the U.N. inspectors said on Sunday.

"We received the letter from (chief inspector Hans) Blix on the Al Samoud, and this issue is under study," Gen. Hossam Mohamed Amin said at a news conference.

"We are serious about solving this."

Gen. Amin expressed optimism that the United Nations and Iraq would be able to work out their differences over the Al Samoud 2.

Mr. Blix told Iraq on Friday that a U.N.-supervised destruction of all Al Samoud 2 missiles, warheads, fuel, engines and other components must begin by March 1.

The missiles exceed the 150-km range limit set by U.N. resolutions adopted at the end of the 1991 Gulf War.

"We hope this issue will be resolved without interference from the Americans or the British," Gen. Amin said. "I think we will be able to resolve this issue without the interference of people with bad intentions."

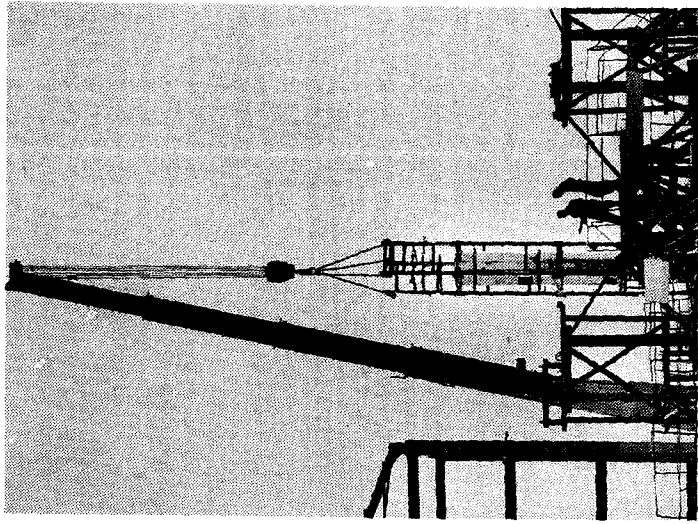
The U.N. weapons inspectors

spectors have ordered Iraq to destroy.

The inspectors went to the Al Fatah facility on the northwest outskirts of Baghdad, which makes components of Al Samoud 2 guidance and control systems, as well as parts of the engine and airframe, Iraq's Information Ministry said.

They also visited the Al Rafah facility, 130 km south of Baghdad, which tests engines of the Al Samoud 2 and other missiles.

On Friday, Mr. Blix said the U.N.-supervised destruction of all Al Samoud 2 missiles, warheads, fuel, engines and other compo-



**HANGING FIRE: Iraqi officials carry out a static test on an Al-Samoud 2 missile at a military facility near Baghdad, on Sunday.** — Reuters

visited two sites today involved in producing and testing the Al Samoud 2 missile, which the in-

nents must begin by March 1 because they exceed the 150-km range limit set by U.N. resolutions adopted at the end of the 1991 Gulf War.

No Iraqi official has commented publicly on the order.

Missiles inspectors tagging the rockets for destruction at the Ibn al-Haithem company yesterday were met by the factory director, Owayed Ahmed Ali, who pleaded with them to let Iraq keep its weapons so it can defend itself in the face of war.

"I asked (the inspectors), 'You would destroy a defensive weapon now that we are threatened by the Americans, who might strike at any moment?'" he said.

"Some said, 'You are right, but we have orders,' while others said, 'You have other means to defend yourself.'"

In addition to the missile-related installations, U.N. inspectors today also visited a military engineering facility south of Baghdad, an electronics research company and a deodorant factory in Baghdad, Iraq's Information Ministry said. — AP

WEST ASIA / 'U.N. TEAM MUST SPECIFY DEMAND'

## Iraq doing its best to avoid war: envoy

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, FEB. 22. The Iraqi Ambassador to India, Sala Al-Mukhtar, told presspersons here today that his country was "doing its best to avoid war" by cooperating with the United Nations weapons inspections "as advised by friends like India" and adhering to the conditions imposed on it.

Making out a case for continuing inspections and reining in the United States, he said that the U.N. team should specify what it wanted from Iraq. "Do not talk to us in general terms," he said.

Asked about the concerns expressed over chemical and biological weapon ingredients, he said that his country was open to inspection by scientific

teams. Iraqi scientists would cooperate with them and a joint search of known "graves" of these ingredients could be carried out, he said.

Defending his country for having procured such material during the war with Iran, he said there was no law that prevented this. Occasionally, these were sourced from the "black market" and at other times, from other Governments. But all this material has been destroyed. Even otherwise, it would have been in any case rendered impotent as it had a shelf life of only about three years.

He claimed that the present pressure and war threats had nothing to do with chemical weapons or weapons of mass destruction. If that was the cri-

terion, then the first country to be tackled should be North Korea, which has declared that it possessed nuclear weapons, he reasoned. The threat of invasion was aimed at controlling Iraqi oil. After controlling oil, the U.S. would dictate terms to the world. Iraq had offered to talk to the U.S. directly to avoid war — an offer that was repeated by the Iraqi Vice-President even yesterday — but the U.S. had repeatedly rejected the idea, he said.

"But if the war happens, we will defend ourselves. We know how to defend ourselves," he said. It was not sophisticated arms or equipment but the "will of the human being" and the "determination to defend the freedom of the nation" that would make the difference in

the event of a war, he said. And, Iraq was not ruled by politicians, but freedom fighters.

Seeking to paint the U.S. and the U.K. as the unreasonable ones, he warned that the U.S. would not stop with the invasion of Iraq. Iraq would be the "starting point," he said and predicted that any State that competes with the U.S. technologically, economically or in any other manner would be in line to be attacked. There was a "waiting list" of countries that the U.S. would target, he added.

He expressed satisfaction at the overwhelming response of countries as also freedom-loving people all over the world in support of Iraq. He was happy that in India, both the right-wing and the left-wing parties were sympathetic towards Iraq



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**BANNED WEAPONS / BAGHDAD NEEDS TO DO MORE: BLIX**

# U.S. planes conduct searches again

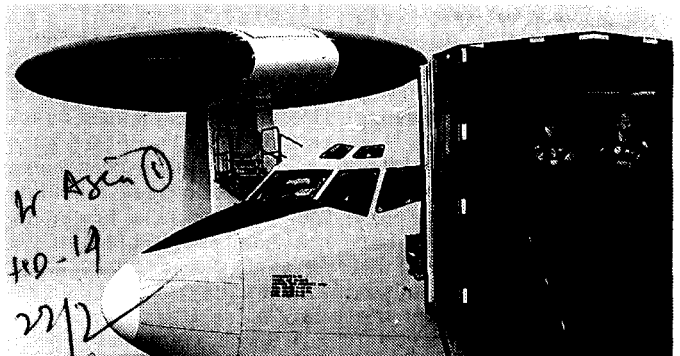
By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 21.** Faced with mounting military pressure on its borders, Iraq, for the second time in a week has allowed a U.S. surveillance plane to scan for banned weapons. The U-2 spy plane flew for six hours and twenty minutes over Iraqi territory.

Two French Mirage IV planes, which can also undertake surveillance missions, are on their way to expand the aerial search for alleged unconventional weapons. Russia has also pledged to send its planes that specialise in carrying searches at night. A United Nations spokesman said Iraq had submitted a list of 83 people that are reportedly involved in the destruction of material from its biological and missile programmes. But U.N. officials said

Iraq had still not provided enough information about nuclear, chemical, biological and long-range missile operations. "Clearly, Iraq needs to do more by way of cooperating, particularly on unresolved disarmament issues, which are clearly issues of substance," Ewen Buchanan, a spokesman for the chief U.N. weapons inspector, Hans Blix, said. Iraq's U.N. Ambassador, Mohammed Al-Douri, however, said on Thursday that his Government was doing "the utmost" to cooperate with inspections.

Analysts point out that U.N. weapon inspectors are looking for greater cooperation from Iraq for curtailing its Al Samoud-2 missile programme and allowing confidential interviews of Iraqi scientists outside the country. Mr. Blix reportedly



**Flight personnel stand at the entrance of an AWACS airplane at an airbase near the German city of Gellenkirchen in this Oct. 2001 file photo. A NATO commander on Friday ordered the deployment of AWACS in Turkey to protect the country against the threat of an Iraqi missile attack.**

plans to send a letter to Iraq demanding the destruction of the Al Samoud 2 missiles and related machinery, as its range exceeds 150 km that Baghdad had been permitted. Iraqi officials,

however, counter this assertion by pointing out that the missile marginally exceeded its range in flight tests because it was not mounted with a guidance package and payload.

THE HINDS

22 FEB 2003

# Blix to demand destruction of missiles

**BAGHDAD, FEB. 20.** United Nations weapons inspectors, taking inventories of banned Al Samoud 2 missiles, returned on Thursday to facilities involved in the rocket's production.

The chief inspector, Hans Blix, is likely to demand that Iraq destroy them, U.N. diplomats said in New York on Wednesday.

The missiles, a key part of Iraq's arsenal, tested above the 150-km range limit imposed by U.N. resolutions after the 1991 Gulf War. Iraq says the missiles flew so far only in tests because they weren't loaded with guidance and control systems.

The inspectors went on Thursday to the Ibn al-Haithem facility, just north of Baghdad, which produces missile parts, and the Al Samoud factory, which makes liquid-propellant engines for the missiles, Iraq's Information Ministry said.

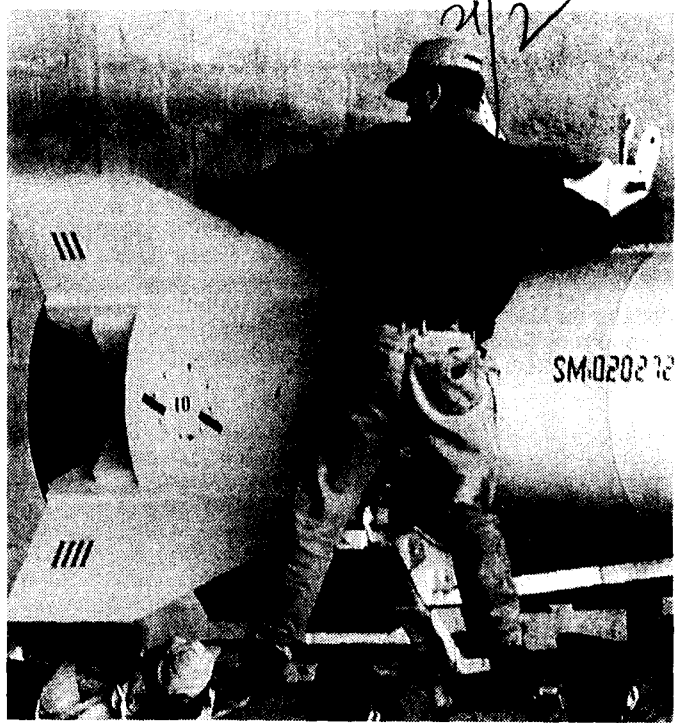
They also visited the Al Kudus company, involved in explosives research and development, and the Al Basil company, which makes chemicals. Under the U.N. resolutions, the inspectors can order the missiles destroyed or rendered harmless. But U.N. sources and dip-

lomats said on condition of anonymity that Mr. Blix was likely to send a letter to Iraq in coming days asking it to destroy all Al Samoud 2s.

Destroying the missiles would be difficult for Saddam Hussein, who has tens of thousands of U.S. and British soldiers massing around his oil-rich nation. However, his enemies could use a refusal as an argument for war. The inspectors returned to Iraq in November after a four-year gap under a new, tougher Security Council resolution. The inspectors are trying to verify Iraq's claims that it no longer holds banned weapons.

On Feb. 14, Mr. Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the U.N. nuclear control agency, told the Security Council that they detected some improvement in cooperation by Mr. Hussein's Government. But Mr. Blix also said inspectors found that the Al Samoud 2 exceeded the permitted range and chastised Iraq for not giving a full accounting of chemical and biological weapons programmes.

Mr. Hussein said on Wednesday that Iraq doesn't want war with the United States, but that



**STEPPING UP EFFORTS:** A U.N. weapons inspector climbs on top of an Al Samoud missile at a site 40 km north of Baghdad on Sunday. — AP

peace cannot be kept at the expense of "our independence, our dignity" and freedom. "Iraq

doesn't want war," Mr. Hussein said. But peace "at any cost" was unacceptable. — AP

# Turkey dithers, Britain flashes Kuwait alert

NADIM LADKI AND  
RALPH BOULTON

**Baghdad/Ankara, Feb. 19** (Reuters): The northern thrust of a planned two-pronged US-led invasion of Iraq was thrown into doubt today when Turkey put off any decision on whether to allow American forces onto its soil.

In a late development today, the British embassy in Kuwait asked Britons today to leave the Gulf Arab state due to "increasing regional tension and the risk of terrorist action".

"If you are already in Kuwait, you should leave unless you consider that your presence... is essential," an embassy advisory to Britons said. "We are giving this advice because of the increasing regional tension and of the risk of terrorist action," it said.

Western forces poured into the Gulf south of Iraq, and the US and Britain were working to draw up a UN resolution autho-

rising force that they hope will placate global opposition to a war assumed to be only weeks away.

But the government of Turkey, Iraq's northern neighbour, deferred a decision on allowing US invasion troops to be deployed on its territory, as the two states wrangled over the size of a multi-billion-dollar aid package for Ankara.

"A framework for the agreement we are looking for has not been established," a spokesman said after a meeting of Turkey's Cabinet. "No decision regarding the request (to parliament on admitting troops) has been made."

The US warned its apparently reluctant ally time was running out. "Time is a critical issue for us," US ambassador Robert Pearson said in Ankara.

Washington has shown growing frustration as the clock ticks towards military action and has made clear it is close to the point where it could abandon plans for

a Turkish front. A White House spokesman said the US offer of \$6 billion in grants and up to \$20 billion in loan guarantees was final. Turkey has demanded more than \$30 billion, US sources say.

Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gul spoke by phone with

US secretary of state Colin Powell today, Gul's aides said. A Nato committee, meeting without France, approved today the deployment of defence equipment to Turkey, which fears possible counter-attacks from Iraq in the event of war.

Washington yesterday or-

## 'US pursuing own oil interests'

**Berlin, Feb. 19** (Reuters): A German Cabinet minister poured fuel on the flames of a transatlantic row over Iraq today by saying the US was pursuing its own oil interests in its conflict with Baghdad.

Environment minister Juergen Trittin made the accusation in an interview with *Die Welt* newspaper, remarks likely to put added strain on relations already at a post-war low over Germany's opposition to any US-led war to disarm Iraq.

"A war is not justified. This debate is distracting from the real interests of the United States," Trittin told *Die Welt*. "Those are geo-strategic and oil interests. The critics are quite right with their motto 'No war for oil'".

The comments are the most strident by a German minister since Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder sacked his justice minister last year for likening US President George W. Bush's tactics to those of Adolf Hitler.

dered 28,000 troops to the Gulf region, where it has already massed more than 180,000. The US force is expected to eventually total well over 200,000. Britain has mobilised some 40,000 troops.

US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair insist no deadline for war has been set, but military experts say the huge military build-up has been designed for an offensive in March, before temperatures in the region soar.

Britain today advised its nationals in Iraq to leave immediately, reminding them that Britons were held hostage before the 1991 Gulf War.

President Saddam Hussein maintained a defiant public stance. "The Iraqi people don't want war, but not at any cost. We don't compromise on our independence, dignity and right to live as free men acting freely," he was quoted as saying during a meeting with Russian Commu-

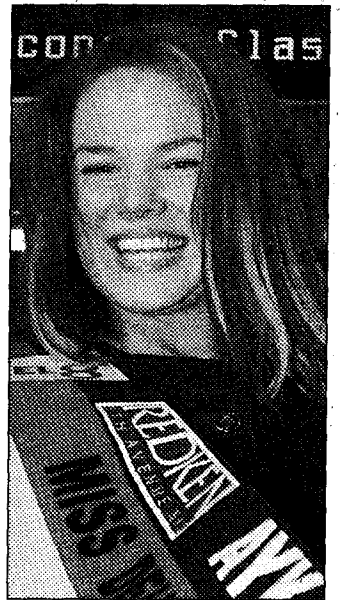
nist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov.

Kurds running a breakaway enclave in northern Iraq said they had arrested agents of Baghdad who threatened the safety of Iraqi opposition leaders gathering there to plan for a future after Saddam.

The strength of the anti-war mood was clear in a debate at the United Nations, where country after country spoke out against war and said inspectors looking for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq should instead continue their work.

UN Security Council endorsement of the use of force against Iraq in a new resolution would help Washington's key allies overcome opposition to war among their voters.

Resolution 1441, approved last November, threatens "serious consequences" if Iraq refuses to disarm, but many US allies want further UN endorsement of any use of force.



Miss Germany, Alexandra Vodjanikova, at Munich airport en route to Baghdad on a private peace mission. (AFP)

# Global opposition pegs back war resolution

United Nations, February 19

WITH MORE than 24 countries opposing a rush to war, the US and Britain struggled to find support for a new Security Council resolution authorising force against Saddam Hussein.

The overwhelming opposition to the Bush administration's policies on Iraq — voiced in the Security Council and in the streets of world capitals over the weekend — set back plans for the introduction of a new resolution on Wednesday, US and British diplomats said.

The diplomats, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the very substance of the resolution — envisioned just one week ago as a short and tough text — had yet to be agreed upon between President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. "In light of the circumstances, Washington is trying to be more creative," one diplomat said.

Diplomats said there was still a chance a draft resolution could be circulated by the end of the week but acknowledged they may need more time to decide whether the declaration would include a general ultimatum or set a deadline for Saddam to comply with a set of specific measures. "All options are on the table," a US diplomat said.

Bush said in Washington that discussions on a new resolution were underway, but US ambassador John Negroponte said the US would wait until after an open Security Council debate on Iraq concluded on Wednesday before deciding on "the timing and the precise contents" of a resolution.

Negroponte further added that the US hadn't made a final decision to introduce a second resolution though he expected an announcement "quite shortly".

British diplomats, however, said they were determined to fight for a new resolution, partly to counter strong public opposition to military action launched without UN authorisation.



British troops wait to check-in ahead of their flight to the Gulf region in Oxfordshire on Wednesday.

REUTERS

## Ships with Iraq arms tracked: Report

London, February 19

US AND British Intelligence services are tracking three mystery ships suspected of carrying Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the *Independent* says.

Asked to comment on the report, a spokeswoman for Britain's Ministry of Defence said: "We don't discuss Intelligence issues."

The paper, quoting what it called authoritative shipping industry sources, said

the giant cargo ships had been sailing around the world for three months while maintaining radio silence in violation of international maritime law.

But the International Maritime Organisation said it was not against the international law of the sea to withhold information about the content of a cargo, its destination or to maintain radio silence on the high seas.

"Ships do steam around

on the high seas without giving a destination or declaring a manifest — it is common practice," said an IMO spokesman.

"A declaration (of cargo) is only required when a port or destination is known — oil companies, for example, do this kind of thing all the time," he said.

He said that once vessels entered a country's territorial waters then different laws applied; however, and the ship's master would

have to comply.

Intelligence chiefs are believed to be reluctant to stop and search the vessels for fear they might be scuttled and cause an environmental disaster, the *Independent* said.

A shipping industry source told the paper: "If Iraq does have weapons of mass destruction, then a very large part of its capability could be afloat on the high seas right now."

Reuters

### Iran will confront US jets

Iran's Defence Minister said on Wednesday its forces would "confront" any US aircraft that used its airspace during possible strikes on neighbouring Iraq.

Iran, branded a sponsor of terrorism by Washington, opposes any military operation against Iraq and has repeatedly urged Baghdad to cooperate with United Nations arms inspectors

"to remove any pretext" Washington might use to launch a war.

"We will defend our airspace and will not let America violate our airspace while attacking Iraq," Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani told reporters.

Asked what Tehran would do if US jets unintentionally entered Iran's airspace during possible strikes on Iraq, Shamkhani said: "We will give a decisive

and ultimate answer to Americans to confront their possible mistakes."

### Defence gear for Turkey

Nato brought to a close on Wednesday one of the stormiest chapters in its 54-year history, approving the deployment of defence equipment to Turkey which fears counter-attack in the event of a war in Iraq.

The decision was taken

by the Defence Planning Committee — a forum of the 19-nation alliance on which France does not sit.

The 18-nation Defence Planning Committee agreed to deploy AWACS early warning aircraft, Patriot air defence missile systems and chemical-biological response units in southern Turkey, a likely launch pad for any United States-led strike on Baghdad.

Agencies

## US plans new N-arsenal

Washington, February 19

THE BUSH administration is planning a secret meeting in August to discuss the construction of a new generation of nuclear weapons, including "mini-nukes", "bunker-busters" and neutron bombs designed to destroy chemical or biological agents, according to a leaked Pentagon document.

The meeting of senior military officials and US nuclear scientists at the Omaha headquarters of the US Strategic Command would also decide whether to restart nuclear testing and how to convince the American public that the new weapons are necessary.

The leaked preparations for the meeting are the clearest sign yet that the administration is determined

to overhaul its nuclear arsenal so that it could be used as part of the new "Bush doctrine" of pre-emption, to strike the stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons of rogue states.

Greg Mello, the head of the Los Alamos Study Group, a nuclear watchdog that obtained the Pentagon documents, said the meeting would prepare the ground for a US breakaway from global arms control treaties, and the moratorium on conducting nuclear tests. "It is impossible to overstate the challenge these plans pose to the comprehensive test ban treaty, the existing nuclear test moratorium, and US compliance with article six of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty," Mello said.

The documents leaked to Mello are the minutes of a

meeting in the Pentagon on January 10 called by Dale Klein, the assistant to the Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, to prepare the secret conference, planned for "the week of August 4, 2003".

The National Nuclear Security Administration, which is responsible for designing, building and maintaining nuclear weapons, on Tuesday confirmed the authenticity of the document.

According to the leaked document, the "future arsenal panel" would also ask the pivotal question: "What forms of testing will these new designs require?" The administration has been working to reduce the amount of warning the test sites in US desert would need to be reactivated after 10 years lying dormant.

The Guardian



# Consequences of a war — II

By Michael Krepon

1912

XD-10

**I**F SADDAM Hussein creates mass U.S. casualties by unleashing chemical or biological weapons in a losing cause, the presumed value of gas, germs and nukes could grow considerably. Why? Because other leaders worried about U.S. gun-slashing might reasonably conclude that the best way to deter another preventive war would be to clarify the prospect of mass casualties, thereby reinforcing second thoughts by the American public and its erstwhile allies. And if friendly nations perceive a folding of the American protective umbrella, they, too, could be more interested in acquiring deadly weapons for national defence.

Chemical or biological weapons have never been used in asymmetric warfare between weak states and major powers. Taboos could be broken, with cascading effects, if Mr. Hussein uses these weapons in a losing cause.

The first Bush administration was mostly silent when Mr. Hussein used chemical weapons against domestic foes and Iranians. There will be no silence this time at home and abroad if Mr. Hussein uses deadly weapons against allied expeditionary forces.

The most significant taboo in warfare is against the use of nuclear weapons. The Bush administration has warned that this taboo could also be broken in a prospective war against Mr. Hussein. The Bush national security strategy states that, "the United States will continue to make clear that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force — including through resort to all of our options" if bugs or gas are used against U.S. forces, friends and allies.

This veiled warning of the possible use of nuclear retaliation has been much repeated of late in order to deter Mr. Hussein from authorising a chemical or biological attack.

For the sake of shoring up deterrence, let us conveniently ignore

that the threat of using nuclear weapons against Iraq violates a fundamental norm of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (and thus U.S. and international law) that nuclear powers are not supposed to use nukes or threaten their use against non-nuclear countries. By repeatedly invoking this threat, the Bush administration has hastened into

Presidents have strived mightily to uphold since 1945 will be waved aside. Subsequent U.S. efforts to stop nuclear terrorism or to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by other states will become a lonely, hypocritical pursuit. Proliferation feeds on double standards.

What conclusions might be reasonable, drawn from these lousy

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## *The Bush administration cannot succeed in countering proliferation by bludgeoning the U.N., multilateral diplomacy and treaties.*

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what Stanford University's Scott Sagan calls the "commitment trap". If deterrence breaks down, and if Mr. Hussein or his henchmen actually use bugs or gas, the question will immediately arise whether Mr. Bush will carry out his implied threat. If Mr. Bush backs down, this threat and the national security strategy in which it is now embedded will be much weakened, thus inviting further WMD use.

If, alternatively, the most powerful country the world has ever known detonates a nuclear weapon against a pitifully weaker foe — even one that initiates chemical or biological warfare — there will be a hellish global reaction, particularly in the Islamic world.

Whatever gains that might accrue from "shoring up" deterrence against future foes would be dwarfed by negatives, including the crossing of a fateful threshold that has withstood 45 years of Cold War crises, as well as the Korean and Vietnam wars.

The first use of a nuclear weapon after Hiroshima and Nagasaki will have profound consequences for proliferation and catastrophic terrorism. In his recent State of the Union message, Mr. Bush declared, "if war is forced upon us, we will fight in a just cause and by just means, sparing, in every way we can, the innocent". If nuclear weapons now constitute "just means", a norm that

choices? First, that the twin crises the Bush administration now faces in Iraq and North Korea constitute a likely "tipping point" for global proliferation. If either crisis ends badly, the world will become a far more brutish place. Critical thresholds will be tested.

If they are crossed, the "antidotes" to U.S. military supremacy — the acquisition of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons — will spread in troubled regions.

Second, there is now no alternative to successful disarmament in Iraq. Having rejected containment and U.N. inspections while teeing up an invasion force, the Bush administration has to separate Mr. Hussein, voluntarily or involuntarily, from the stockpiles he has previously worked so assiduously to hide. The consequences for regional proliferation if Mr. Hussein again succeeds in playing "cheat and retreat" would be severe. The chances of persuading North Korea to reverse course will plummet if Mr. Hussein succeeds in foiling the U.N. and the Bush administration.

Third, the pursuit of preventive war does not become the U.S., especially when its advocates denigrate multilateral institutions and hollow out treaties.

The Bush administration cannot succeed in countering proliferation by bludgeoning the U.N., multilater-

al diplomacy and treaties. The treaties administration officials denigrate set international norms against the possession of chemical and biological weapons. If these norms are worth asking American soldiers to die for, the treaties embodying these norms are worth strengthening.

Fourth, until a balance is restored in the Bush administration's approach, military successes will still generate proliferation setbacks. The administration proposes to spend three dimes on safeguarding dangerous weapons and materials that could fall into the wrong hands for every dollar spent to maintain and modernise the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Mr. Bush's new budget spends \$1 billion more on missile defence programmes than for the entire State Department. It is extremely hard to make the case against nuclear proliferation when the administration rejects a nuclear test ban and hints at a resumption of underground testing.

Is proliferation worth fighting against? To judge by the U.N. debate, most countries would answer "no". In some cases, however, proliferation can metastasise throughout a troubled region, reducing international bodies to mere talk shops and gutting global norms. The Bush administration is poorly positioned to argue this case, since it has revelled in double standards and has had little use for the institutions and treaties that are now placed at grave risk. And even if the Bush administration had adopted a coherent approach, a burgeoning global peace constituency is unlikely to have been persuaded. Paradoxes now rule: Mr. Hussein and his henchmen are widely viewed as victims, and vastly superior U.S. firepower will be neutralised, not on the battlefield, but in a world of spreading proliferation, weakened multilateral institutions and hollow treaties.

(Concluded)

THE HINDS

19 FEB 2003

# Nato closes ranks over defending Turkey

Brussels: Nato broke a month-long impasse over preparations in case of a war in Iraq, reaffirming alliance solidarity even as European Union leaders began an emergency session over Iraq. "Alliance solidarity has prevailed," Nato secretary-general Lord Robertson said on Sunday. "We have been able to collectively overcome the impasse."

After France was shut out of the room, the other two holdouts—Germany and Belgium—dropped their objections to starting planning for Turkey's defence immediately, Nato officials said.

Belgium threw a last-minute wrench into the works by insisting on linking any eventual Nato deployment to developments at the UN security council. But the final statement says only "we continue to support efforts in the United Nations to find a peaceful solution to the crisis."

Belgium had joined France and Germany for the past month in blocking a Nato decision to begin planning to help fortify Turkey—the only Nato ally bordering Iraq—against any potential reprisals. They argued such a move was premature and would undermine UN efforts to avoid a war. To help end the stalemate, Nato put the issue on Sunday to its defence planning committee, which excludes France. Paris left Nato's military command structure in the late 1960s and participates only in political, not military consultations. Some progress was made after negotiations, a Nato official said. The idea of starting planning was now "uncontested."

The US proposed a month ago that the alliance consider sending early warning Awacs aircraft, missile defences and anti-biochemical units to Turkey. But after France, Germany and Belgium blocked the planning for

● EU leaders gather for critical meet to seek common ground while Nato military planners prepare to defend Turkey

● Turkey's PM has told his Greek counterpart his government will bring a bill to approve deployment of US troops on Turkish soil

● The Opec cartel says it may suspend output quotas temporarily and pump oil at will if an attack on Iraq halts supplies from the world's eighth-largest oil exporter.

● Kuwait shuts down production at two small northern oil fields near its border with Iraq as a security precaution

three weeks, Turkey last Monday invoked Nato's mutual defence treaty, which bind the allies to talks when one feels threatened, but so far to no avail.

Turkey feels especially vulnerable, especially as it is considering allowing tens of thousands of US soldiers to use its facilities for a possible Iraq war. The United States and its allies say denying support for Turkey's defence erodes the alliance's credibility and sends the wrong signal to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Some of the measures can be done bilaterally—Germany has already agreed to send Patriot missiles to Turkey via the Netherlands—but those missiles need to be linked to Nato radar networks to be effective.

Countries such as Germany also have promised Awacs crews, but the planes themselves are Nato assets. The month-long dispute has driven a deep wedge into the 53-year-old alliance. Agencies

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2003

## NO CAUSE FOR WAR

W. A. B. 1

THE IRREFUTABLE CONCLUSION to be drawn, from the second report presented to the United Nations Security Council by those heading the inspection teams mandated to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities, is that progress is being made towards the attainment of this objective through peaceful means and, therefore, that there is no need for a war to achieve the same. The head of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Hans Blix, and the chief of the inspection team from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohammed ElBaradei, have both been more upbeat in their assessment of Iraqi cooperation now than they were when they presented their first reports on January 27. Mr. ElBaradei, whose teams probe the less contentious issue of Iraq's nuclear weapons programmes of the past, has reported that they had found no evidence that Baghdad had re-started work in this area. While Mr. Blix has been less definitive in regard to the progress his teams have made towards unearthing all aspects of Iraq's programmes for developing chemical and biological weapons and missiles of proscribed range, he appeared to have set aside the judgment he made in the first report that Iraq had not internalised the need for inspections. In his second report, Mr. Blix focussed on the several measures that Iraq had taken to enhance its cooperation with the inspection teams, including prompt and unimpeded access to suspected weapons sites, the drastic reduction of the "minders" appointed to monitor the inspectors, the prompting of scientists and technicians associated with the programmes to present themselves for interviews and greater amenability to the idea of surveillance flights. Mr. Blix also pointedly countered a presentation made by the U. S. earlier this month — wherein it had shown data which purportedly proved that Iraq was sanitising weapons sites just before inspection teams arrived — by stating that vehicular movement near those sites or other facts of the kind could as easily have

an innocent explanation as the sinister. But, while Mr. Blix struck a more optimistic note in his second report than he did in his first, he did not change the basic conclusion that Iraq had yet to satisfy the inspection teams that it had actually destroyed the huge stockpiles of ingredients for chemical and biological weapons which documents proved it had produced in the past.

The reports from the heads of the two inspection commissions show that they have been expanding their activity to cover an increasingly wide area of Iraq and the number of sites visited has also increased significantly. While Mr. Blix's report did underline that Iraq's cooperation with the inspection process has not been up to the required levels, its overall thrust suggests that Baghdad can be, and is being, nudged to move in the desired direction. Such a conclusion lends support to the position taken by France and a majority in the Security Council that an expansion and intensification of the inspection process is not only necessary and viable but will produce results. It also undermines the U.S. argument that Iraq cannot be rid of its WMD potential by any means short of war. There is, however, a need for those countries that have steadily opposed a war to ensure that Iraq abides by its commitment to rid itself of a WMD potential and does not take the cover of the widespread sympathy that it currently enjoys to so prolong the inspection process as to effectively nullify the objective.

While the reports do not provide a sufficient *casus belli*, it does not appear that Washington will be easily diverted from its intent, or its preparations, to wage war. The U.S. administration has invested too heavily — in political, diplomatic and military terms — for it to back off without serious loss of face. It would be tempting to believe that the public sentiment, and the protests, against war building rapidly within the U.S. and across the globe will halt the outbreak of hostilities. But Washington has been waxing so belligerent that expectations on these lines could well be belied.

THE HINDS

17 FEB 2003

# USA STAYS AWAY FROM TALKS BY THIRTY NATIONS ON HUMAN COST OF WAR

## Bid to bring Bush back from brink

Associated Press & AFP

GENEVA, Feb. 16. — Major countries — with the USA notably absent — met officials from Iraq's neighbours and aid agencies today to prepare for the relief work that will be needed if there is a war.

Switzerland invited officials from 30 countries to take part in the closed-door conference, including all five permanent members of the UN Security Council, other major donor countries and Iraq's neighbours like Jordan and Turkey. Four permanent Security Council members — Britain, France, Russia and China — are attending the two-day Geneva conference, which began yesterday. But the USA refused, on grounds that UN agencies already had made extensive preparations and it is unclear how the meeting would help.

Aid officials, however, noted it was the first time Iraq's neighbours have met with relief agencies and rich donor countries to discuss what to do if a war breaks out. Neighbouring countries, which say they had to shoulder too

much of the aid burden during the 1991 Gulf War, have welcomed the conference. Iraq was not invited to the meeting because Swiss officials said they wanted to avoid turning it into a political event.

According to copies of the agenda distributed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, delegates yesterday made a "general assessment of the vulnerability of the civilian population in Iraq, its neighbouring countries and the region". The participants also discussed what UN aid agencies the international Red Cross and other relief groups already have done to prepare for a war.

In Moscow, Russia today insisted that UN weapons monitors must pursue their work in Iraq after the chief inspectors' more positive report but was keeping its options open in the face of US determination to strike Baghdad, adds AFP.

As the USA and its key ally Britain hesitated how to act with the UN Security Council unlikely to approve a new UN resolution authorising the use of force against Iraq, Moscow repeated calls for a



Arab ministers confer on possible war in their neighbourhood at the special meeting of the Arab League in Cairo. — AFP

diplomatic solution. "Our aim is to preserve the unity of the UN Security Council. Russia, France and Germany are ready to work with the USA and the Security Council to resolve the Iraq problem," Mr Alexander Yakovenko, Russian foreign ministry spokesman, said. "The use of force should be the last resort. For the moment, we see sufficient prospects for pursuing the inspectors' work, especially since yesterday's report to the Security Council showed that there is progress in inspections," he said.

Russia, which has joined a drive by Germany and France to avert war in Iraq, has a key voice as one of the five veto-wielding council members and has warned that it could block any resolution that would pave the way for conflict. "Six weeks ago we believed the chances of war were 65 percent, then it went to 90 or 95 percent. Now it has dropped again, after

the UN inspectors' report," said Mr Sergei Karaganov, head of the Moscow-based Council on Foreign and Defence Policy.

**Saudi prince calls caution**  
Arab states should send military troops to Iraq immediately to forestall a foreign invasion, Prince Sultan bin Turki of Saudi Arabia said today, adds a report from Dubai. "We call on all the Arabs to make this demand, and we call on Arab leaders to make this demand a reality," the Prince said in a statement. He did not spell out the role an Arab force would play in Iraq, but he said it would help keep the peace and prevent civil unrest. The prince, a nephew of Saudi King Fahd, does not hold a high-ranking position in the Saudi government. He is known for speaking his mind on foreign and domestic and is regarded as one of a small group of royal members who favour bold reforms.

### Payback time for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 16. — It's time for Pakistan to repay the largesse that successive regimes since Gen. Zia have received from Uncle Sam, starting with the \$3.2bn bonanza that was arranged for Islamabad courtesy the 1984 Pressler Amendment.

The USA today stepped up pressure on Pakistan to support its possible second resolution in the UN Security Council to authorise military strikes against Iraq. Mr George W Bush telephoned Gen Pervez Musharraf on Friday to solicit support. US Ambassador to Islamabad Ms Nancy Powell called on Pakistani foreign minister Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri to solicit Pakistan's support. — PTI

### Iraq claims a moral victory

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Feb. 16. — Iraq today gloated over the global outpouring of opposition to the US threat of attack, saying anti-war demonstrations in several countries signaled an Iraqi victory and "the defeat and isolation of the USA".

Iraq's tightly controlled news media gave prominent coverage to anti-war demonstrations staged around the world yesterday. Iraqi TV showed footage of millions marching in cities all over the world — under the logo "International Day of Confronting the Aggression".

"The world said with one voice: 'no to aggression on Iraq'," read a headline in the government daily *Al-Jumhuriya*. "The world rises against American aggression and the arrogance of naked force," read a front page headline in the army daily *Al-Qadissiya*.

**Air strikes:** US and British warplanes bombed "civilian installations" in the no-fly zone in the southern province of Zi-Qar, triggering retaliatory fire, an Iraqi air defence spokesman said today, AFP adds.

"The enemy attacked our civilian and service installations in Zi-Qar province," he said. "Our forces confronted them, forcing them to leave our airspace toward their bases in Kuwait."



COLOURS OF PROTEST: Across Europe, it's reminiscent of the Vietnam protests that swamped USA in the days of Lyndon Baines Johnson. A scene from an anti-war rally in Paris over the weekend. — AFP

THE STATESMAN



**IRAQ CRISIS / CAIRO MEET**

**Arab states  
must do more:  
Baghdad** HD-19

18/2  
**CAIRO, FEB. 16.** Arab countries may not be able to stop a war against Iraq, but must stand clearly united against it, said the Lebanese Foreign Minister on Sunday in opening formal talks to prepare for an emergency summit on the crisis.

Any aggression against Iraq will have dire consequences for the entire region, warned Mahmoud Hammoud, Chairman of an Arab League Gathering of Ministers.

"Arab countries might not be able to stop this war, but they have responsibilities to consider steps toward taking a unified and clear stand against those who are beating the drums of war," he said.

"Arab countries should refrain from giving any military assistance in any aggression toward Iraq."

Several Gulf Arab states are allowing the U.S. to use bases on their soil for troop build-ups in preparation for any war against Iraq, which the U.S. maintains has not rid itself of banned weapons of mass destruction.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Greek Foreign Minister, George Papandreou, whose country holds the rotating E.U.

presidency, met the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, who is attending the Arab League gathering.

Afterward, Mr. Papandreou said he told Mr. Sabri war could be avoided if Baghdad quickly and "openly and reliably" answers questions posed by the chief U.N. inspectors, Hans Blix and Mohammed ElBaradei.

Mr. Sabri said earlier that Iraq wanted fellow Arab states to do more to avert war.

"We are satisfied with the public's position, but so far Arabs have not crystallised an official position," Mr. Sabri told reporters after an informal Foreign Ministers meeting ended early on Sunday.

Some Arab officials have indicated they wouldn't object to a war under U.N. auspices, but all publicly reject a U.S.-led war without a U.N. stamp of approval.

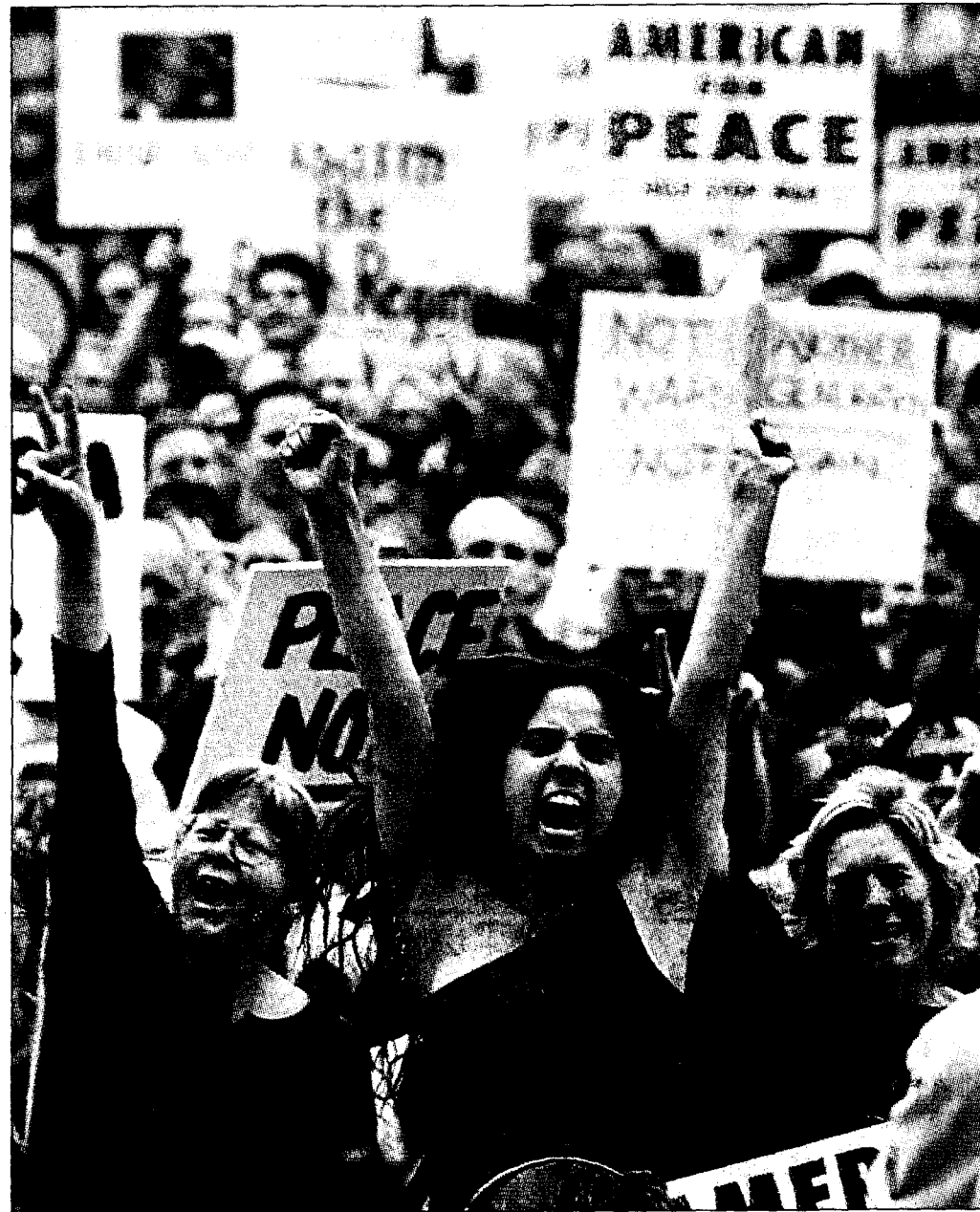
"If the war is launched, this will be considered as a unilateral act in violation of international legitimacy, U.N. resolutions and it will end international peace and stability," Mr. Hammoud told fellow Foreign Ministers in Cairo.

The Ministers then went into private session. — AP

17 FEB 2003

THE HINDU

# No-war roar breaches barriers



Women raise slogans in Texas, President George W. Bush's home state, against a possible US attack on Iraq. (AP/PTI)

10/12  
K.P. NAYAR

New York, Feb. 16: They came in hordes. Babies in prams, women in their seventies leaning on walking sticks and crutches, children with Cupid's insignia painted on their cheeks, militant labour union activists and teenagers who reminded everyone of protests by the "flower people" of the 1960s.

They came in cars, buses and trains. Some travelled all the way from Miami and Boston, staying overnight in dormitories to take part in a massive protest here against the Bush administration's preparations to attack Iraq.

They rocked to *All You Need Is Love*. One woman draped in stars and stripes chained herself to an iron fence in Manhattan, symbolising the attacks on civil liberties since September 11.

Most of all, there were New York policemen who were openly critical of the very restrictions they were told to impose in an attempt by this city's Republican mayor Michael Bloomberg to foil what was planned as the biggest protests in the Big Apple since the Vietnam war.

They were part of the wave of demonstrations by more than six million people that swept 600 towns and cities from Cape Town to Chicago on Saturday. More than 200,000 people, some waving banners asking "How many lives per litre?", kicked off a second day of protests in Sydney today.

Police erected barricades all over the east side of Manhattan, preventing tens of thousands of protesters from getting anywhere near the venue officially assigned for them to gather.

From morning, they restricted traffic from Queens to Manhattan so that protesters were



## New tape

Dubai, Feb. 16 (Reuters): An Islamist website broadcast an audio tape purported to be the voice of Osama bin Laden, telling Muslims to fight against the "enemy" US and saying holy war was the only way to win Muslim rights.

■ See Page 4

discouraged from joining the chorus against war.

The high-handedness of the city administration had the opposite effect, however. Demonstrators began impromptu marches wherever they were stopped, converting much of the east side of Manhattan into a sea of small, separate anti-war rallies at each block and along different avenues.

Naturally, at the end of the day the city police were unable to provide any figures of the number of demonstrators. Unofficial estimates varied wildly from 200,000 to half a million.

Bloomberg had refused organisers of yesterday's protest the right to march, citing security threats. Attempts to challenge the decision were rejected by city courts.

Despite such provocation, the protest here was entirely peaceful. On a stage 10 blocks away

from the United Nations, 83-year-old folk artiste Pete Seeger, singer Harry Belafonte, actress Susan Sarandon and her colleague Danny Glover addressed the crowd.

"Peace! Peace!" exhorted South African bishop and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu. "Let America listen to the rest of the world — and the rest of the world is saying: 'Give the inspectors time'."

Black men and women carried placards saying: "A house slave is a shame on our race, Colin Powell". It was a reference to Belafonte's recent remark that President George W. Bush had taken secretary of state Powell into his house to do his bidding.

There were many placards urging Americans to "Buy French", a reference to campaigns in the US to boycott French products following opposition from Paris to Washington's plans to go to war.

Although New York was the epicentre of yesterday's protests in the US, demonstrations were held in cities across America.

At a huge demonstration in San Jose, California, there was a war veteran donning the very uniform he wore fighting the Italians in World War II and carrying a sign: "I'm 84 and say no to war".

In Chicago, thousands paraded along the city's streets wearing skeleton suits and Uncle Sam hats, tooting horns and banging plastic buckets or aluminum pots.

Anti-war marchers gathered from Maine to Florida, from Colorado to Michigan in numbers big and small.

In Philadelphia, Quakers held a silent protest while Koreans who fled the war in their country banged traditional drums around the historic Liberty Bell.

IRAQ / 'BAGHDAD PLAYING TRICKS ON WORLD' 10-13

## Decision in weeks: Powell 16/2

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**UNITED NATIONS, FEB. 15.** After an embarrassing day at the United Nations Security Council, the Bush administration is reviewing its options with the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, insisting here that the issue of Iraq would be decided in 'weeks' and that a decision on a resolution would be made "in the not too distant future". Gen. Powell who had to sit through the Council session on Friday heard not only the anti-war sentiments among most Council members but also took some direct 'hits' from the Chief Weapons Inspector, Hans Blix, on the intelligence assessment provided in a special session on February 5; and the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, debunking Washington's theory of an Iraq-Al-Qaeda axis.

During the session, Gen. Powell maintained his composure but when it came to his turn to speak the top Cabinet official departed from the prepared text and took on the criticisms and warned the Security Council that the world should not be taken in by the "tricks that are being played on us". He also put the Council on notice saying that it would have to decide "in the very near future" on whether or not to consider the "serious consequences" of Iraqi non-compliance.

Over and beyond the rare show of emotions inside the Council Chamber, at the end of the day it was pretty obvious to the Bush administration that it did not even have nine votes to push through its aim.

Only Britain and Spain came out against Iraq; Bulgaria remained cautious; and Chile and Angola which were thought to

be on the side of Washington were somewhere in the middle preferring the continuation of inspections. Some senior diplomats here maintain that the presentation of the French Foreign Minister may have made all the difference along, of course, with the report of Dr. Blix. At the same time, in taking on the United States head on, the French could have actually hardened the American position further, it is felt in some quarters. The Bush administration's short-term agenda by way of forcing a second resolution may have suffered a setback by the turn of events on Friday here, but the larger Iraqi policy

and objectives remain unchanged. In fact, Washington has been saying all along that it did not need a second resolution to force a showdown with Iraq. The U.S. has not immediately agreed to a French proposal of a Ministerial Meeting of the Security Council here on March 14. Instead the immediate focus is on a March 1 meeting of the Members of the Permanent Five with the top weapons inspectors. Two days ago, there was the talk of Britain and the U.S. wanting to introduce a second resolution immediately after the Friday meeting, perhaps with a final resolution on Saturday. That is on hold now.

## 'Old' jokes ease tension

**UNITED NATIONS, FEB. 15.** The issue at the U.N. Security Council was war and peace in Iraq, but the world's top diplomats eased the mood with jokes about 'old' and 'new' Europe, using humour to deflate a trans-Atlantic spat. Speakers yesterday played on provocative remarks by the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, in January that France and Germany, opponents of Washington's drive toward military action against Iraq, were part of 'old' Europe, while supporters, including the former communist states, were the 'new' Europe.

The French Foreign Minister, Dominique De Villepin, said, "The message comes to you today from an old country, France, from a continent like mine, Europe, that has known war, occupation and barbarity. An old country that does not forget and knows everything it owes to the freedom fighters who came from America and elsewhere."

The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, Washington's close ally on Iraq which was not included in Mr. Rumsfeld's disparaging put-down of some NATO allies, took up the theme. "Mr. President, I speak on behalf of a very old country..." he began and was interrupted by laughter. He added a punch line: "... founded in 1066 by the French." Normans invading from France conquered Britain in 1066. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, when he spoke, followed suit. "I'm very pleased to be here as the Secretary of State of a relatively new country on the face of the Earth," he said to smiles in the Security Council chamber. "But I think I can take some credit sitting here as being the representative of the oldest democracy that is assembled here around this table. Proud of that," he said. — Reuters

## Bush will not wait for long

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**UNITED NATIONS, FEB. 15.** The United States President, George W. Bush's tough words against the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, at the FBI headquarters today were not merely for the domestic audience but also directed at the Security Council and the world at large.

The Bush administration was caught unawares at the Security Council on Friday when members such as France, Russia and China argued against war and pleaded for the continuation of the inspection process. The strident talk had posed a tough question for the White House — delay a decision on a military showdown or ignore the Security Council and go along with the so-called "coalition of the willing"?

Some diplomats believe that this week could be crucial at the Security Council as the United States, along with Britain, may try to get a resolution — specific or ambiguous — passed, and then, perhaps, set a small time frame by way of a deadline. In any case, the argument is that military advan-

tages would not be compromised for political reasons, least of all to what was unfolding at the U.N.

But one thing is clear: this Republican administration will not wait for too long. One assessment is that with or without a resolution, the U.S. is getting to start military operations around March 10. From a domestic point of view, the goings on at the U.N. and in Europe meant two things to the administration. On the one hand, there is the call to listen to what others are saying and, on the other, a sense of outrage in certain sections of Capitol Hill to the attitude and stance of European allies such as France and Germany.

And the Democrats, analysts said, were not sure which way to press the administration. While senior Democratic lawmakers like Senators Edward Kennedy and Robert Byrd insisted that they would call for a second Congressional resolution authorising war, others such as Joseph Lieberman, John Kerry, John Edwards and Richard Gephardt, who have accepted the administration position and reasoning, would be opposed to a second Congressional resolution authorising the use of force.

## Massive protests in London

By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, FEB. 15.** Britons today pulled out all stops to show their anger over the looming war against Iraq as hundreds of thousands of men and women from across the country poured into London in what was billed as Britain's biggest anti-war rally in recent memory.

Participants, many of whom had never attended a public march before, cut across party and group labels and included a number of Iraqis disproving claims that the campaign against Iraq has their support. The impressive line-up included West End actors, writers, playwrights, poets, academics, singers, MPs, civil rights activists, single mothers with children in tow, old-age pensioners, religious groups and even a clutch of visiting Indian and Pakistani activists.

Most people made clear that their opposition to a war did not

mean that they supported Saddam Hussein. They felt that a military conflict was not the way to deal with him, and wanted to speak up and be counted. "My son is in the army and I don't think he should be pushed into an unjustified war," said one woman. Filmmaker Ken Loach denounced war as "an act of absolute recklessness", and novelist Wil Self said Britain had no business going into Iraq—it was not within its "rightful sphere of influence."

Much of Central London was swamped by protesters carrying banners, singing songs and blowing whistles as they wound their way through Piccadilly Circus to Hyde Park where they were addressed by prominent public figures including the American black civil rights leader, Rev Jesse Jackson, who urged the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to "do something as bold as go to Iraq and talk to Saddam

face to face".

Noted playwright, Harold Pinter, human rights campaigner, Bianca Jagger, Labour veterans, Michael Foot and Tony Benn, the Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy, and the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, were also slated to speak at the rally which, at the time of writing, had just got underway.

There were enough celebrities from the world of cinema, theatre, music and fashion to turn it into a huge media event, and the presence of pop singer, Dynamite, and model, Kate Moss, came as a huge bonus to a whole lot of young participants out on their first protest march. A spokesperson for Stop the War Coalition, which organised the march along with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and several Muslim groups, described it as the "biggest demonstration this country has ever seen".

## Blair reiterates military option

By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, FEB. 15.** The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, today questioned the Iraqi offer of cooperation and reiterated his commitment to military action to remove the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's regime, if all other efforts failed.

He said more time would be given to the weapons inspectors, but raised serious doubts whether the inspection process would work given Iraq's record of "deception and evasion". "To anyone familiar with Saddam's tactics of deception and evasion, there is a weary sense of *déjà vu*. As ever, at the last minute, concessions are made. And, as ever, it is the long finger that is directing them. The concessions are suspect," he said.

Mr. Blair, who was addressing his party's spring conference in Glasgow amid countrywide anti-war protests, warned that the U.N. would be compromising its authority if it did not act to ensure that Iraq was disarmed.

In a strongly-worded speech, he said it would be 'inhuman' to leave the Saddam Hussein regime intact, and getting rid of it would be an "act

of humanity".

Observers noted that this was the first time he had spoken so strongly and explicitly in favour of a regime change.

It was in sharp contrast to the British Government's original position that it was not interested in overthrowing Mr. Hussein.

He told anti-war critics that there would be "moral consequences" if the Saddam Hussein regime was allowed to remain in power, and said he would not 'shrink' from military action if that was the only way to deal with Iraq.

Mr. Blair dismissed warnings that a war would destabilise the West Asian region and said similar warnings were heard before the military intervention in Kosovo and Afghanistan.

He said every time he sent Britain to war he hated it but it was important to have the courage to do the right thing.

"I do not seek unpopularity as a badge of honour. But sometimes it is the price of leadership and cost of conviction," he said and warned of "chaos, disorder and instability" if the threat from weapons of mass destruction was ignored.

6 FEB 2003

# Anti-war protests gather momentum around the world

**London:** Millions of people around the world were demonstrating on Saturday against a US-led war on Iraq after Washington said it would wait only "weeks" before deciding whether to attack Baghdad.

The first demonstrations began in Asia but the biggest were expected to take place in Britain, Germany, Italy and France.

Several thousand people demonstrated in West Asia in support of Iraq after Muslim prayers on Friday, setting the scene for the weekend protests worldwide.

The protests follow Friday's crucial meeting of the 15-nation United Nations security council, at which only Britain and Spain supported the US assertion that Iraq was continuing to defy demands to disarm and should face war.

New Zealand kicked off the global protests with around 14,000 demonstrators protesting in Wellington and Auckland.

Another 3,000 people took to the streets of Canberra in one of the biggest rallies ever seen in the capital of Australia, the only country apart from Britain to have sent forces to the Gulf to join the US military build-up in preparation for war.

More than 100,000 people protested in Melbourne on Friday and an even larger gathering is expected to take place in Sydney on Sunday which organisers predict will be the largest seen in Australia since the early 1970s.

More than 20 anti-war groups were expected to protest in Tokyo, amidst fears the Japanese government would change the country's post-World War II constitution, which bans the use of force in settling international disputes.

Several hundred people demonstrated in Hong Kong and rallies were also due to be held in many other major Asian cities, including Tokyo, Dhaka, Taiwan and Nepal.

In Iraq itself, two massive anti-war demonstrations

filed the streets of Baghdad, with many protesters carrying guns. Official figures put the number of protesters at one million. Reporters estimated the turnout at several hundred thousand.

Further anti-war protests in West Asia were due to take place in Jordan, Egypt, Syria, the Palestinian territories and Israel.

Thousands of South Africans, including three government ministers, lined the streets of Cape Town on Saturday, one of four protests planned across the country. Protesters carried placards saying "bombs kill babies" and "there's a terrorist behind every Bush".

French organisers of a rally in Paris, were expecting to attract hundreds of thousands of demonstrators.

German unions, rights groups and political associations were gearing up for what was expected the biggest peace rally in Berlin since the 1980s, when the US deployed missiles in Germany aimed at the then Soviet Union.

In the Russian capital Moscow, several hundred communists protested in front of the US embassy, brandishing banners saying: "Bush, don't touch Iraq" and "Bush go away, you are Hitler today".

Some 2,000 anti-war demonstrators in Malaysia on Saturday gathered outside the American embassy to protest against war despite police orders not to hold the rally.

The protesters, who included Australians, Americans and Belgians as well as Malaysians, carried banners and placards bearing slogans such as: "No war. Stop US aggression," "No more blood for oil" and "Drop Bush not bombs".

They chanted: "Destroy America. Destroy America. America is the devil. We want peace, not war."

"We are assembled here today in Kuala Lumpur with the rest of the world in condemning the aggression of the United States and its allies," the anti-war activists said in a statement. AFP



CONDITIONS HAVE IMPROVED FOR INSPECTIONS IN IRAQ'

# We have not found weapons of mass destruction: Blix

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, FEB. 14. In a presentation that brings little cheer to the Bush administration, the top United Nations weapons inspector, Hans Blix, told the Security Council today that conditions had improved for weapons inspectors in Iraq and that inspections had found no weapons of mass destruction.

But even while stressing the positive elements of the inspection process, he maintained that many prohibited weapons had not been accounted for, a finding of "great significance".

"One must not jump to the conclusion that they exist. However, that possibility is also not excluded. If they exist they should be presented for destruction. If they do not exist, credible evidence to that effect should be presented," Dr. Blix said.

In his crucial, second report to the Council which is seen as being far less tough on Iraq than on the previous occasion, Dr. Blix once again said that access to inspection sites were "almost always" prompt on the part of Iraq and that there were no signs that the Iraqis knew of the inspections in advance.

The Bush administration, however, has maintained that there is evidence of "clean-up" of sites prior to inspections. Referring to the February 5 presentation of the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, where he highlighted satellite photos of munitions depots, Dr. Blix argued: "The reported movement of munitions at the site could just as easily have been a routine activity".

He also said that mobility for weapons inspections, including for travel, had improved. Till date, there had been more than 400 inspections at 300 sites;



The U.N. chief weapons inspector for Iraq, Hans Blix, presenting his report to the Security Council on Friday. — AP

there were 250 U.N. personnel in Iraq, including 115 inspectors; and Iraq had relented on

private interviews and on the number of "minders". At the same time, he argued that since the interview with three Iraqi scientists of February 8 and 9, no further interview requests had been accepted on the terms of the inspectors. "I hope this will change," Dr. Blix said.

The International Atomic Energy Agency chief, Mohammed ElBaradei, told the Council in his presentation that his agency's work in Iraq had moved from reconnaissance to investigation. Iraq continued to provide access to sites. As he said in his January 27 report, Dr. ElBaradei, said that inspectors had found no evidence that Iraq had restarted its nuclear weapons programme.

But even before the reporting process got under way at the Council chambers this morn-

ing, the U.S. had started its high-profile diplomacy with the intent of swaying key states such as Russia, France and China.

Gen. Powell is pressing allies from Europe, Russia and China to see things the way the Bush administration wants: that is the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, has not lived up to his obligations and commitments set forth in Resolution 1441 and that he has deliberately squandered away his one final chance to come away clean.

The U.S. Resolution, according to one version, will not seek the outright use of force to disarm Iraq.

The Bush administration apparently wants the Security Council to go on record saying that Mr. Hussein has not disarmed and therefore faces "serious consequences".

## It's not about more inspectors: Powell

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, FEB. 14. The issue in Iraq is not about "more" inspectors but about "unconditional" cooperation by Baghdad regime on its obligations and commitments under Resolution 1441, says the United States.

Rejecting France's position, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, told the Security Council — after Hans Blix made his presentation on the weapons inspections in Iraq — "It's not more inspectors that are needed. What we need is immediate active unconditional, full cooperation on the part of Iraq".

On a day that saw sharp differences between the U.S. and its allies and friends on the issue of Iraq, Gen. Powell warned the Council that it should not allow the inspection process to be dragged on for an uncertain pe-



riod of time. Rejecting the stand that Baghdad had shown signs of increased cooperation, Gen. Powell said, "We cannot allow this process to be endlessly strung out".

Gen. Powell, who was pointedly criticised in the Council Chamber, took a swipe at talk of "Iraqi cooperation." Referring to the weapons inspectors, Gen.

Powell said, "...they are still being watched. They are still being bugged. They still do not have the access they need in Iraq to do their job well".

Prior to Gen. Powell's speech, the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, made a strong case against war on Iraq and for strengthening the weapons inspections process; and suggested a Ministerial Meeting of the Security Council to further hear out the inspectors. "The use of force is not justified at this time. There is an alternative to war — disarming Iraq through inspections," Mr. de Villepin said.

"Inspections are producing results... The option of inspections has not been taken to the end," Mr. de Villepin said, a view endorsed by the Foreign Ministers of China and Russia.

Bush's warning: Page 14

## Saddam decree bans WMD

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 14. Signalling that Iraq has decided to shed unconventional weapons permanently, its President, Saddam Hussein, today issued a decree banning the import and production of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

"Individuals and companies in private and mixed sectors are banned from importing and producing chemical, bio-

logical and nuclear weapons," the decree issued in Baghdad said. Its timing is crucial as it came hours ahead of a report by the United Nations weapons inspectors to the Security Council on whether or not Iraq was cooperating in the international efforts to disarm it. The move could also influence the debate within a divided Security Council on whether the inspections in Iraq should continue.

Countering the position adopted by the United States and Britain, France, Germany and Russia have been saying that the inspections were working and that they should be allowed to run their course. Iraq's weekend declaration is also significant as it could provide momentum to massive anti-war protests that are expected to materialise in the next few days.

Mr. Hussein ordered his

Ministers to take all necessary steps to implement the decree. The Iraqi parliament went into session soon after, to approve of the legislation that the U.N. arms inspectors have been seeking for some time.

Reinforcing the declaration, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, held talks with Pope John Paul and promised him that Baghdad would fulfil the U.N.'s disarmament demands.

# Saddam moves to meet UN arms demand

**Baghdad, Feb. 14 (Reuters):** Iraqi President Saddam Hussein complied with a key UN arms demand today by decreeing a ban on importing or making weapons of mass destruction, but the move drew a sceptical response from Washington.

Hours before the top UN arms inspectors presented a report to the UN Security Council that could influence the chance or timing of any war, Saddam also reiterated that Iraq was free of any such weapons, a claim the US rejects.

The decree is at least a symbolic gesture by the Iraqi President to meet one of the demands that chief weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei made when they visited Baghdad in mid-January.

"Individuals and companies in private and mixed sectors are banned from importing and producing chemical, biological and nuclear weapons," the presidential decree read. It said materials used in producing them were also banned.

Saddam ordered ministers to take all necessary measures to implement the decree and "punish those who don't adhere to it".

An Iraqi parliamentary session was scheduled to discuss the ban, but only discussed the prospect of war.

It ended with an appeal to the international community to thwart a US-led invasion of Iraq. "It is clear now to all the world that Iraq does not have weapons of mass destruction," Parliament speaker Saadoun

Hammadi told reporters after the session.

"According to Security Council resolutions...the problem must be solved peacefully and US aggression and threats stopped."

The US reacted sceptically to the decree, saying Baghdad had no credibility on the issue.

Washington said the decree was in line with expectations that Iraq would make piecemeal concessions, such as allowing U-2 spy plane flights earlier in the week, in hopes of heading off a war. "It's impossible to place any credibility in the laws, so-called laws, of a totalitarian dictator-ship," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

"But if one would just want to make believe and pretend that

Iraq was a democracy that would pass meaningful laws, it would be 12 years late and 26,000 litres of anthrax short, it would be 12 years late and 38,000 litres of botulin short, and it would be 12 years late and 30,000 unfilled chemical warheads short," he said.

Iraq has over the past eight days already succumbed to two other key demands by the inspectors — private interviews with Iraqi scientists and U-2 surveillance flights.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) earlier said Saddam had chaired a meeting of top officials to say the country had no biological, chemical or nuclear arms — but would fight anyone who attacked.

"That meeting... wanted to assure those whom it may con-

cern in our great people, nation and humanity that Iraq is free of so-called weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological," INA said.

"They are totally confident that this cover (banned weapons) is over and the aggressors can't use it as a pretext or an excuse in front of the Security Council to make it a cover for aggression," INA said. "If the aggressors attack after this... the Iraqi people and armed forces will fight them in a spirit of holy struggle that would please friends and infuriate the enemy."

Iraqi deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz held crisis talks with Pope John Paul and promised him that Iraq will cooperate with the international community on disarmament demands.

**Washington, Feb. 14 (Reuters):** A White House spokesman said President George W. Bush remained optimistic Iraq would heed international calls to disarm and avert the need for a US-led war to do so by armed force.

"The President remains hopeful that Iraq will, indeed, disarm and therefore avert the need for force to be used to disarm him," spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters.

Speaking after chief UN weapons inspectors delivered their latest updates to the UN Security Council in New York, Fleischer cited what he called continued obstruction by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

"But in the end, the process set forward by the United Nations... is aimed at the disarmament of Saddam Hussein. Nowhere did the world receive any comfort in New York that Saddam Hussein has shown the world that he has disarmed. Quite the contrary," he said.

At the UN, US secretary of state Colin Powell accused Iraq of playing tricks on the United Nations and said the Security Council could not allow the inspection process to be "endlessly strung out".

"To this day we have not seen the level of cooperation that was... hoped for," he told the council after the latest report on Iraqi disarmament by chief UN weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei.

"We cannot allow this process to be endlessly strung out," he said, mocking Baghdad's claim that it was cooperating with inspectors and disputing the anti-war argument that inspections should continue even without full Iraqi compliance.

Powell said the Security Council would have to consider whether it was time to impose "serious consequences" — the diplomatic term Washington interprets to mean a military invasion to overthrow Saddam.

"We must continue to put pressure on Iraq, put force on



**Chief weapons inspector Hans Blix at the UN on Friday. (Reuters)**

Iraq, make sure that the threat of force is not removed," he said, but gave no indication how long Washington could wait.

The US has moved tens of thousands of troops to the region around Iraq in preparation for an invasion if Bush decides to attack. US officials have said a decision was weeks away.

Powell said he was pleased at the positive elements in the reports by the UN inspectors but that they covered only cooperation with the inspection process, without a political decision by Baghdad to disarm voluntarily.

"These are all tricks that are being played on us... They (the inspectors) are still being watched. They are still being bugged. They still do not have the access they need in Iraq to do their job well," he said.

Blix had reported some improvements in Iraqi cooperation but complained again that Baghdad had not accounted for all of the anthrax, VX nerve agent and long-range missiles it was believed to possess.

# Inspectors find banned missile system in Iraq

James Bone/ The Times. London

NEW YORK, Feb. 13. — The chief United Nations weapons inspector, Mr Hans Blix, will report tomorrow that Iraq has been developing a ballistic missile that is in clear violation of UN restrictions. The discovery of a banned weapons system, even though it was declared by Iraq to the UN as a legal programme, is tantamount to the inspectors finding a "smoking gun".

The findings came as Mr Blix prepares to

deliver his crucial report on Iraq's cooperation with the UN's inspection regime to the Security Council on Friday.

Washington hopes that report will be damning enough to prevent France, Germany and other reluctant council members from blocking a second UN resolution authorising military action. With the discovery, Mr Blix will probably declare the Al Samoud 2 missile system a "proscribed programme".

Diplomats said the announcement would strengthen London and Washington's case that Iraq is in "material breach" of UN de-

mands and help the two allies gain support in UN Security Council for a new resolution authorising the use of force.

The finding may provoke a confrontation between Iraq and the UN when inspectors ask the Iraqi armed forces to surrender the banned missiles for destruction just as the country is preparing for an US attack.

"The verdict on the missiles was that the Al Samoud (missile) falls in the prohibited zone and its engines should probably be destroyed," said one Security Council diplomat.

Mohammed Aldouri, Iraq's UN ambas-

sador, insisted that the Al Samoud 2 missile system flew within the permitted range of 150 km. "I think these missiles are within the range agreed between the UN and Iraq," he said. The determination was made by a panel of independent experts who concluded that the Iraqi missiles are capable of flying beyond the maximum permitted range of 150 km.

Gen Colin Powell, the US secretary of state, is expected to join the foreign ministers of Russia, France and several other council members for Mr Blix's briefing.

# Iraq: Desperate UK seizes on missile proof

MIKE PEACOCK  
LONDON, FEBRUARY 13

**S**TAUNCH US ally Britain, struggling to rally support for war, on Thursday seized on a finding that Iraq has missiles of prohibited range as proof Baghdad is defying the United Nations.

The report gave PM Tony Blair fresh ammunition in the war of words among supposed NATO allies and the five members of UN Security Council which have the power to veto any new resolution authorising military action. A panel of independent arms experts told the UN the range of Iraq's Al Samoud 2 rockets exceeded the 150km limit laid down by UN arms controls by 40km. "If these reports are correct... it is serious," Blair said.

"It would be not just a failure to declare and disclose information but a breach of resolution 1441," Blair said.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, arriving in Italy to put his case to Eu-

rope, countered. "We are still within limits that are decided by the UN."

The issue will reach a climax at the UN on Friday when chief UN-weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohamed El Baradei report to the Security Council. US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who will attend Friday's Security Council meeting, said decision time was near. "We are reaching a moment of truth as to whether or not this matter will be resolved peacefully, or will be resolved by military conflict," he told US lawmakers on Wednesday. As Washington called up more reservists, talks were under way on the language of a new UN disarmament resolution on Iraq.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was quoted by the press as saying Russia might block further UN steps against Iraq. "If it is necessary, we will use our veto, but I do not think it is helpful to get into debate about this at the moment," he said.

China has lined up with Russia and France to give the doves an apparent ma-

on Thursday that Germany—one of 10 Council members without a veto — said he did not think Iraq was in "material breach" of 1441. Chancellor Schroeder said a majority of the Council's 15 members supported Germany's position.

"Together with France, Russia and other partners the government is doing all it can for a peaceful resolution. That is possible and we are fighting for that," he told Parliament. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, another NATO and Security Council member, promised President George W. Bush he would help build support for a new resolution authorising force.

Warplanes taking part in US-British no-fly zone patrols attacked Iraqi battlefield missiles for a second successive day on Wednesday. The US Military said the missiles posed a threat to coalition forces massing in neighbouring Kuwait.

Both the United States and Britain were on alert for attacks at home. Jeep-borne, anti-aircraft missiles were de-

played in Washington. Troops patrolled London's main airport Heathrow.

Washington seized on a taped message attributed to Osama bin Laden which talked of "our Mujahideen brothers" inside Iraq as evidence of an "unholy partnership" between Al Qaeda and Iraq. NATO grappled with one of the worst crises of its 54-year-old history, after France, Germany and Belgium blocked plans to send military aid to Turkey.

German Defence Minister Peter Struck said on Thursday the deadlock would be broken by Saturday. A US official said in Geneva it was "unacceptable" for Iraq to take its turn next month as President of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, saying it would discredit the institution. France backed the US position.

Opponents of war in Iraq have called a series of marches around the world for Saturday. The organisers expect millions of people to turn the anti-war protest into the biggest ever. — Reuters

## Germany leads doubters on Iraq-Qaeda link in Osama tape

**B**ERLIN: Germany, Europe's most vocal opponent of war in Iraq, swiftly dismissed on Wednesday US claims that a new audio tape believed to be of Osama bin Laden pointed to close links between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda.

Germany said the tape, which exhorted Muslims to fight the "allies of the devil", appeared to contain no such proof that Iraq had any ties with Al Qaeda.

"From what is known so far, we don't think we can conclude that there is evidence of an axis or close link between the regime in Baghdad and Al Qaeda," a spokesman said. — Reuters

Majority among the five Security Council veto powers over the US and Britain, who say they want a further UN resolution but will go to war without one if necessary.

Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said

# French plan to resolve Iraq crisis

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 12. The stage is being set for an all-out confrontation at the United Nations, with France keen on taking on Britain and the United States over the ongoing crisis in Iraq.

Defying Washington and London, France has circulated specific proposals that would address the issue of disarmament in Iraq in a peaceful manner. The French idea has the backing of Russia and China, two other permanent members of the Security Council; and according to one count, has the support of at least 11 out of the 15 members of the full Security Council. For any resolution to pass the Council, it requires nine votes and no veto by any permanent member. And the Bush administration has started racheting up diplomatic pressure.

On Tuesday, the President's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, made a surprise visit to New York for a meeting with the top weapons inspector, Hans Blix. Washington is obviously concerned that Mr. Blix could "soften" his language in

his second report which would then weaken the "case" of the U.S. According to a number of versions in the media, Dr. Rice has told Mr. Blix that he had to be as blunt as possible; and is goading the top U.N. official to say publicly that Iraq has failed to scrap any of its prohibited weapons systems.

The Bush administration has also come down hard on the "conditions" imposed by Baghdad for the flights of the U-2s.

The new proposals set in motion by France will see the overall strengthening of the inspections regime in Iraq, including perhaps the tripling of inspectors on the ground; there will be expanded surveillance flights, the appointment of a permanent U.N. coordinator in Baghdad and recruiting experts and other officials who are qualified to track down Iraqi weapons and programmes of mass destruction. The plan would also expand the kind of security programme put in place by the U.N. in Iraq during the inspections process including the "freezing" of sites before and after inspections. But apparently, the French plan formally circu-

lated to members as a position paper does not talk about sending in U.N. peacekeepers — or Blue Helmets — to strengthen the inspections process.

Last week, it was said that both France and Germany were putting forth this plan with a larger and expanded framework of inspections. France — as will the U.S. and Britain — will wait until after the presentation of the second report of Mr. Blix; and this is set for February 14.

## Terrorism alert in Washington

WASHINGTON, FEB. 2. Air defences around the U.S. capital have been strengthened amid a heightened terrorism alert and a warning from the CIA Director, George Tenet, that Al-Qaeda attacks could occur as early as this week, Defence officials said today. Avenger anti-aircraft missiles have been stationed around Washington, along with extra radars, and the Air Force has stepped up its combat air patrols over the capital, they said. — AP

Threat to U.K.: Page 15

13 FEB 2002



# China, Japan air divergent views

## 419-4 13/2 on Iraq

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE, FEB. 12.** China and Japan are drifting apart on the Iraq crisis. China has decided to take a firm anti-war line at variance with the U.S. after giving it some benefit of the doubt about how far Iraq might comply with the U.N. resolutions designed to erase its profile as a "proliferator" of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

While the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, made his country's position clear in a telephonic conversation with his French counterpart, Jacques Chirac, on Tuesday night, the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, indicated in Tokyo today that the question of war and peace in Iraq would depend on the actions of its leader, Saddam Hussein.

This exposes the nuances and shades of opinions on Iraq in East Asia, too. But the differences in this region, such as they have begun to evolve, are not as dramatic or significant in scope as those within the NATO or across the new political divide between the U.S. and Russia on Baghdad's alleged efforts to take the world for a ride.

Several key countries in South-East Asia are opposed to the idea of any U.S.-led war on Iraq at this point, although their assertiveness in this regard varies from one state to another.

On the whole, the wider East Asian region is inclined to favour a "peaceful" resolution of the two issues of Iraq's WMD potential and North Korea's nuclear weaponisation plans. It is within this parameter that China and Japan have expressed their views on Iraq.

Mr. Koizumi said, during a parliamentary session today, that "it is for Iraq to explain itself" as the U.N. weapons inspections could not be construed as a form of investigation.

Without spelling out what Tokyo might do in the event of a military attacks on Iraq by the U.S., the Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yasao Fukuda, told Japanese journalists today that it was time for the international community to adopt a "consistent approach" in dealing with Iraq. Japan, for its part, would take a more definitive stand about war and peace only after evaluating the report by the U.N. inspectors to the Security Council on Friday.

In contrast to Japan's pro-U.S. tilt, China has come to the conclusion that the ongoing weapons inspections in Iraq were effective and that these should be sustained. Overall, Beijing wants a political solution within the framework of the U.N.

13 FEB 2003

# NATO fails to agree on Iraq

**BRUSSELS, FEB. 11.** The NATO ambassadors today failed to resolve a damaging crisis over Iraq and would reconvene tomorrow, the alliance spokesman, Yves Brodeur, said.

"There is no conclusion yet on the ongoing discussions," he told reporters.

"The talks will continue throughout the night," he added, referring to high-level contacts between top officials from the alliance's 19 member-states.

A new meeting of NATO's policy-making North Atlantic Council was scheduled for tomorrow in Brussels at 9.45 a.m. (0845 GMT), another official said.

"They are still at the same position," a diplomat told AFP. Monday's aborted meeting, meant to tackle a divisive row over a U.S. request to bolster Turkey's military defences, had

already been postponed twice during the day.

## 'Extend inspections'

In Berlin, a German Government source said today that 11 of the 15 U.N. Security Council members supported extending arms inspections in Iraq.

The U.S., Britain "in part", Spain and Bulgaria were the exceptions. "The others support the German position," the source said in response to a question about whether Germany was isolated in wanting the inspectors to be given more time to conduct their work.

Germany is a temporary, non-veto-holding member and currently holds the chair of the Security Council, which needs the support of nine of its 15 members to pass any resolution. The source said that when the work of the "weapons inspectors has been exhausted,

then we can talk about other action."

The German Government wants to see "robust inspections carried out in line with UN resolution 1441 on Iraqi disarmament, and the international sanctions imposed after President Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Kuwait reinforced."

The source said Germany had been working together with France on a number of proposals to avoid a conflict in Iraq. The proposals included boosting the number of inspectors, tightening border controls against illegal oil exports and other smuggling, and examining more closely so-called "dual use" materials that could also be used to make weapons.

The source said the proposals did not include sending UN peacekeepers into Iraq, as suggested in news reports at the weekend. — AFP

# Disarm, Don't Defy

## Ball is in Saddam's Court

By Robert D Blackwill

The dominating question remains to be answered regarding Iraq: "Will Saddam Hussein disarm peacefully?" Secretary of state Colin Powell's February 5 presentation to the United Nations Security Council provided detailed and compelling evidence that the regime in Baghdad is continuing to build Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs); is not cooperating with UN inspectors; is therefore in material breach of UNSCR 1441; supports international terrorism; is a threat to the people of Iraq; and poses a clear and present danger to the international community.

In this context, the United States strongly concurs with India's view that "Iraq has to faithfully comply with provisions of the Security Council resolutions," and that "Iraq should also respond to the facts and evidence which have been presented to the Security Council," by secretary Powell.

Furthermore, we are in full harmony with India's position that the disarmament of Iraq should be done peacefully. Unfortunately, Saddam Hussein appears intent on keeping his WMDs, and on using them to threaten Iraq's neighbors in the Middle East and the world in full defiance of UNSCR 1441. Iraq's blatant disregard of its obligations to the United Nations stretches back over 16 previous UN resolutions in 12 years.

UNSCR 1441 required Iraq to provide a complete declaration of its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs and ballistic missile activities, and to permit UN weapons inspection teams to verify full compliance. Secretary Powell presented the Security Council last week with intelligence audiotape intercepts, satellite reconnaissance photographs, and human intelligence gathered from Iraqi defectors that prove beyond any doubt the degree to which Iraq has gone to deceive weapons inspectors and the United Nations as a whole regarding its WMD and missile programs.

The Security Council explicitly placed the burden on Iraq to comply and disarm, and not on UN weapons inspectors to find that which Iraq has consistently concealed for so long in an area as large as the US state of California. Iraq has demonstrably failed the tests set forth in 1441 for its complete WMD disarmament. Iraqi WMD experts have been told by Hussein's intelligence service that they are not to be interviewed outside Iraq, a direct contravention of 1441. Any scientist who agrees to be so interviewed has been advised that he would be treated as a spy, and Hussein has threatened them with death if they divulged information to UN weapons inspectors.

The Iraqis have not accounted for the biological and chemical warfare agents they were known to possess in 1995. Iraq has the ability to produce the smallpox virus for biological weapons, as well as anthrax,

botulinum toxin, aflatoxin, and ricin. Further, as president Bush has emphasized, "We have sources that tell us that Saddam Hussein recently authorized Iraqi field commanders to use chemical weapons -- the very weapons the dictator tells us he does not have." Finally, Iraq already possesses two of the three components required to manufacture a nuclear weapon, and is attempting to obtain sufficient fissile material needed to complete the process.

In addition to its possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Iraq harbors a terrorist network headed by Al-Qaida operative Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who has helped develop and operate a poison and explosives training camp in north-eastern Iraq. Al-Zarqawi has been teaching other terrorists how to produce ricin and other poisons. Al-Qaida groups continue operating in northern areas of Iraq outside of direct Iraqi control, but Baghdad has Iraqi agents working with these terrorists. They have been involved in terrorist operations and networks in North Africa, Europe, and in Georgia and Chechnya.

Moreover, the Baghdad regime practices systemic torture, detention, disappearance, expulsion, and murder of its citizens. Saddam Hussein has used poison gas against his own people, and has caused untold suffering by denying them the profits of the UN Oil for Food Program. Iraqi authorities have conducted experiments on as many as 1,600 convicted prisoners to perfect its biological and chemical weapons.

The urgent question put before Saddam Hussein by the United States, India, the UN Security Council and virtually the entire community of nations is whether he will disarm peacefully. President Bush again reiterated American policy when he spoke on February 8, "Having made its demands, the Security Council must not back down when those demands are defied and mocked by a dictator. The United States would welcome and support a new resolution making clear that the Security Council stands behind its previous demands. Yet, resolutions mean little without resolve. And the United States, along with a growing coalition of nations, will take whatever action is necessary to defend ourselves and disarm the Iraqi regime."

Iraq's possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction is the most serious test that the United Nations Security Council has faced in many, many years. All reasonable people continue to hope that Iraq will disarm peacefully. But have no doubt. Iraq will be disarmed one way or another. As secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld said in Germany on February 9, "War is never a first or an easy choice. But the risks of war need to be balanced against the risks of doing nothing while Iraq pursues the tools of mass destruction."

(The author is the US ambassador to India)



119-14  
10/2

**IRAQ / BRITAIN, U.S. DRAFTING CONCISE RESOLUTION**

# Saddam may be given ultimatum

By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, FEB. 9.** Britain and the United States are reported to be working on a second United Nations resolution that would give the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, not more than 48 hours to leave the country or face military action, according to *The Sunday Telegraph*.

In a front-page splash, the newspaper said today that the ultimatum would come if the U.N. weapons inspectors were to report next Friday that Iraq was refusing to disarm fully and was in breach of the Security Council mandate.

"The phrasing of the new, deliberately concise U.N. resolution would deny Saddam a fresh chance to say that he will comply with Security Council demands.... The resolution would declare that Saddam is in material breach of U.N. resolutions which authorise the use of all necessary means to disarm him," it said quoting a "senior" Security Council diplomat.

Unlike the four other Security Council members — Germany, France, China and Russia — which are in favour of giving weapons inspectors more time, Britain and U.S. were said to be "determined to avoid a second resolution that would enable Saddam to delay disarmament further".

The British Ambassador to

the U.N., Jeremy Greenstock, echoing the Prime Minister, Tony Blair's impatience, said: "It's 600 weeks since we started the business of asking Iraq to disarm. Now, it's time to cut the knot and take action".

This was also the theme of the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon's stinging attack on anti-war critics.

He said the time was running out to contain Mr. Hussein and doing nothing about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction was not an option.

"The Government is not prepared to sit idly by ... and those who argue otherwise should look long and hard at themselves," he said even as anti-war Labour MPs stepped up their campaign ahead of next week's party conference where Mr. Blair is expected to face a hostile audience.

A potential revolt was said to be brewing among backbench party MPs who formed a cross-party alliance with Opposition members to demand a vote in Parliament on whether Britain should back a U.S.-led war against Iraq without a specific U.N. mandate.

Mr. Blair has said that he is hopeful of getting a second resolution through the Security Council but there was no official comment on *The Sunday Telegraph* report.



**A Bulgarian woman cries as she holds a portrait of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, altered to resemble Adolf Hitler, during a protest rally against possible war with Iraq, in downtown Sofia, Bulgaria, on Sunday. — AP**

# Hectic Euro-Arab diplomatic activity to avert war

By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 9.** Coinciding with what appears to be greater openness on the part of Iraq, Arab countries are holding intensive discussions on forging a joint initiative with key European countries, aimed at averting a war.

The objective of the exercise, which comes even as Baghdad today handed over fresh documents to the United Nations weapons inspector, Hans Blix, and the IAEA chief, Mohammad ElBaradei, is to ensure that Iraq disarms peacefully and that the "regime change" in the country is accomplished with the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, agreeing to go into exile, possibly in Libya.

Libya's role in achieving a breakthrough is acquiring increasing importance with the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, reportedly announcing on Friday that he had sought the Libyan leader, Muammar Gadhafi's mediation for averting a military strike against Iraq.

Mr. Gadhafi also paid a surprise visit to Egypt where he joined discussions with the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, the Syrian President, Bashar Al Assad, and the Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud Al Faisal.

Sunday's meeting follows intense Euro-Arab diplomacy that includes a visit by the European Union's External Affairs Commissioner, Chris

Patten, to Iran and Turkey. George Papandreu, Foreign Minister of Greece, current EU chairman, also visited Damascus and Lebanon in the last one week.

Iraq's Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, arrived in Teheran today to meet his counterpart, Kemal Kharrazi, who has returned from London after holding talks with the British Foreign Secretary,

Jack Straw. Seeking more time to persuade Mr. Hussein to choose exile, the Arab countries are expected to welcome a new U.N. resolution by France and Germany that seeks to disarm Iraq by increasing the strength of the inspection team threefold and positioning U.N. peacekeepers in Iraq. While the exile idea has not cut much ice with Washington or London, the two have not rejected it either. In fact, a new U.N. Security Council resolution that Britain could introduce after February 14, in case Mr. Blix gives a negative report, is expected to give a 48-hour notice to Mr. Hussein to leave Baghdad or face war.

Meanwhile, in a possible setback to the U.S. war plans, activists of the Kurdish Ansar al Islam, cited recently by the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in the context of Iraq-al-Qaeda links, have allegedly assassinated three top commanders of the pro-U.S. Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Cadres of the PUK are expected to play a major role in the northern offensive against Iraq, in case of a war.

## European plan a diversion: Powell

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**WASHINGTON, FEB. 9.** The United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has said that the European plan for Iraq is not a "solution" but a "diversion" and that it focussed on the wrong issue.

"The issue is not more inspectors. The issue is compliance on the part of the Saddam Hussein regime," Gen. Powell

said in an interview on Sunday.

There is a report which first surfaced in Europe that France and Germany are working on a Resolution in the Security Council which will see thousands of blue helmets inside Iraq, stepped up reconnaissance flights over that country and tripling the number of inspectors, all with the objective of coming to grips with the dis-

armament of that West Asian country. By this, some nations believe that a war with Iraq could be avoided.

But Washington has disagreed right away. "The idea of more inspectors or no-fly zones or whatever may be in this proposal that is being developed is a diversion, not a solution", Gen Powell said and warned Baghdad and the international community that time was running

out for Saddam Hussein. "We know what the Iraqis are trying to do. They are just trying to string this out, hoping that it will just go away," he said.

The Bush administration says that there is just no need for any elaborate additional mechanisms to be put in place in Iraq. All it required was for Saddam Hussein to reveal his country's weapons and programmes of weapons of mass destruction.

10 FEB 2003



# Blix lands in Iraq

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Feb. 8. — The chief UN arms controllers, Mr Hans Blix and Md El Baradei, landed in Baghdad today for a new round of crucial talks with Iraqi officials.

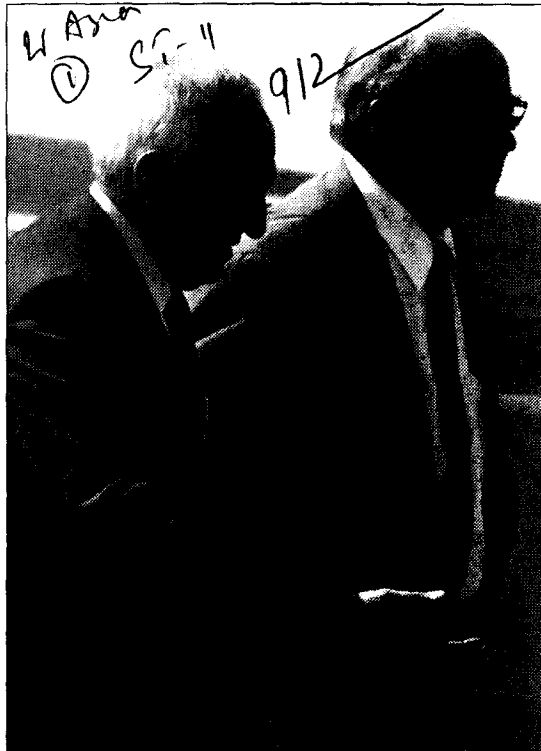
With a shadow of war on the horizon, the two went face to face with their Iraqi counterparts in "useful and very substantial" talks to finally get answers to questions about anthrax, VX and other forbidden arms.

After more than four hours of meetings, Mr El Baradei reported the Iraqis had presented unspecified "explanations on some of the issues." The discussions will resume tomorrow. The talks were pivotal, but they were "not the last chance" for peace, he said, seeking to counter talk in USA that the time for diplomacy has all but run out.

Mr El Baradei along with Mr Blix were looking for quick Iraqi concessions on practical matters in the disarmament effort here, such as clearance to fly American U-2 reconnaissance planes in support of their inspections. But they also wanted more documents, testimony or other evidence to clear up discrepancies in Iraq's accounting for weapons of mass destruction produced and weapons destroyed over a decade ago. The Iraqi concessions began early, with a private interview, long sought by UN inspectors, granted by an Iraqi scientist for the first time on Thursday. Three more scientists were interviewed yesterday.

In crucial reports next Friday, Mr Blix and Mr El Baradei will update the UN Security Council on their assessment of Iraqi cooperation.

In Munich, US Defence Secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld warned Europeans today that delaying preparations for war in Iraq could make that war more likely while undermining both the Nato alliance and the UN. "Delaying preparations sends a signal of uncertainty, instead of a signal of unity and resolve," Mr Rumsfeld told an international defence conference. But Germany's foreign minister Mr Joschka Fischer spoke against accepting "the logic of a military campaign." "We must give the inspectors more time."



**RIGHT OF WAY: President Saddam Hussein's aide, Gen. Amer Al-Saadi (left), welcomes Mr Hans Blix at Baghdad Airport on Saturday. — AFP**

9 FEB 2003

THE STATESMAN

# Trans-Atlantic rift over Iraq widens

## CAROL GIACOMO

Munich, Feb. 8 (Reuters): Deep US-European divisions over Iraq were laid bare today as US officials said European reticence over war was harming transatlantic ties, while Germany insisted peace should be given a chance.

US secretary Donald Rumsfeld told an annual security conference in Munich that 12 years of diplomacy, economic sanctions and limited military strikes had failed to disarm Iraq and the world would know in "days or weeks" if war was needed.

He branded as "inexcusable" moves by France, Germany and Belgium to stall Nato planning for the protection of Turkey in the event of a war in Iraq, saying they were undermining Nato's credibility and illustrating deep divisions within Europe.

German foreign minister Joschka Fischer told the confer-

ence Berlin stood by its obligations to its Nato partners but defended not wanting to push forward planning on Turkey, saying he was still not persuaded of the need for war with Iraq.

"I am not convinced. That is my problem. I cannot go to the public and say these are the reasons because I don't believe in them," he said, switching briefly from German into English.

Waving banners displaying anti-war slogans and blowing whistles, about 6,000 protesters took to the streets of Munich amid heavy snowfall today to demonstrate against the conference and the threat of military action against Iraq.

Fischer said Germany agreed that the end of the Cold War had disturbed the balance of power in West Asia but said Islamic extremists and not Iraq posed the main threat and bringing peace to Israel should be the first priority.

He also questioned whether

the US public was ready for the long-term occupation that would be needed after an Iraq war.

A speech to the conference by Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov made no mention of Iraq, focusing instead on security threats in Chechnya and Central Asia and arguing they were an integral part of global concern over Islamic extremists.

Rumsfeld said many in Europe had failed to see the danger of new security threats thrown up by the end of the Cold War and said Washington's main con-

cern was states like Iraq acquiring weapons of mass destruction and passing them onto terrorists.

He said Washington hoped to avoid military action, but a growing number of nations were serious about eliminating Iraq's alleged nuclear, chemical and biological arms but would only succeed if the world was united and determined to use force. Rumsfeld said it would be clear in "days or weeks" whether they are going to know whether they are going to cooperate.

Baghdad has denied repeatedly that it has such weapons.

"No one wants war. War is never a first or an easy choice. But the risks of war need to be balanced against the risks of doing nothing while Iraq pursues weapons of mass destruction," he said.

"Clearly, momentum is building, momentum that sends a critically important message to the Iraqi regime — about our seri-

ousness of purpose and the world's determination that Iraq disarm."

## New plan

Germany and France are working on a new plan to try to avert war in Iraq that would compel Baghdad to admit thousands of UN troops to enforce disarmament and tighter sanctions, a magazine said today.

A German government spokesman confirmed Berlin and Paris were working together to find a peaceful alternative to war with Iraq, but would not provide any details of the efforts.

Germany's leading news magazine *Der Spiegel* said the idea had originated in the office of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Berlin and Paris had been working on the details of the initiative in secret talks since the beginning of the year.

German defence minister Peter Struck declined to comment.

## Bush braces nation for war

Washington, Feb. 8 (Reuters): US President George W. Bush braced the nation today for a possible war with Iraq, saying it must be prepared to act if the UN Security Council backs down.

"The US, along with a growing coalition of nations, will take whatever action is necessary to defend ourselves and disarm the Iraqi regime," Bush said in his weekly radio address. Also today, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan warned Washington against attacking Iraq on its own, arguing action under a UN umbrella would have greater legitimacy and be more likely to succeed.

The comments came one day after the administration ordered a fifth aircraft carrier to the Gulf region, where more than 110,000 US troops have already gathered. Citing evidence presented to the UN by secretary of state Colin Powell, Bush said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has never accounted for a vast arsenal of deadly biological and chemical weapons, and was pursuing an "elaborate campaign" to conceal them from UN inspectors.

HANS BLIX VISIT / BAGHDAD SOFTENS STAND

# Iraq allows interviews with scientists

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, FEB. 7. With a military showdown fast becoming imminent and ahead of the chief U.N. weapons inspector, Hans Blix's visit to Baghdad on Saturday, Iraq has begun allowing private interviews of its scientists as sought by the U.N. Security Council. The U.N. weapons inspectors on Thursday conducted their first private interview with an Iraqi biological scientist. The session lasted for three hours and 32 minutes, the spokesperson for the U.N. inspectors, Hiro Ueki, said in Baghdad.

Similar interaction was possible in the coming days, the Iraqi Presidential adviser, and Gen. Amir al-Saadi, indicated at a press conference on Thursday. Iraq's reluctance to allow private interviews and its refusal to guarantee the safety of the U.N. authorised U-2 spy planes has become a major source of friction with the U.N. inspectors. Gen. Al-Saadi also hinted that U-2 flights could begin in case the movement of the U.S. and British warplanes patrolling the northern Iraq to maintain a "no-fly-zone" were suspended when these spy-planes were airborne.

Analysts point out that faced with the possibility of a fast approaching war, Iraq may be beginning to demonstrate to a divided U.N. Security Council that it was moving from passive compliance to active cooperation with the U.N. inspections team. In case it can make this impression on Mr. Blix who is to submit a report to the Security Council on the Iraqi disposition towards inspections on February 14, it would strengthen the hands of France, Russia and China who are reluctant to endorse the use of force.

Turkey, whose support the U.S. would find crucial, had on Thursday sanctioned the entry of U.S. military personnel to modernise an unspecified number of Turkish airfields from where air strikes into northern Iraq could be launched. Meanwhile, Iraq has rebutted the allegations of the U.S.



**NOTHING TO HIDE?:** Foreign journalists examine the Iraqi al-Fateh missiles at the al-Moutassem military facility, 50 km south of Baghdad, on Friday. Baghdad said the journalists' visit would "expose the lies" of the U.S. that its military facilities were concealing banned weapons. — AFP

Secretary of State, Colin Powell, point by point. Gen. Al Saadi at the press conference dismissed the relevance of the telephone intercepts that Gen. Powell had played on Wednesday to demonstrate that Iraq was not complying with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441. "Regarding the (audio tapes) I will not grace them with any more comments. They were below the level of a superpower. One can ... fabricate anything in this regard and they are no evidence at all," Gen. Al Saadi said.

Iraq has also denied any links with the Al-Qaeda network. In an interview to the French daily *Le Figaro*, Iraq's deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, asserted, "Absolutely no links exist between us and Al-Qaeda."

He also rejected the accusation that Iraq had secretly supported the extremist outfit Ansar-ul-Islam that is active in a Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq. On the contrary, Mr. Aziz asserted that Iraq had supported the fight against this organisation and had gone to the extent of arming the Kurdish rebel movement leader Jalal Talabiani when he had sought Baghdad's help.

Iraq also denied that it was sheltering Abul Musab al-Zarqawi, an Al-Qaeda operative of Jordanian nationality who allegedly has ties with Ansar al-Islam group. In recent years, Iraqi officials say, Baghdad made several offers to Washington to cooperate in combating terrorism but the United States had always failed to respond.

8 FEB 2003

# Iraqi denial amid new resolution talk

**NADIM LADKI & STEVE HOLLAND**  
BAGHDAD/WASHINGTON, FEB 7

**I**RAQ on Thursday poured scorn on US accusations that it was cheating weapons inspectors and had links with Al Qaeda, as the United States and Britain called for a new UN resolution to authorise war.

An elite US air assault division was ordered to deploy to the Gulf region and US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld left for Europe to press the case for a possible war on Iraq.

Iraqi officials responded angrily to US Secretary of State Colin Powell's evidence of Iraq's attempt to hide banned weapons.

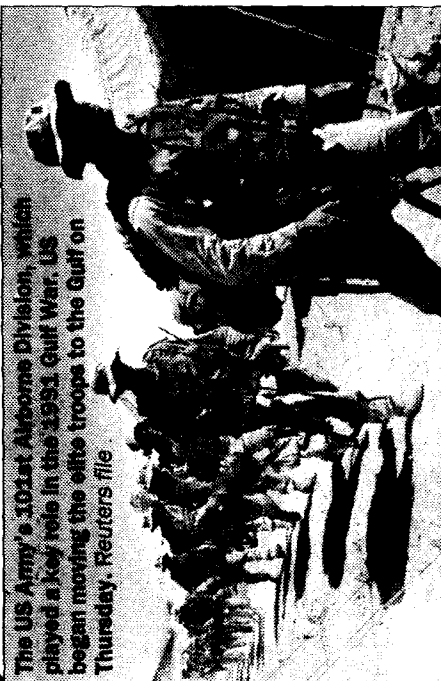
Amer al-Saadi, adviser to President Saddam Hussein, said the allegations were "outrageous and not convincing", designed as

## Balancing bear for Annan

**NEW YORK:** Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov has gifted UN Secretary General Kofi Annan a carved wooden bear walking on a tightrope stretched between two poles and juggling five balls to illustrate the need for Security Council unity over Iraq. The bear was given to Annan by Ivanov at a Security Council members' luncheon after US Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech in UN.

"home consumption for the uninformated." "We will send a detailed letter to the Security Council... to rebut Powell's speech point by point," he said. Months of diplomatic maneuvering over Iraq now focuses on whether the Security Council will follow up its November 8 resolution, which

The US Army's 101st Airborne Division, which played a key role in the 1991 Gulf War, US began moving the elite troops to the Gulf on Thursday. Reuters file



in a televised interview on Thursday night. "I don't think we will get to the position of vetoes."

Meanwhile, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who arrived in Europe on Friday to press Washington's case for military action, has said "momentum is building" for possible war with Iraq. On a three-day Europe trip, he warned that the international community was putting its credibility at risk if it gave Baghdad more time to comply with UN arms inspections.

Back in the Gulf, the pace of military preparations quickened. The US Army's 101st Airborne Division, which played a key role in the ground phase of the 1991 Gulf War, said on Thursday it had been ordered to go to the Gulf. The US contingent is expected to reach well over 200,000 troops. —Reuters

threatened Iraq with "serious consequences" if it failed to disarm, with an even tougher one.

"The US would welcome and support a new resolution that makes clear the Security Council stands behind its previous demands," President George W. Bush told reporters.

The US and Britain however reserve the right to attack Iraq without another resolution, which could be blocked by one of the other three powers which wield a veto on the Security Council: France, Russia and China. "I don't think that is what will happen," British PM Tony Blair said

## No proof yet: Blix

W. Amin  
① By Hasan Suroor L19 1

LONDON, FEB 6. The chief of United Nations weapons inspectors, Hans Blix, who met the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, today, distanced himself from the United States' claims that Iraq clearly possessed weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Blix maintained that there was no proof yet to come to such a conclusion, but said he was not excluding the possibility altogether. "We do not contend that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, but we don't exclude it," he said hours after the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell's presentation to the Security Council claiming that Iraq was concealing its deadly arsenal.

The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and the head of the Atomic Energy Agency, Mo-

hamed El Baradei, were also present during Mr. Blix's meeting with Mr. Blair at Downing Street. After the meeting, Mr. Blix warned Iraq that it must cooperate more fully on the "substance" of inspections, or his next report due on February 14 "may not be what we would have liked it to be".

Mr. Baradei said their visit to Baghdad over the weekend would be "crucial" and hoped that the crisis would be resolved peacefully. The message from the Security Council, he said, was clear that Iraq must "cooperate fully" with the inspectors.

Details of the meeting were not disclosed, but Mr. Blix was reported to have "updated" the Prime minister on the inspection process and was in turn given a brief on what he should tell the Iraqi leaders when he meets them.



# 'France against war in Iraq'

By Vajju Naravane

**BANGALORE, FEB. 6.** The French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, today reiterated France's opposition to the imminent war in Iraq.

"France's position remains unchanged. We want the inspectors' work to continue. We do not want war. We believe there are other ways than war of destroying weapons of mass destruction. War is really the last resort", the French premier said on landing in Bangalore where he inaugurated the French pavilion at the Aero-India show.

Asked to react to the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell's presentation before the Security Council on Wednesday, Mr. Raffarin said France was "committed to every process that can prevent war" and called on Iraq to cooperate with U.N. arms inspectors.

The highpoint of Mr. Raffarin's visit to the air show was the signing of four agreements between the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and the French aircraft engine manufacturer, SNECMA, for joint production, manufacture and maintenance of engines and key components to the tune of \$300 million.

Under the agreement signed in the pres-

ence of Mr. Raffarin and the Minister for Defence Production, O. Rajgopal, a HAL-SNECMA joint venture will create a centre for excellence in the manufacture of key components, investment castings, and equipment dedicated to aircraft engines.

HAL also joined up with another SNECMA subsidiary, Turbomeca, to jointly develop 'Shakti' a high-power arden engine and its co-production for HAL's advanced light helicopter.

Mr. Raffarin, speaking at a seminar on Indo-French cooperation in the aeronautics field, said Indo-French cooperation had a promising future. SNECMA has proposed an engine for India's HJT 36 trainer aircraft while the French companies, Thales and Sagem, had been retained to supply other components for these aircraft.

Touching upon the bid by Airbus Industrie to renew the ageing fleets of Indian Airlines and Air-India, Mr Raffarin described it as "a true industrial partnership" which had been extended by the involvement of Indian engineers in the construction of the future A380, the largest passenger aircraft ever developed.

He hoped the decision by the Board of Indian Airlines to opt for 45 Airbus would "soon become official". He described the

Indo French partnership in the aviation sector as a relationship between equals.

Mr. Raffarin began by honouring the memory of Kalpana Chawla, the India-born astronaut who died on board the shuttle Columbia last week, saying her last message from the doomed flight was a message for the youth of this country, urging them to work hard to translate their dreams into reality.

On Friday, Mr. Raffarin begins the political part of his two-day official visit when he is scheduled to call on the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and hold talks with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Mr. Raffarin will also meet the Vice-President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, and the Opposition leader, Sonia Gandhi.

India and France will have the opportunity to spell out their opposition to a war in Iraq.

The two countries have very similar views on the subject, expressed two weeks ago in Paris by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and Mr. Raffarin during the former's visit to Paris.

This stand, that any decision on Iraq must be taken by the U.N. Security Council has not altered since, Mr Raffarin said.

# Powell wins little support for war

United Nations, February 6

SECRETARY OF state Colin Powell failed to persuade key Security Council members to back an early war in Iraq as attention shifted to a weekend trip to Baghdad by the top UN arms inspectors.

The response from Washington's staunchest allies to Powell's presentation was quick and supportive.

Britain called the evidence "powerful". Spain said it was "compelling". Australia said the speech showed a "deeply disturbing pattern of deceit" by Saddam. Italy and Netherlands also lauded Powell, and Israel's Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had "exposed the great dangers that emanate from this regime to the world".

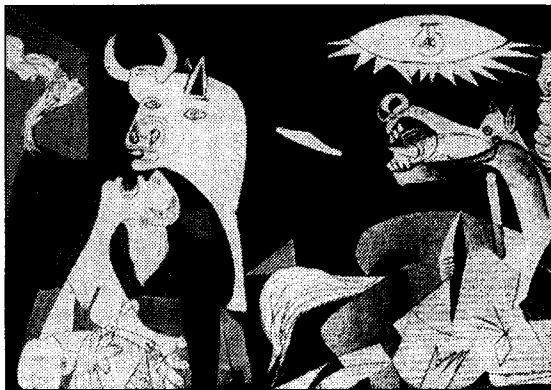
Tokyo's Premier Junichiro Koizumi on Thursday said Powell's speech had deepened suspicions over Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, and said Iraq holds the key to whether a peaceful solution can be reached. But Powell's 80-minute presentation appeared to do little to win over countries opposed to the war.

France and Germany said they needed to review the evidence and wanted to give arms inspectors more time.

French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin told Europe 1 radio on Thursday the time was not right to discuss a new UN resolution to pave the way for a war against Iraq.

Ten former Communist

## UN keeps *Guernica* under wraps



The *Guernica*.

United Nations, Feb 6

IN A bold cover-up, the United Nations on Wednesday concealed behind a blue cloth and a row of flags the world body's treasured tapestry of *Guernica*, the Picasso anti-war masterpiece.

The tapestry hangs outside the Security Council, where Colin Powell was presenting the US case that Iraq is hiding weapons of mass destruc-

tion and war may be needed to make sure it disarms.

But UN officials insisted that the cover and flags were meant only to provide a strong visual clue to TV cameras.

*Guernica* commemorates a Spanish village in Spain that was used by Germany for bombing practice on April 27, 1937. The raid affected 1,600 people and left the village in flames for three days.

Reuters

countries, however, broke ranks with Western Europeans on the issue, strongly supporting the US. Foreign ministers of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia,

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania said they had lived under communism and experienced tyranny. They asked democracies to unite to face the danger posed by Iraq.

Agencies

7 FEB 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11-16

## Escape Hatch

The presentation of clinching 'evidence' by the US secretary of state Colin Powell to the UN Security Council that Iraq was concealing its weapons of mass destruction makes it clear that — barring a miracle — war is inevitable. Mr Powell's 'proof' of weaponisation, based on US intelligence reports and tapes, is founded on strange logic: Over a decade ago, Iraq was known to possess chemical and biological weapons, such as anthrax. These have not been found, though the UN inspectors have been on the job since last November, nor has their absence satisfactorily been explained by Baghdad. So obviously Saddam is hiding them. As such, there is no need to look for them any more, but conclude, as Mr Powell did, that the Iraqi leader has made "no effort to disarm as required by the international community". This is virtually a post-dated declaration of war, needing now only the rubber stamp of the UN inspection teams. However, if president Bush and his advisers have painted themselves into a corner with regard to options vis-a-vis Baghdad, the Iraqi leader also finds himself in a similar situation, brought about by his intransigence.

If war — with its incalculable costs in material and human terms — is to be avoided, some out-of-the-box thinking needs to be done. It is possible that having long stifled even the mildest dissent and having surrounded himself with echo-chamber acolytes, Mr Hussein has lost touch with the reality principle and prefers to remain oblivious of the disastrous consequences of getting into a collision course with the world's only superpower. This might explain why he has not offered any sort of compromise that could help to defuse the situation. The suggestion — made by the US, and others — that he seek permanent asylum in another country might be an unacceptably bitter pill for the Iraqi strongman to swallow. However, he might think of offering to remove himself temporarily from the scene, under UN auspices and protection, in order to counter the US charge that he is obstructing the search for weapons. Stubborn pride, buttressed by suspicions that his enemies might well plant damning evidence in his absence, is unlikely to countenance such a suggestion. But some departure from mutual inflexibility has to be made, no matter how outlandish it might initially sound, if a war, with its unforeseeable repercussions, is to be avoided. Time and options are fast running out not just for Saddam, but for the global community.

7 FEB 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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**TONY BENN INTERVIEW/ BLAIR DISMISSES CLAIM**

# Saddam denies Al-Qaeda link

By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, FEB. 5.** In a rare TV interview to a British politician, the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, has strongly denied any links with Al-Qaeda and accused Britain and America of looking for a "pretext" for a war in order to gain control over Iraqi oil.

Speaking to Tony Benn, a Labour Party veteran and bitter critic of Prime Minister, Tony Blair's hawkish stance on Iraq, Mr. Hussein said: "If we had a relationship with Al-Qaeda and we believed in that relationship we wouldn't be ashamed to admit it. Therefore I would like to tell you directly and also through you to anyone who is interested to know that we have no relationship with the Al-Qaeda."

But Mr. Blair remained unimpressed and told sceptical MPs that evidence did exist, suggesting links between the Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi regime. What was not known was the "extent" of the links, he said and denied that he was "talking up" the issue to justify an attack on Iraq.

Mr. Hussein in his TV interview, telecast on Channel 4, questioned the British and American motives and said they wanted to destroy Iraq, because the "destruction of Iraq is a prerequisite to controlling oil." He was not con-



**The Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein (right), with the British Labour Party veteran, Tony Benn (left) at Mr. Hussein's presidential palace in Baghdad . Mr. Hussein denied links between his regime and the Al-Qaeda in the interview. — AFP**

vinced that the aim behind the U.N. arms inspections was to track down weapons of mass destruction.

("If the purpose was to make sure that Iraq is free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons then they can do that. These weapons do not come in small pills that you can hide in your pocket. These are weapons of mass destruction and it is easy to work out if Iraq has them or not," he said.)

Mr. Hussein said Iraq did have "complaints" about certain aspects of the weapons inspections but it had no wish to

"push things to a confrontation".

"Iraq has no interest in war," he declared and said it was the "other side" which was gearing up for a war against his country. He singled out America as the more aggressive compared to Britain and said that, through the interview, he wanted to reach out to the British people.

"Iraqis do not hate the British people. We hope the British people would tell those who hate the Iraqis and wish them harm that there is no reason to justify this war," he told Mr.

Benn.

The interview, for which Channel 4 is reported have paid £50,000 to a London-based Arab TV network, was widely dismissed as propaganda while Mr. Benn received flak for being "too soft" on the Iraqi President. "Saddam couldn't have faced a softer grilling had he been quizzed by an interviewer from his own State-run broadcaster," *The Times* said and wondered whether the person Mr. Benn interviewed was indeed Mr. Hussein or "one of the numerous doubles who stand in for the Iraqi dictator..."

INDU  
- 6 FEB 2003

# Powell presents evidence on Iraq

Press Trust of India

UNHQ, Feb. 5. — Backed by satellite pictures and purported transcripts of conversations between senior Iraqi military officers, the US secretary of state General Colin Powell today told the UN Security Council that Baghdad is hiding its weapons of mass destruction and has devised ingenious methods to ensure that weapons inspectors do not find them.

He also accused Iraq of having "sinister" links with the terrorist networks.

General Powell said Iraq continued to follow a policy of denial and deception and asserted that it was not cooperating with weapons inspectors and was hiding prohibited weapons.

Right at the beginning of the presentation, Gen Powell played two tapes of conversation between military commanders which, he said, clearly in-

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dicated that they were trying to hide prohibited weapons and to ensure that weapons inspectors did not find anything.

Gen Powell presented spy satellite photographs that, he said, proved Iraq was maintaining banned weapons programmes in defiance of UN disarmament demands.

He alleged that Iraqi officials hid correspondence on military industrialisation, ordered the removal of banned weapons from key sites and hid prohibited items in their homes.

The satellite pictures showed what Gen Powell said was an ammunition facility which housed chemical weapons. He said the facility was cleaned up before the inspections and showed another picture which showed that Iraq was removing the prohibited material.

An image of missile facility, he said, showed that Iraq had moved missiles days before the inspections. In another

image, he showed trucks and cranes brought to remove the missile.

Mr Saddam Hussein threatened Iraqi scientists with death if they divulged information to UN inspectors, General Powell said.

Scientists, under direct orders from the Iraqi leader, had been forced to sign documents that said divulging any information would be punishable by death, the secretary of state told the packed Security Council chamber.

"On the orders of Saddam Hussein... a false death certificate was issued for one scientist who was sent into hiding," while dozens more were placed under house arrest, Gen Powell said. The issue, Gen Powell said, is not how much time the weapons inspectors should be given but for how long the Security Council was prepared to put up with Iraq's deception.

Iraq has not accounted for all biological materials which it had admitted it possessed, he said.

6 FEB 2003

THE STATESMAN



IRAQ / U.S., ISRAEL TEST PATRIOT MISSILES

# Final preparations for war on

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 4. Israel and the United States today tested Patriot missiles on Israeli soil as part of a final phase of preparations for a war against Iraq even as Iraq's key neighbours stepped up efforts to forge a durable relationship with the European Union (E.U.).

About 10 to 14 Patriot missiles were tested in a simulated exercise in the Negev desert. Israel apprehends that once a military showdown with Iraq begins, Baghdad may not hesitate to attack it with Scud missiles tipped with chemical warheads.

Israel has recently imported improved Patriot missiles as the earlier version of these weapons deployed in 1991 proved largely ineffective. Iraq had fired 39 Scud missiles on Israel during the first Gulf War.

As the possibilities of war increase, Iraq's neighbouring countries, apprehending that the war will lead to an entrenchment of pax-Americana in the region, are beginning to look at the possibility of the E.U. emerging as a future ally.

Iran's President, Mohammad Khatami, hosted the E.U.'s External Affairs Commissioner, Chris Patten, in Teheran on Tuesday.

Though Iraq is one of the key issues being discussed in Teheran, the two sides are looking at positioning an institutional framework that will define their long-term political and eco-



**READY TO STRIKE: A U.S. Army officer tests a Patriot missile at a classified launch area in the southern Kuwaiti desert on Tuesday. — AFP**

nomie relationship. Mr. Patten has reportedly called for forging strategic ties with Iran and has pointed out that it would be a mistake to exclude Iran from shaping the global agenda.

The six Persian Gulf states that are part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are also looking at cultivating the E.U. more keenly. Qatar has invited the Foreign Ministers of France, Belgium, Spain and Luxembourg to participate in what would amount to a Euro-GCC dialogue on March 3. Respon-

ding to the overtures from several West Asian countries and faced with the difficulties it is encountering with the U.S., the E.U. has also begun to signal that it is open to exploring the possibility of forging an E.U.-Arab front, focused on averting a war.

The E.U., for instance, said on Tuesday that it was considering whether to join a possible Arab peace mission to Baghdad to tell the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, that he must comply with U.N. resolutions on disar-

mament. The Foreign Minister of Greece, George Papandreu, the current E.U. President, when asked by reporters in Beirut on Tuesday whether the E.U. would be ready to join an Arab peace mission, said: "We have talked about the possibility of whether the envoys should be Arabs or the E.U. and Arabs. No decision has been taken yet." He also said the Arab League would hold its annual summit in late February or early March, rather than late March as scheduled.

Earlier, the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, on whom Mr. Papandreu had called during his stay in Damascus, had stressed the importance of enhancing European cooperation with Iraq's neighbouring states for reaching a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Meanwhile, there are reports about the departure of some of diplomats from the Iraqi capital.

The Polish embassy in Baghdad announced that it was closing its U.S. interests section that was the only manifestation of Washington's diplomatic presence in Iraq since 1991.

Analysts find Poland as being Washington's trusted ally in Baghdad till now as significant, as it indicates Washington's deepening ties with the Eastern and Central Europe.

Hungary, Poland's neighbour, is reportedly imparting military training to Iraqi exiles and Bulgaria has already pledged full support to Washington over Iraq.

THE HINDU

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# UK fails to coax France over Iraq war

MARK JOHN (14)

**Le Touquet (France), Feb. 4** (Reuters): Washington's closest ally Britain failed to coax France into backing early military action against Iraq today.

US secretary of state Colin Powell has promised to unveil "compelling proof" tomorrow that Baghdad is hiding banned weapons from UN inspectors, but French President Jacques Chirac said more could be done to disarm Iraq peacefully.

"We will only adopt a position when we believe that nothing further can be achieved there," he told a joint news conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair after a summit in the French seaside town of Le Touquet.

Amid this fresh evidence of divisions, the EU considered calling an emergency summit after Powell's address.

The EU was also discussing whether to join a possible last-ditch Arab peace mission to Iraq, where several thousand volunteers paraded in the northern town of Mosul chanting: "No Peace, No Surrender" in the latest show of defiance.

Israel stepped up preparations for possible Scud missile strikes from Iraq and Israeli and US soldiers fired Patriot missiles in a joint exercise.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who held talks with US President George W. Bush last week, said he thought a decision on taking military action against Iraq was less than a month away.

"I don't think more than four weeks will be needed to make the case for military action," Berlusconi said when asked whether military action over Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction might begin in weeks or

months. Britain said it would begin loading tanks from Germany onto 20 to 30 ships this week, indicating a possible mid-March start date for a ground war against Iraq.

Blair, trying to straddle the yawning gap between the US and key members of the EU over a war, won tentative support from Bush last week to agree to seek new authorisation from the UN for any attack.

But France, along with neighbour and fellow Security Council member Germany, insists everything must be done to disarm Baghdad without war. France has not ruled out vetoing in the Security Council any action it deems unjustified.

Both Blair and Chirac said after their meeting that differences remained over Iraq but they had agreed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had to be disarmed through the UN Security

Council. Bush also wants to rally as many countries as possible behind a war to disarm and depose Saddam but insists time is running out and has warned that any new UN resolution should not be used as a delaying tactic.

US officials said Powell would use satellite photos and intercepted conversations among Iraqi officials to make his case that Iraq was pursuing banned weapons.

Financial markets reeled in anticipation of the speech, due to start shortly after 1530 GMT tomorrow, with gold, the traditional safe haven in times of turmoil, hitting a 6-1/4 year high, bond prices rising and stocks battered again.

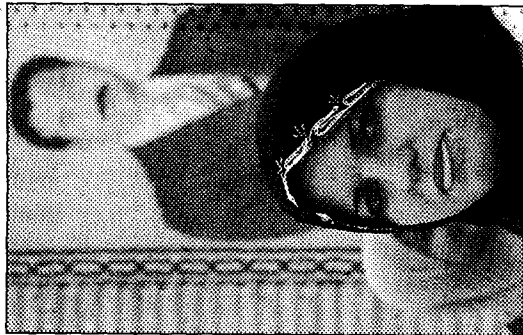
EU President Greece was sounding out other members on convening a possible summit following Powell's address as long as there was a clear understanding of what it could achieve, a

spokesman for the European Commission said today.

Greek foreign minister George Papandreou, who has been rallying Arab states to press Saddam to avert war by complying with UN disarmament resolutions, said in Beirut an Arab peace mission to Iraq was a "real possibility" and the EU might join.

Arab officials said worried leaders in the region were also exploring 11th hour solutions to get assurances the Iraqi army would be kept intact to prevent a post-Saddam Iraq disintegrating into rival Shia, Sunni and Kurdish enclaves.

In a bid to spare the potentially costly losses of a devastating war, part of the intention is to encourage the military to topple the Iraqi leader in a coup or persuade Saddam to accept exile by offering him and his henchmen a safe haven.



A doctor waits for an EU delegation which visited the Qadissiyah maternity clinic in Saddam City, Baghdad, on Tuesday. (AFP)

# Blair to meet Chirac on Iraq mission

Paris: The US-Iraq crisis entered a crucial week on Monday, with US allies coming under intense pressure to support a looming war, while Baghdad showed fresh willingness to remove obstacles to UN weapons inspectors.

France, a veto-wielding member of the UN security council, is expected to bear the brunt of a US-British diplomatic offensive to rally the world powers behind a new UN resolution to underpin a US-led military assault on Iraq.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, President Bush's closest ally, is confident he will convince President Jacques Chirac to back a UN

resolution authorising war on Iraq when the two meet for a summit in Le Touquet, northern France, on Tuesday, British newspapers reported.

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Colin Powell is to present security council members with US intelligence purported to show Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has links to the Al Qaida and that he is hiding weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush has warned that Iraq has "weeks,



Tony Blair



J. Chirac

not months" to give up its alleged weapons programmes in line with UN resolutions or face war.

Faced with the growing threat, Iraq has said it is prepared to meet the demands of UN weapons inspectors, who have been trying to secure Baghdad's agreement on overflights by US spy planes and interviews with Iraqi scientists.

Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix is due to go to Baghdad at the weekend for talks after Iraq's ambassador to the UN, Mohamed Al-Douri, said Iraq now had "no objection" to the use of U2 surveillance aircraft.

Hosam Mohammed Amin, who is in charge of Iraqi liaison with the inspectors, said: "We shall do our best to make his visit successful".

Turkey, Nato's only Muslim member and one of Iraq's northern neighbours, is also feeling the heat.

Although Ankara is reluctant to take part in a war, Washington has insisted it accommodate thousands of

**Faced with the growing threat, Iraq has said it is prepared to meet the demands of UN weapons inspectors, who have been trying to secure Baghdad's agreement on overflights by US spy planes and interviews with Iraqi scientists**

US troops for a two-pronged invasion of Iraq. A rancorous parliamentary vote is expected within days.

The US, Britain and Australia are assembling a massive force in the Gulf south of Iraq.

By mid-February, there will be more than 150,000 service personnel, at least four aircraft carriers and hundreds of aircraft in the region.

Mr Bush has repeated that he is willing to order a US-led war on Iraq with or without a UN mandate. AFP

## Arabs lack coherent stand on Iraqi crisis

By Jal Taraporevala  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The rising tension in the Gulf region has again underscored the weak position of governments in much of the Arab world. Indeed, the absence of an adequate Arab response has made it less difficult for the US to sustain the pressure on Iraq. This is partly a reflection of the diplomatic, economic and politico-strategic realities in

ton. These factors notwithstanding, a number of Arab governments are apprehensive about the fallout of a possible American war against Iraq, especially if such a conflict drags on for any length of time. A war would carry the risk of widening the gulf between the rulers and the ruled in the Arab world which, in turn, could have a destabilising effect on the regimes in the region. After all, there is a strong undercurrent of anti-American sentiment at the grass-roots level in the Arab world because of the growing assertiveness in American foreign policy in the post-September 11 period, the breakdown of the West Asia peace process and increasing economic problems.

Besides, there are specific local conditions which add to the concerns of some Arab governments.

King Abdullah of Jordan must contend with the fact that Palestinians constitute more than 50 per cent of the population of his country. Real per capita income has fallen by about 50 per cent in Saudi Arabia in the last 15 years, which has bred considerable disaffection in a section of the population.

The authorities in Algeria, Egypt and Morocco face a significant challenge from militant Islamic groups which can be counted on to seek to take advantage of a US war against Iraq to promote their own political agendas.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

a unipolar world.

Even so, there are some factors at work which have contributed to the lack of a coherent regional stand on the question of the American policy on Iraq. First, ideological divisions and differing security perceptions have made Arab unity an elusive goal. More importantly, some Arab governments have a vested interest in not antagonising the Bush administration. For instance, the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar have traditionally maintained close defence links with the US in view of their narrow political base of support and external threat perceptions. The administration of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt annually receives about a billion dollars in economic and military aid from Washing-

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 FEB 2003

# 'Iraqi scientists free to meet inspectors'

LONDON, FEB. 2. The Iraqi officer in charge of working with United Nations weapons inspectors said on Sunday that Saddam Hussein's Government was encouraging its scientists to meet privately with inspectors.

Maj. Gen. Hossam Mohammed Amin told the British Broadcasting Corporation that the scientists were reluctant to do so and were asking Iraqi officials to sit in on the talks. The issue has been a sticking point in the inspections process. Iraqi scientists have uniformly rejected U.N. requests that they submit to private interviews about possible weapons programmes, insisting that witnesses be present during the questioning, often Iraqi Government officials.

The inspectors believe the specialists will not be candid at interviews monitored by representatives of Mr. Hussein's authoritarian Government.

"The final decision is a personal decision. We are encouraging them, we are making them available," Gen. Amin said. "We can't force the scientists to make such interviews and if any of them want to make

the private interview, OK, we are encouraging them in that," he said.

## 'U.S. to administer Iraq'

CAIRO, FEB. 2. The United States expects to administer Iraq for a "certain period of time" after its "liberation" from the regime of Saddam Hussein, the National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, told a state-run Cairo daily on Sunday.

"We believe that when Iraq has been liberated from this terrible regime, the Iraqi people will be perfectly capable of running their own affairs," Ms Rice was quoted as saying by the Arabic-language *Al-Ahram* newspaper.

"But, there will be a certain moment, particularly while military operations are still under way, during which we will need to restore order and U.S. military forces will play a central role in that. — AFP

Meanwhile, weapons inspectors visited at least nine sites on Sunday before the ex-

pected return next Saturday of U.N. team chief, Hans Blix, to Baghdad, Iraqi Government officials said.

Three facilities used to manufacture missile components and a dairy were among the sites visited in the latest round of U.N. inspections that began two months ago, said Iraqi officials working with the international inspection team.

In New York on Saturday, a U.N. spokesman said Mr. Blix and the co-chief, Mohammed ElBaradei, would not return to Baghdad until Iraqis agreed to allow scientists to be interviewed and overflights of U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance planes.

The Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, said Mr. Blix would arrive in Baghdad on Feb. 8 for talks, Iraqi media reported. However, there was no indication whether this meant Iraq had accepted the U.N. conditions.

Inspectors used helicopters to reach two facilities outside Baghdad, Iraqi authorities said. Inspectors flew to Ba'qubah, a city about 80 km northeast of Baghdad and to the Syrian border near Al Qa'im. — AP, DPA

- 3 FEB 2003

FEB 2003

# Decision only weeks away: Bush

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JAN. 31. Edging closer to a military showdown over Iraq, the United States has just about told allies that the final decision is only "weeks, not months" away, with the President, George W. Bush, taking the lead in consulting world leaders on the developing situation.

The Prime Minister of Britain, Tony Blair, arrived here on Thursday night and will be meeting the President at Camp David on Friday. It is seen as a crucial meeting of the two leaders as Britain is the only nation that is openly on the side of the U.S.

Mr. Blair and Mr. Bush are expected to go over many details, political, diplomatic and operational, but no one expects the American President to be setting any final date on Friday for a military strike against Iraq. By the same token, not many are expecting the British leader to goad Mr. Bush into a diplomatic path. Privately, officials are saying that the U.S. may be willing to give the United Nations at least until February 14 when the top weapons inspector, Hans Blix, is due to give his second report to the Security Council.

Germany, which takes over the Presidency of the Council for the month of February, had wanted Dr. Blix to come up with a second report. But, what the Bush administration does after the February 14 timeframe is anybody's guess. Washington has consistently maintained that it would not allow the world body any indefinite period of time on this Iraqi crisis. For now, all eyes and ears are on what the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, is going to tell the Security Council on February 5.

The debate within the administration on how much to share with the Council and the international community apart, there are those in the world body who are quite sceptical of the additional information and intelligence that Gen. Powell may be bringing with him. The Russians have bluntly said that they are looking for compelling evidence or "undeniable proof".

In Washington, on Thursday, the Presi-



The Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, Saud al-Faisal (left), and the Saudi Ambassador, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, at a news conference after meeting the U.S. President, George Bush. The Saudis have been seeking a way to avoid a U.S. war with Iraq. — AP

dent met with the Prime Minister of Italy and the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, besides placing calls to the leaders of Portugal and Sweden. Senior officials such as the Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, were on Capitol Hill before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, making the case against Iraq.

Over the last few days, one of the things coming up in discussions is if the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, could be forced into exile as a way to avert war in West Asia. The Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia argued that this subject did not come up in his meeting with Mr. Bush. But every time the subject comes up there is a considerable body of opinion which says that Mr. Hussein will never voluntarily leave Baghdad or that there are indeed some countries to

offer him refuge and asylum. Even one or two countries frequently mentioned such as Belarus and Mauritania have rejected the idea. Further, questions remain on the kind of "deal" that is going to be struck for Mr. Hussein's exit from Baghdad, if this is going to happen at all. Washington is keeping the military pressure on, along with turning the heat on the diplomatic front. There are currently about 100,000 U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf area and this number is expected to double within the next three weeks. With four aircraft carriers already in the area or steaming in that direction, and two others likely to join, the U.S. has assembled a powerful navy with all the required air power. And the Air Force, with its long-range bombers, are on a high state of alert both within the U.S. and in bases overseas.

# Iraq invites U.N. inspectors to return

BAGHDAD, JAN. 31. Iraq said on Friday it was anxious to discuss key unresolved issues with top United Nations weapons inspectors — including private interviews with scientists and surveillance flights — if they accept an invitation for new talks here next month.

Maj. Gen. Hossam Mohammed Amin, chief Iraqi liaison officer with the inspectors, said Iraq was interested in resolving outstanding issues before Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei make their next report to the U.N. Security Council on Feb. 14.

However, it was unclear whether Iraq was prepared to make concessions on the issues of surveillance flights and private interviews with Iraqi scientists and others.

Outlining the Iraqi position, Gen. Amin suggested Baghdad would not oppose overflights by U-2 aircraft, as requested by the United Nations, as long as the U.S. and Britain stop patrols over the "no-fly" zones of southern and northern Iraq while the spy planes are in the air. This way, he said, Iraqi anti-aircraft batteries would not mistake the reconnaissance plane for American and British jets and fire on it.

The no-fly zones have been enforced by the U.S. and Britain since 1991 to protect Iraqi Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south from Iraq's army.

Gen. Amin also said it was up to individual scientists whether they wanted to speak to U.N. inspectors in private. — AP

# Remove obstacles, Iraq told

VIENNA (AUSTRIA), JAN. 31. The United Nations' two chief weapons inspectors will accept a new invitation by Baghdad to visit only if Iraq removes major obstacles now hampering inspections, the chief of the U.N. nuclear agency said on Friday. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director-General of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, said Iraq needed to allow inspectors to interview scientists in private and to use a high-altitude surveillance plane.

"We need to make sure before we go that they are ready to move forward ... on these issues," Mr. ElBaradei said as he returned from New York after briefing the U.N. Security Council earlier this week. "We will have first to see what they are offering before we decide on the visit."

The U.N. has been pressing Iraq for private interviews in hopes the scientists would be more forthcoming with information. Iraq insists it is encouraging private interviews and no one has accepted.

Another unresolved issue is Iraq's refusal to allow flights by U-2 spy planes in support of the inspections. — AP



# Diplomatic bid is on to disarm Iraq, says US

Washington/Baghdad: President George W. Bush was to make a last diplomatic push on Thursday to try to persuade Iraq to disarm as Baghdad's UN envoy said Muslims around the world would attack Americans in the event of a war.



**George Bush** would attack Americans in the event of a war.

With thousands of US troops pouring into the Gulf region, Mr Bush was to meet Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi later in the day to discuss a possible deadline for disarmament.

After Mr Berlusconi, who told Washington that its planes bound for the Gulf can use military bases in Italy, Mr Bush will hold talks at Camp David on Friday with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, his staunchest ally on Iraq. "They will discuss the next steps to take in the face of Iraq's failure to date to disarm and comply with UN's resolution 1441," said White House National Security Council spokesman Sean McCormack.

In a foretaste of diplomatic struggles ahead, however, chief UN nuclear weapons inspector Mohamed El-Baradei told the BBC he did not agree with US views that Iraq was already in "material breach" of the resolution—the legal trigger for war.

"If they decide that this is a material breach, then that is their prerogative," he said. "We are not going to say that this is a

material breach unless we see a gross violation."

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer predicted "an uptick in the tempo" of diplomacy with an increase in meetings and phone calls by Mr Bush in the coming days and weeks.

Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal will come to Washington from Paris on Thursday for White House talks, possibly including Bush, a senior official said.

Prince Saud, the highest ranking Saudi official to visit Washington in months, is expected to focus mostly on Iraq and US military preparations for a possible war.

The diplomatic flurry comes ahead of US Secretary of State Colin Powell's appearance before the UN Security Council on February 5. He is expected to reveal intelligence showing Saddam has been hiding arms of mass destruction and consorting with terror groups, including Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida network.

Iraq has denied the allegations. Baghdad's UN ambassador Mohammed Aldouri told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday that Muslims around the world would attack American facilities if the US started the war.

"Certainly, US interests will be endangered in the Arab world and the Muslim world. I am certain of that," Aldouri said. "They cannot accept that a whole country will be attacked."

The ambassador also distrib-

# Saddam vows to fight enemy even with pistols



US secretary of defence Donald H. Rumsfeld (left) listens to Joint Chiefs' Chairman, Gen. Richard Myers, as he addresses the media at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, on Wednesday.

uted a seven-page paper to Security Council members that contradicted arguments from chief weapons inspector Hans Blix, who on Monday sharply criticised Iraq for failing to account for past chemical, biological and ballistic weapons programmes.

# Saddam vows to fight enemy even with pistols

Baghdad: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has vowed that Iraqis would battle a US-led invasion with pistols and rifles if they had to and would ultimately "break the neck" of their enemies.

"Our determination is solid, even if it comes to pistols and rifles to battle and defeat the enemy," Saddam told a meeting of top army officers, later broadcast by state television on Wednesday.

"If (the enemy) keeps wanting to attack us, we are going to break its neck," he told the meeting, which included defence minister Sultan Hashem and Saddam's younger son Qussay, who directs the elite republican guard.

Mr Saddam said the army was preparing for the threat of a US invasion "with successive lines of defence ... and the greatest possible amount of equipment."

In the last month, Saddam has upped his meetings with military officials and traded verbal jabs with US President George W. Bush, who has threatened to invade Iraq unless it rids itself of alleged weapons of mass destruction.

The White House strategy showed some early signs of success as key allies came to Washington's defence in the showdown with Iraq. Canadian foreign minister Bill Graham said in Ottawa on Wednesday Baghdad had only a few weeks to comply fully with UN resolutions or face action. February 14 is the day when Mr Blix and Mr ElBaradei are scheduled to report again to the Security Council.

And newspapers across Europe on Thursday published a letter from prime ministers of eight European nations declaring solidarity with the Bush administration. On the list were Italy, Portugal, Poland, Denmark, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Council members Britain and Spain.

Still, no member of the UN Security Council changed positions on Wednesday, with most hoping war could be averted or delayed by allowing weapons inspectors more time.

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IRAQ / U.S. MAY SET DEADLINE FOR BAGHDAD

# Bush appeals for global support to disarm Saddam

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

NEW YORK, JAN. 30. Arguing that the containment of the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, is not an option, the United States President, George W. Bush, is calling on the world to unite and pressure the "dangerous" leader to disarm.

A day after talking tough on Iraq in his State of the Union Address on Tuesday, Mr. Bush took the message outside Washington saying yet another time that if the international community did not rally behind him, the U.S. will go it alone in the campaign to disarm Iraq.

"In my judgement, you don't contain Mr. Hussein. You don't hope that therapy will somehow change his evil mind", Mr. Bush remarked during a visit to Grand Rapids, Michigan. "I have thought long and hard about this. The risks of doing nothing, the risks of assuming the best from Mr. Hussein is just not a risk worth taking. So, I call upon the world to come together and insist that this dangerous man disarm", he said.

The White House is making the point that the flurry of diplomatic activity now taking place including the Secretary of State, Colin Powell's scheduled visit to the Security Council on February 5 is a "diplomatic window" — a narrow one at that — which would mark the "final phase" in this Iraqi crisis. The Republican administration is also making it known that while it



Members of the U.S. Task Force 1-30 conduct bunker training in the Kuwaiti desert, south of Iraq recently. — AP

expects the international community to rally behind in the efforts to fully disarm Mr. Hussein, the U.S. will act alone if it really comes down to that.

"Should they (meaning other nations) choose not to continue to pressure Mr. Hussein and should he continue to defy...

world leaders is seen in many quarters as the last phase in a showdown that will culminate in the February 5 presentation of Gen. Powell at the Security Council. One thinking is that with or without a second resolution, the U.S. will be setting a deadline — perhaps of 30 days.

this country will lead a coalition of other willing nations and we will disarm Mr. Hussein", Mr. Bush stressed. The Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, will be in the Oval Office on Thursday for a meeting with the President; on Friday, Mr. Bush meets the Prime Minister of Britain, Tony Blair, at Camp David. The Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia is rushing to Washington for meetings with Gen. Powell and Mr. Bush. The flurry of consultations Mr. Bush is having with

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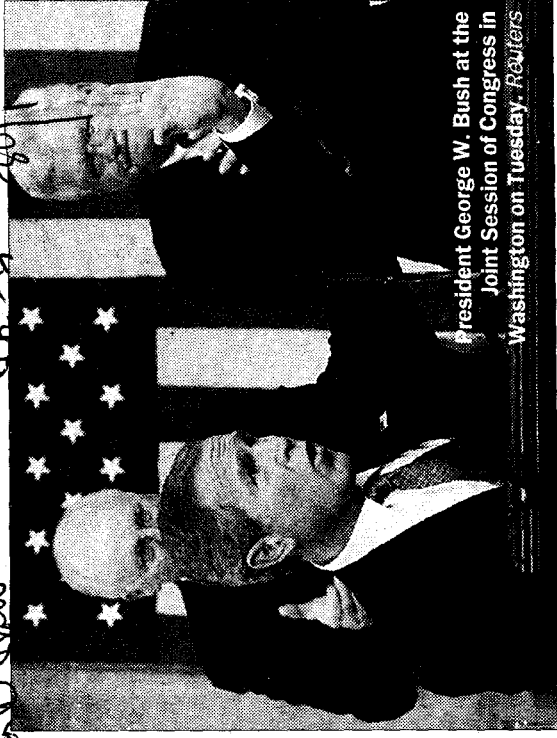
# Saddam in contempt of UN, says Bush

STEVE HOLLAND, PATRICIA WILSON & DOMINIC EVANS  
WASHINGTON/LONDON, JANUARY 28

**P**REPARING Americans for possible war, US President George Bush on Tuesday accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of showing "utter contempt" for the UN by practicing deception rather than obeying its demands that he disarm.

In his State of the Union speech to Congress and the American people, Bush said over the past 12 years Saddam had systematically violated UN agreements to give up weapons of mass destruction. "Three months ago, UN's Security Council gave Saddam Hussein his final chance to disarm. Instead, he showed utter contempt for UN, and for the world's opinion... The dictator of Iraq is not disarming. To the contrary, he is deceiving."

Bush said "the gravest danger facing America and greatest danger facing the world... is outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical and biological weapons."



President George W. Bush at the Joint Session of Congress in Washington on Tuesday. *Reuters*

## Bush unveils terror intelligence analysis

WASHINGTON: President George Bush announced on Tuesday the creation of an intelligence center to provide seamless analysis of foreign and domestic terrorist threats facing US. "I am instructing the leaders of the FBI, Central Intelligence, Homeland Security and the Department of Defense to develop a Terrorist Threat Integration Center, to merge and analyse all threat information in a single location," he said.

The Center will include CIA, FBI, Department of Homeland Security and the Pentagon. —*Reuters*

MOVIC have not directly asked for an extension, but that if one is offered by the Security Council, they would welcome that," European Parliament President Pat Cox of Ireland said.

Building his case for a possible attack on Iraq, Bush has asked the UN Security Council to meet on February 5 to consider fresh evidence about Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's "illegal" weapons programs.

Bush further said that Secretary of State Colin Powell would present new intelligence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to the UN next week and responded to critics who have said the threat from Iraq is not imminent.

"Some have said that we must not act until the threat is imminent," Bush said. "Since when have terrorists and tyrants announced their intentions, politely putting us on notice before they strike?"

The intelligence would form one part of the US push to persuade key countries — including UN Security Council veto-holders France, Russia and China — and a wary US public that military force may be necessary to disarm Iraq. —*Reuters*

Iraq was dragging its feet in meeting their demands.

Many US Allies have called for the inspectors to be given more time to work in Iraq and on Tuesday the Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix said he would welcome this if the UN Security Council offered it.

"I think he was anxious to establish in our minds that he himself and UN-

with the full force and might of the US military — and we will prevail," Bush said.

Earlier, Bush received strong backing from his main ally against Iraq, Britain, which said Baghdad was in "material breach" of UN disarmament demands. Bush's State of the Union address comes one day after weapons inspectors told the UN that

"These regimes could use such weapons for blackmail, terror and mass murder. They could also give or sell those weapons to their terrorist allies, who would use them without the least hesitation," he said.

Bush braced wary Americans for a possible war with Iraq by saying "some crucial hours may lie ahead". "If war is forced upon us, we will fight

# Preparing for regime change in Iraq

By C. Raja Mohan

*For the Bush Administration, this war is not merely about removing Saddam Hussein. It involves a much larger project about the political transformation of the Middle East.*

**I**N DECLARING that Baghdad had "missed" the last chance to avert war by coming clean on its programmes for weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, has signalled that war against Iraq is now inevitable. Acts of war are never easy for any leader. It involves careful weighing of all risks and benefits. In his State of the Union speech on Wednesday, Mr. Bush has made it clear that America has done its sums and is ready for a war to oust Saddam Hussein as Iraq's President.

But what about the debate in the United Nations Security Council on the latest report of the chief inspectors? The Bush Administration is not impressed with the view of Russia, China, France and Germany that the inspectors need more time to work in Iraq. Mr. Bush has now ordered his Secretary of State, Colin Powell, to present next week American evidence to buttress the claim that Mr. Hussein is cheating.

If the Security Council does not accept the American evidence, Washington is saying it is prepared to act on its own. As Mr. Bush said, "We will consult, but let there be no misunderstanding; if Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people, and for peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him". If the Security Council is prepared to go along with the United States it is fine. Otherwise, Washington is ready to lead a "coalition of the willing" into the war.

The charade of a debate in the Security Council on the inspections of the Iraqi programmes on weapons of mass destruction will continue in the coming days. It could at best delay the war by a few more weeks, but is unlikely to stop it. In the next few days, the leaders of the major powers will be under pressure to come to terms with the U.S. plans for war. Those like France might decide it is smarter to influence the nature of the war and its political outcomes than be left out. Those like Germany

who have strong domestic peace constituencies to cater to would want to opt out. Russia and China, despite their many political reservations, could decide silence is better than resistance to the U.S. war plans.

The slim hopes that Mr. Hussein could be persuaded to go into exile too have not materialised. There could be fresh attempts in the next few days to induce him to fly out. But the prospects of their success remain bleak. Those who have closely followed the American debate on Iraq over the last two years have had no doubts about the Bush Administration's political commitment to oust the Hussein regime. The decision in the White House for regime change in Iraq was taken even before the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

The mock debate in the U.N. about the disarmament of Iraq is about garnering multilateral support for the American war. It was never about, what Mr. Bush called, a "scavenger hunt" for evidence on Iraqi special weapons programmes. The American decision to go to war against Iraq had preceded the move to go to the United Nations. The "multilateralists" in the Bush Administration like Mr. Powell argued that getting the U.N. cover would be useful and must be tried out before a unilateral act of war by the U.S.

The unanimous decision of the Security Council to demand tough inspections against Iraq seemed to boost Mr. Powell's case. But the danger that the inspections could become an end in themselves have put the hardliners on Iraq back in the driver's seat in Washington. For the ideologues of the Bush Administra-

tion, the challenge in Iraq was less from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction per se. The real threat, they insisted, lay in the nature of the regime in Baghdad. The emphasis on inspections and procedure, they demanded, should not undermine the principal strategic objective of regime change.

Further, Mr. Bush has gone too far down the road into the military confrontation with Iraq to now walk back, by clinging on to a compromise on inspections. Delaying the war now, Mr. Bush understood, will signal a weakness of resolve that could be detrimental to his entire foreign policy enterprise. Countries like North Korea have already begun to take full advantage of the crisis in the Gulf. Stepping back from the brink now would further weaken the international coalition that Mr. Bush has struggled to hold together.

For the Bush Administration, this war is not merely about removing Mr. Hussein. It involves a much larger project about the political transformation of the Middle East. Even before September 11, the radicals in the Bush Administration had come to the conclusion that a major overhaul in American policy towards the region was necessary. And the war on terrorism declared after the attack on New York and Washington had reinforced this objective.

There is profound scepticism across the world about the American ability to nudge the Middle East towards economic modernisation, political moderation, and representative governments. Mr. Bush's attempt to define the war as a liberation of the Iraqi people from the dictatorship of Mr. Hussein too

might have few takers. Yet, those who dismiss the motivations of the Bush Administration might be underestimating the sheer audacity that underlies Washington's project to remake the Middle East.

It would be right to dismiss such boldness among weaker powers as mere rhetoric. But today the U.S. has accumulated military power and resources on a scale unprecedented in world history. When combined with political will, such extraordinary power could easily shatter the ossified structures of the Middle East. Those who see the impending war as a mere personal revenge by Mr. Bush or as a reflection of cynical oil politics might be missing the grand agenda of the American war in the Gulf.

The safe diplomatic position that India had constructed for itself in the current Gulf crisis would soon begin to unravel. Pious platitudes about avoiding the dangers of war serve no purpose except deluding oneself. Calls for restraint of the type the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, issued this week are of no consequence when war is imminent.

India's arguments that a war against Iraq could have grave consequences for itself — from rising oil prices to a political backlash in the Arab world — do have merit. But if war is inevitable and India cannot prevent it, New Delhi must begin to move to the next questions. How does India minimise the negative consequences of war? How does New Delhi protect its many interests in a post-Saddam Iraq and the Middle East?

India should know that where it stands before the war will significantly shape its influence when the peace treaties are drafted and spoils from the war are distributed. Sitting on the fence until it is all over is a risk free option. But such timidity might also marginalise India in the potentially historic arrangements that could emerge in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

THE HINDU

30 JAN 2003

U.N. / 'ONLY TWO ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED'

## Iraq plays down differences

BAGHDAD, JAN. 28. Iraq sought on Tuesday to play down differences with the United Nations over arms inspections, arguing that U-2 reconnaissance flights and private interviews with scientists were the only issues left unresolved.

However, U.N. inspectors said two more Iraqis had turned down requests for interviews without the presence of an Iraqi official — something for which the U.S. has been pressing. A U.N. statement said since the inspections resumed in November, 16 Iraqis had been asked to submit to private interviews but none had accepted.

The U.N. inspectors in Iraq, meanwhile, continued their hunt for evidence of biological, nuclear and chemical arms, visiting at least seven sites, including a munitions depot where they discovered empty chemical warheads earlier this month.

Elsewhere, the Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, told the

Canadian Broadcasting Corp., that Iraq had no plans to attack targets inside the U.S. in the event of war. Nonetheless, Mr. Aziz warned that Iraqis would vigorously defend themselves if the Americans launch a war.

"I would say that if the Americans try to invade Iraq, they will be fought courageously and effectively and they will have a great number of casualties," Mr. Aziz said.

Asked whether the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's government would strike against other countries, presumably Israel, Mr. Aziz replied: "No. We will fight within our territory." Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles, all with conventional warheads, at Israeli cities in the 1991 Gulf War.

But Mr. Aziz hinted that those restrictions would not apply to Kuwait, which Iraq invaded in 1990. The United States is assembling a large force in the neighboring emirate for a possible war.

"American troops are in Kuwait and preparing themselves to attack Iraq," Mr. Aziz said. "If there will be an attack from Kuwait, I cannot say that we will not retaliate."

The U.S. and Britain dismiss Iraq's claims that it holds no weapons of mass destruction and have threatened war if Mr. Hussein does not give them up.

### Mubarak warns Saddam

Meanwhile, in an interview published Tuesday, the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, sternly warned Mr. Hussein to avoid any missteps in dealing with U.N. inspectors.

"The strike is coming — coming unless Iraq abides by the resolutions of international legitimacy and ceases to put obstacles in front of the international inspection operations," said Mr. Mubarak in an interview with the United Arab Emirates daily newspaper *Al-Itihad*. — AP

29 JAN 2003



HP-14

## China throws its weight behind U.N.

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE, JAN. 28.** As the only full-fledged Asian state with veto powers in the U.N. Security Council, China today upheld the global organisation's locus on the escalating Iraq crisis and held the scales even as between Washington and Baghdad.

China urged Baghdad to enhance its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, which was still seized of the substantive modalities of inspecting the suspected nuclear-weaponisation sites in Iraq.

In the same diplomatic refrain, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Zhang Qiyue, maintained that the entire U.N. Security Council should continue to support the unfinished work of the nuclear inspectors in Iraq. In carefully crafted comments designed to keep the U.S. guessing about China's strategic thinking on the Iraqi nuclear issue, Ms. Zhang underlined that there was no room for hasty conclusions at this point about ways to domesticate Iraq as regards its suspected programmes of amassing weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, Beijing indicated how strong its diplomatic comfort level with Washington was at this time by pointing out that the U.S. Vice-President, Dick Cheney, a known hawk on the Iraq issue, would visit China later this year. Mr. Cheney was invited by Hu Jintao, whom the international community had by now come to see as China's president-in-waiting.

Japan, a key U.S. ally in the Far East, took a stand that was nearer America. Tokyo, however, took care to emphasise the need for a peaceful resolution. Placing the onus for this squarely on Baghdad, the Japanese authorities strongly urged it to address all unresolved nuclear issues in a proactive fashion and comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions so that Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction could be suitably disposed of.

Elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region, the Indonesian Vice-President, Hamzah Haz, said his country was opposed to an attack against Iraq. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, said the U.S. had already "gone overboard" in the "war on terrorism".

29 JAN 2003

THE HINDU

29 JAN 2003

# Baghdad has not done enough to avert war: U.S.

UNITED NATIONS, JAN. 27. Iraq has a "sincere willingness" to clarify any question relating to its alleged weapons of mass destruction, its U.N. envoy, Mohammed Aldouri, said today.

Speaking after the chief U.N. weapons inspectors delivered their reports on Iraq to the Security Council, he said "we are doing everything. We are cooperating in every way."

He emphasised that his country had given unconditional and immediate access to the weapons inspectors. "There is no more need for inspections or inspectors."

In Baghdad, Iraq's Foreign Minister, Naji Sabri, told reporters that his country had fully cooperated with the inspectors but said the United States and Britain were nonetheless intent on invading his country.

He said that accusations against Iraq by the Bush administration were "all lies to hide America's true intentions" which he said were to take control of his nation's oil resources and protect "America's interests in Israel."

But the United States today dismissed Iraq's response to U.N. disarmament demands as inadequate, saying there is nothing in the report of inspectors that indicated a willingness to comply or that Iraq has done enough to avert war.

"They are not cooperating unconditionally," John Negroponte, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, said in New York. "In the days ahead, we believe the Council and its member governments must face its responsibilities and consider what message Council resolution sends to Iraq and other proliferators." "It benefits no one to let Saddam Hussein think he can wear us down into the business as usual as he has practiced it over the last 12 years."

Mr. Negroponte said the United States has concluded "there is an entire state apparatus in Iraq whose sole purpose is to obstruct the inspections."

While there are some positive elements in the report on two months of searches for hidden weapons, there is no indication that Iraq will comply with the resolution, an administration official said earlier, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The White House also reacted coolly to U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan's plea for longer weapons inspections in Iraq. "When people say give them more time, the more time they get the more time they get the run-around," White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, said. "Iraq is giving the inspectors the run-around."

He renewed accusations that the United States believes there are ties between Iraq and Al-Qaeda.

The spokesman said Al-Qaeda prisoners had revealed that Iraq provided chemical weapons training to them. Asked if Al-Qaeda terrorists visited Iraq for training or if Iraqis went to Afghanistan, he said, "We have concerns about both."

## A charade: Straw

In Brussels, the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, said the Blix report showed that the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was "practising concealment" and playing charade with inspectors.

"What we've heard from New York today is clear evidence that Saddam Hussein is not engaged in effective cooperation with the weapons inspectors, or the United Nations, but he's practising concealment. "There's clear evidence now that Saddam has made this a charade of an inspection: cooperating on process, but not on substance."

Mr. Straw, speaking on the

sidelines of a meeting of EU Foreign Ministers, said Britain would react more fully after a comprehensive study of the Blix report.

## 'No split'

The NATO Secretary-General, Lord Robertson, today played down a split between top members of the alliance over Iraq, with France and Germany at loggerheads with the United States over a possible military intervention in Iraq.

"The difference of opinion at the present moment relates only to timing, it is therefore not an issue of substance or of principle," he told a news conference at the World Economic Forum here.

"If it is only an issue of timing, then that is not a significant problem, but clearly if it goes on too long, it might well be," he added.

## 'Work must continue'

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, told the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, by telephone today just ahead of the Blix report that U.N. weapons inspectors should be allowed to continue their work in Iraq, a Kremlin spokesman said.

A spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry said the preliminary information on the inspection had been satisfying.

"The work of the U.N. inspectors was satisfying and they encountered no serious problems. Only the inspections can answer the world community whether Iraq has weapons of mass destruction," he said.

In London, the former head of the United Nations weapons inspectors, Richard Butler, said that Iraq certainly had weapons of mass destruction but that any U.S.-led attack without Security Council approval would be illegal.

Mr. Butler told the BBC that action to deal with Iraq's weapons had to take place within the rules of the U.N. Charter.

THE HINDU

23 JAN 2003

14-1A

IRAQ / EXPECTATIONS DIFFER ON CONTENTS

27/1

# All set for submission of Blix report

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JAN. 26. The stage is set for a report that could make all the difference between war and a peaceful resolution of a crisis even if a military conflict in West Asia is not about to start.

The top United Nations weapons inspector, Hans Blix, will be telling the Security Council on Monday morning his assessment of the first 60 days of inspections in Iraq. Mr. Blix will be making an open address to the Council following which there will be a question and answer session. And on Wednesday, the Council is scheduled for its deliberations on the report — a critical phase in the ongoing showdown with the Saddam Hussein regime.

And in between, the reaction of the United States will come from the President himself when he delivers the State of the Union Address on Tuesday. Mr. Blix is expected to be quite critical of Iraq, especially of the manner it has gone about the business in the last several days over the questioning of scientists. Yet, he will stop far short of what the Bush administration would want to hear — a wholesale condemnation of Baghdad, not merely confined to the present Security Council resolution 1441, but past resolutions as well. In the last two months, Mr. Blix has not minced words when it came to assessing Iraq's cooperation with the weapons inspectors. And on more than one occasion, the top U.N. official had made the point that in substantive terms, Baghdad could have done much better. And one of the things that Mr. Blix is expected to tell the Council is that in terms of cooperation, Iraq does not get a failing grade. The bottom line is that Iraq, in the view of the U.S., has a lot of explaining to do whether it pertains to the destruction of



**ARMING THEMSELVES:** An Iraqi boy carries an oil lantern as he and his family leave a shop in Baghdad, on Sunday saying they are preparing for power outages in case of a possible war. — AP

shells filled with mustard gas or those thousands of bombs and shells that are capable of carrying chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Blix is expected to address this issue, at least in very general terms. But the more serious issue raised by the U.N. itself has to do with questioning of Iraqi scientists.

The Bush administration has maintained

that Baghdad has been threatening its scientists or sending intelligence folks as scientists for interviews. The Blix report comes at a critical time even if another assessment is not due until about the third week of February. The Bush administration, which has been pushing other members of the Council for a more aggressive path, is now giving the indication that it could wait for some more time.

And other permanent and non-permanent members are hoping to see enough positive things in the Blix report to push for the inspections to continue. For its part, the Bush administration will be paying close attention to the Blix report. It would want him to list as many violations by Iraq as possible so that this could be used to pin down those in the Council who are now seen standing in the way of Washington.

In fact, one thinking is that the U.S. may insist on a separate U.N. resolution listing "all" the shortcomings of Iraq but stopping short of authorising use of force.

The posturings of France and Germany and to some extent that of Russia, have been frustrating to the President, George W. Bush, who sees in all these an attempt to stretch things too far into the future, thereby upsetting the political, diplomatic and military calculations.

But a delay at the U.N. could send the message of Washington paying attention to allies even as the Pentagon uses this period to get fully prepared for any military action in the Persian Gulf. Senior officials of the Republican administration have consistently warned that the U.S. has the resolve to go alone in the event of a showdown with Iraq; at the same time, Washington would like to have as many on board as possible in this so-called "coalition of the willing".

# Bush shrugs off opposition to Iraq war

24/11 H.C. - 15  
Baghdad/Istanbul, January 23

WASHINGTON LOOKED increasingly isolated in its stance toward Iraq on Thursday as key powers lined up to oppose war. China and Russia joined US allies France and Germany in rejecting military action.

The White House on Thursday shrugged off French and German opposition to any US-led war on Iraq, saying they could stay on the sideline if they choose because plenty of other nations will play supporting roles.

President George Bush, faced with the prospect that Nato would not be united behind his call for military action against Iraq if Baghdad does not disarm, will count on support from a number of nations, said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer.

Bush discussed the Iraq situation on Thursday with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the Kremlin said Putin told the US president that the key to future action on Iraq would be found in next week's report by UN arms inspectors to the Security Council. The White House confirmed the conversation took place but gave no immediate details. Russia, which has large economic investments in Iraq and strong political links with Baghdad, says there is no justification to attack at this time.

French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder have said war was not unavoidable. The split is deepening divisions in the transatlantic alliance. Bush is already at odds with Schroeder for a re-election campaign last year centered on opposition to US policy on Iraq.

Since France is a permanent member of the UN Security

## Kuwait gunman held

A MAN arrested by Saudi Arabian guards has confessed to firing at a vehicle driven by US nationals in Kuwait, killing one and seriously injuring another.

The foreign ministry spokesman said the man, who was not named, had been arrested on Wednesday as he tried to cross into Saudi Arabia from Kuwait. He would be handed over to the Kuwait authorities.

AFP, Riyadh

Council and thus holds veto power, its opposition would kill any second UN resolution authorising military force against Iraq.

Fleischer cited Britain, Italy, Spain and Eastern European nations as countries that might support a US-led effort against Iraq. He also said Australia would likely participate. "This will be, if the President makes a determination to proceed, widely multilateral," said Fleischer.

Foreign ministers and diplomats from Iraq's neighbours — Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria — were meeting along with regional heavyweight Egypt, in Istanbul on Thursday to discuss a way out of the crisis.

In Iraq, UN experts continued their hunt for banned weapons as a local newspaper warned that US troops faced a fate worse than the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US if they attacked.

"The events of September 11 will be a picnic compared with what would happen to America if it commits aggression against Iraq," the *Babel* said.

Reuters

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2003

10-10  
2/11

## PRINCIPLED OPPOSITION

W. Bush  
① 9/20/03

THE PRINCIPLED POSITION taken by France and Germany to oppose the initiation of military action against Iraq should go a long way to rein in a U.S. administration that has been steadily spiking up its war rhetoric. By adopting this stance, the two leading European nations have blocked the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) from arriving at a consensual decision to grant Washington's request for support in military action against Iraq. NATO cannot act without a consensus of all the members and although the U.S. does have the armed force to deal with Iraq on its own, it does need the support of its European allies in certain secondary, yet very vital, spheres of military activity. While the U.S. has been building up its military presence in the region south of Iraq (on land and at sea) thus indicating that the military strike is likely to be launched from this direction, its ability to wage war would be restricted if the Europeans were to deny overflight rights, or the use of NATO planning facilities or other assistance of this nature. A manifestation in the United Nations Security Council of the French and German opposition to a war against Iraq would create further complications for the U.S. Germany is about to take over the rotating presidency of the Security Council from France and both countries — with the likely backing of Russia and China — are expected to lobby hard to ensure that the U.S. does not obtain a majority of the 15 members. But even if Washington does get a vote in its favour, it might still fail to secure the Security Council's mandate since France has warned that it would use its veto to prevent a war at this juncture.

The argument put forward by France and other like-minded countries is that the objective of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) potential — the only objective endorsed by the global community — can be achieved without resort to war. Weap-

ons inspection teams from the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are very actively pursuing their agenda in Iraq. While UNMOVIC and the IAEA are hesitant to state that they have received proactive cooperation from the Iraqi authorities, there have been several signs of late that Baghdad is willing to engage more positively with the weapons inspectors. Iraqi scientists who had worked on the WMD programmes of the past have been told to submit themselves for questioning by the inspectors and technical teams have been ordered to search more vigorously for buried elements of the non-conventional weapon programme such as the four chemical warheads that were discovered recently. Iraq and the weapons inspectors have also entered into an agreement that seeks to address several drawbacks encountered in the inspection process. The UNMOVIC chairman, Hans Blix, has said that the inspections could become very effective if Iraq fulfilled the pledges it has made now.

A critical point would be reached after the U.N. teams submit their reports on Iraq's cooperation with the inspection process on January 27. Since the Security Council is scheduled to discuss these reports on January 29 it is probable that the U.S. President, George W. Bush, would opt for a very aggressive posture towards Iraq when he presents his State of the Union Address on the intervening day. To judge by the rhetoric emanating from Washington in recent days, Mr. Bush could be expected to press the charge that the dismantling of Iraq's WMD potential cannot be achieved through inspections and that more aggressive methods are therefore essential. France has sought to pre-empt this argument by insisting not just that the inspection teams be allowed more time to complete their jobs but also that everything must be done to avoid war.

THE FINCH

24 JAN 2003



HD-14 2/11

IRAQ / SETBACK TO AMERICA'S WAR STRATEGY

W. Aziz 1/20/03 ✓

# Jordan declines to host U.S. forces

By Atul Aneja

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JAN. 21.** In a blow to the efforts by the United States to open a western front in case of a war with Iraq, Jordan on Tuesday reportedly declared that it would not allow the use of its territory or airspace for an attack against Baghdad.

The Jordanian Prime Minister, Ali Abul Ragheb, said in a report in Saudi Arabian daily *Okaz* that Jordan would not take part in any military action against Iraq, even if sanctioned by the United Nations.

He said Iraq's stability and its territorial integrity were extremely important for the Arabs in the region.

Apart from the anti-war mood and pressure from the grassroots, key Arab countries, in opposing a conflict in Iraq, are conscious that no foreign power has occupied an Arab country after the disruption of the Ottoman empire.

Consequently, there are wary of setting a precedent by encouraging U.S. troops to occupy Iraq after they have dislodged the President, Saddam Hussein.

Without the Jordanian front, U.S. forces will have the sole option of assaulting Iraq from the southern direction via Kuwait.

U.S. plans to open a northern front from the Turkish side also appeared to have suffered a blow recently.

Turkey, mainly on account of the pressure by supporters of the ruling Justice and Development Party, has reportedly declined to stage 80,000 U.S. forces for an attack on Iraq.

The Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard B. Myers, failed to con-



**The Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak (right) with the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, at a meeting in Cairo on Tuesday. Prince Faisal said that the two countries would focus on ways to avoid a war against Iraq at a regional conference later this week in Turkey. — AFP**

clude an agreement on troop numbers during his two-day visit to Turkey earlier this week, diplomatic sources say. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Yasar Yakis, told the U.S. National Public Radio that Turkey did not favour deployment of large number of forces.

"Our impression is that Parliament and the Turkish public are not ready to extend support to passage of tens of thousands of

U.S. soldiers from the Turkish territories". He, however, pointed out that discussions on positioning a smaller number of troops could be held. According to analysts, with the U.N. also acquiring a higher profile in disarming Iraq and the wave of anti-war demonstrations that are sweeping across the globe making a political point, the U.S. may find it difficult to take a decision on a war till the end of March.

22 JAN 2003

2. Asia  
2/20/03

# France may veto military action

HD-14  
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By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**WASHINGTON, JAN. 21.** Even as the United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has warned the United Nations Security Council members over Iraq, the Bush administration has been told in plain terms by France and Germany that they would oppose any military action against Saddam Hussein at this point of time.

France, which at one time had made it known that it would not stand in the way of military action if authorised by the United Nations, has now said that it would oppose a second resolution on the subject in the Security Council unless it had the backing of the international community.

Gen. Powell, who was in New York, made Iraq — and to some extent North Korea — as the centre piece of his consultations with several Foreign Ministers, especially the Permanent Members of the Security Council. "We cannot be shocked into im-

potence because we are afraid of the difficult choices that are ahead of us", Gen. Powell argued. He was referring to a January 29 Council meeting which is due to discuss a January 27 report of the chief United Nations weapons inspector, Hans Blix. But France minced no words in its stand and hinting in the process that a veto was on the cards if Washington pushed for a vote on military action against Iraq. "In the event of a second resolution... we will not associate ourselves with military intervention that is not supported by the international community", the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin said. Paris is making the point that if Washington went to war with Iraq without authorisation of the Security Council that would be a victory for the "law of the strongest".

The Security Council resolution passed last November argues that false statements and omissions by Iraq and failure to fully cooperate with weapons

inspectors would amount to a "material breach" which would then have to be discussed by the Council. Most in the Council and elsewhere are of the view that finding Iraq to be in "material breach" did not automatically compel the Security Council to authorise military action. But the general apprehension is that the Bush administration sees "material breach" as code words for the start of a military action.

France is not the only ally of the U.S. across the Atlantic that has come out against military action against Iraq. Germany, which has been at odds with the Bush administration for quite some time now, also said that it would oppose military action against Baghdad. "We are greatly concerned that a military strike against the regime in Baghdad would involve considerable and unpredictable risks for the global fight against terrorism", the German Foreign Minister has said.

It is not as if the Bush admin-

istration is unaware of where the Security Council — especially the Permanent Members — are coming from. At the same time, Washington has also made it known that while it is for the world body to come together on Iraq, it was willing to go alone — a theme that has been made very clear by the President, George W. Bush, starting with his speech to the United Nations last September.

One of the arguments of those in the Council who are against military action at this point of time is that more time must be allowed for the weapons inspectors to do the job inside Iraq and that Mr. Blix and his team cannot be rushed into a task that is vital and critical. In fact, China has been making the point that the report of Mr. Blix to the Security Council on January 27 should not be seen as the end of the inspections regime in Iraq, rather a "new beginning".

The Bush administration has bluntly said that January 27 cannot be a new beginning.

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22 JAN 2003

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# Gulf tensions

## Washington can't ditch the UN process halfway

Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix doesn't look his usual unruffled self these days, a visible symptom that tensions are mounting. No "smoking gun" has been found, and weapons inspectors have indicated that it would take another six months or so to complete their job, but belligerent noises from Washington, to the effect that President Saddam Hussein is running out of time, coupled with President Bush's approval of increasing deployment in the Gulf that could reach 250,000 armed personnel, indicate that Washington may ditch the UN process half-way and go to war even without UN authorisation. British foreign secretary Jack Straw has also supported such a position, saying a UN resolution authorising force would be good but won't be necessary.

It is possible that this position has been taken to ratchet up the pressure on Hussein, the US-British presumption being that Hussein hasn't come clean yet on weapons of mass destruction. But he cannot conceivably be taken to task because he is not able to prove he doesn't have them, as Washington keeps on demanding; it is up to UN weapons inspectors, aided by US intelligence inputs, to come up with positive proof that Hussein is secretly stockpiling WMDs. Short of that, there just isn't any justification for a war. Smuggled missile engine parts have been turned up, but we don't know whether they are for long-range missiles with a range beyond 150km, which Hussein is not permitted to have. Empty chemical warheads have also been found, but Baghdad says they were for conventional artillery.

A massive deployment such as the one Washington is undertaking can create its own compulsions. If the UN timetable requires half a year to complete inspections, keeping troops deployed in strike mode for such a lengthy period of time can be draining in terms of both money and morale, as New Delhi found out during Operation Parakram last year. World powers stayed New Delhi's hand at the time, the question is who will stay Washington's, although international players are scrambling to do that now. Riyadh is pulling together a regional initiative, Moscow has sent an envoy to Baghdad, EU president Romano Prodi has launched an impassioned appeal against war, Ankara is delaying the arrival of US troops on its soil even though it will ultimately succumb to the \$15 billion in loan guarantees being held out as inducement for the use of Turkish territory and airbases. But what may count ultimately is declining support for a war within the US itself, while the majority of Labourites are opposed to Prime Minister Tony Blair's stand. President Bush's personal approval ratings have dropped to 58 per cent, an all time low since 9/11, and while a majority would support using force in Iraq with UN authorisation, only around 25 per cent would support doing so without it.

If the idea of such a war is to deter "rogue states" from acquiring WMDs, its purpose will be defeated as Pyongyang will almost certainly exploit the hiatus in attention to acquire nuclear weapons itself. If the war lacks international legitimacy, the political battle will be lost even if the actual war can be won, which in itself may not be as easy as is currently being given out. Bush must listen less to his hawks and more to what public opinion polls are telling him.



# Global protests against Iraq war

STEVE HOLLAND AND  
ANDREW HAMMOND

**Washington/Baghdad, Jan. 18** (Reuters): Activists poured onto the streets around the world today in mass protests against an attack on Iraq as UN arms chiefs headed to Baghdad to tell its leaders cooperation was the only way to avoid war.

With Washington massing troops and equipment in the Gulf and Baghdad declaring itself mobilised for battle, tens of thousands of demonstrators in Europe, West Asia, Asia and the Americas beat drums, clogged traffic and chanted slogans denouncing a US-led war on Iraq.

"There's been too much capital invested in this war for it not to happen. But we're making our position clear, we're saying 'no'. There are people speaking out on this all over the world now, and

we're part of it," said Adam Conway, 24, an activist living at a peace camp near Shannon Airport in Ireland.

US President George W. Bush has said he will lead a "coalition of the willing" to force Iraq to give up its alleged weapons of mass destruction if Baghdad does not cooperate with UN arms inspectors.

US secretary of state Colin Powell told a German daily this week that Washington believed there would be "a persuasive case" by the end of January that Iraq was not cooperating.

The White House has also seized on the discovery of empty chemical warheads in Iraq as evidence of non-compliance, calling the weapons cache "serious

and troubling", though UN weapons chief Hans Blix played down the significance of the find.

Pleading for the White House to back down and let inspections run their course, up to 100,000 people were expected to protest in Washington and San Francisco in the largest anti-war demonstrations since Bush began mak-

ing a case against Iraq last year. "Bush has said that he intends to launch a pre-emptive war, and now he's facing the most formidable obstacle, which is a pre-emptive anti-war movement," said Washington lawyer Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, who is helping to organise the protests.

In West Asia, the protests sounded a more ominous note as thousands of demonstrators in Beirut carrying Palestinian and Iraqi flags chanted: "Sign your name on a suicide attack on US interests, so we can fight an American attack along with Iraq."

The maverick British politician George Galloway, who joined the march, said: "A peaceful solution must be found, or we're all going over the cliff in West Asia and all of us will be damaged in the fall."



A demonstrator holds an anti-war poster during a protest march in Marseille. (Reuters)

## Scientist accuses inspectors of Mafia-like tactics

**Baghdad, Jan. 18** (Reuters): An Iraqi nuclear scientist accused "Mafia-like" UN inspectors today of trying to use his wife's illness to persuade him to leave Iraq to be questioned about his work.

Physicist Faleh Hassen said an American inspector had approached him while UN experts searched his house on Thursday, saying: "Your wife is sick and we can take her outside Iraq for treatment. You can accompany her."

"But I said: 'No, thank you', he added.

Hassen told reporters at his house that he understood from the conversation that the inspector had wanted to interview him abroad. The US has pressed the UN inspectors, hunting for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in Iraq, to take scientists abroad to make them feel safer, believing the intelligence they could give could be crucial.

Hassen, 55, said the inspectors had been "Mafia-like", searching even his bedrooms and asking him and his family "silly" questions.



# Saddam's fate hangs in balance

By Atul Aneja

JERUSALEM, JAN. 18. Amid rising tensions, the visit of the Chief United Nations weapons inspector, Hans Blix, to Baghdad on Sunday may be part of a last ditch effort to avert a United States-led war in Iraq.

Analysts here point out that with the Blix mission, coercive diplomacy to achieve the two core objectives of the U.S. — disarming Iraq and unseating the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, maybe coming to a head.

In case Mr. Blix's visit fails to make progress in this direction, the countdown for a war could, for the first time, actually begin.

Apart from the January 27 deadline, when the inspectors report to the U.N. Security Council about their findings in Iraq, firm indications about the possibility of a war could come in the U.S. President, George W. Bush's State of the Union address which is slated for January 28. Diplomatic sources here say that Mr. Bush has very little room for manoeuvre in his dealings with Iraq.

By firmly committing himself to a "regime change" in Baghdad, he now has no option, but to carry out the decision. Otherwise, he faces grave political embarrassment both domestically and internationally.

Regime change in Iraq can be achieved either through diplomacy, backed by a

credible threat of force which will persuade Mr. Hussein to go into exile, or through the prosecution of war.

There is considerable speculation that the Blix initiative spearheads a credible diplomatic effort to unseat Mr. Hussein.

This process apparently began around December 20, when the Syrian President, Bashar al Assad, visited London.

There is a view here that the Syrian President, after this visit, carried with him a message from the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, for Mr. Hussein.

Broadly, it amounted to Mr. Hussein surrendering all his weapons of mass destruction by making a final declaration of his real assets of unconventional weapons to the U.N. inspection team. It was this consideration that, in part, influenced Mr. Blix's decision to visit Baghdad on January 19.

In case the Iraqi President makes his final declaration, he could, under this plan, choose to go into exile in a country of his choice.

Iraq's neighbours, led by Turkey, have subsequently stepped up the pressure on Mr. Hussein to go into exile voluntarily.

Meanwhile, diplomatic pressure on Iraq, prior to Mr. Blix's visit, has been ratcheted up with the discovery of empty chemical warheads by the inspectors on Thursday.

A final word on one of these warheads has so far been kept in abeyance, but a ver-

dict on it in the coming days could materially influence the debate among Security Council members on Iraq.

In an apparently well-calibrated move, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has also turned the heat on Iraq prior to Mr. Blix's visit by pointing out to a German daily earlier this week that the U.S. expected to be ready with a "persuasive case" about Iraq's lack of cooperation by the month-end.

The pressure on Iraq has been kept up with the visit to Turkey of the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Richard B. Myers, who has already positioned himself in U.S. Central Command's advanced headquarters in Qatar.

General Myers' visit to Turkey signals the U.S. commitment to give a final shape to the "Northern Front" that is likely to be opened up against Iraq in case of a war.

Keen to give diplomacy some more time to play out, the British have taken the lead in signalling that they are not keen to rush into a war and the British Prime Minister has had a meeting with Mr. Blix on the eve of the latter's visit to Baghdad.

Mr. Blair is also expected to meet Mr. Bush at the month-end. The spate of anti-war protests that have begun to sweep across the globe can also influence the timing, but not necessarily, a decision on the war.

# Worldwide protests against war plans

WASHINGTON, JAN. 18. From Bahrain to Brazil and at a national rally in Washington, protesters worldwide are shouting "No" to U.S. war plans for Iraq.

Buses rolled into Washington from many parts of the country, delivering thousands for a weekend of dissent that organisers promised would be peaceful, and nature conspired to make cold.

A rally outside the Capitol on Saturday, followed by a march to a naval yard, anchored demonstrations from coast to coast and abroad. President George W. Bush was at Camp David, Maryland, for the weekend.

Demonstrators hoped the protest blitz and more ahead would win over an American public that is unsettled by the prospect of an Iraq war yet supportive of Bush's leadership.

"Bush has said that he intends to launch a pre-emptive war and now he's facing the most formidable obstacle, which is a pre-emptive anti-war movement," Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, from Partnership for Civil Justice, said on Friday.

Few of the nuances in U.S. public opinion were on display

among protest organizers.

"I hardly see a threat from Iraq," said Rev. Graylan Hagler, pastor of Washington's Plymouth Congregational Church. "The threat is the United States being a bully, the bully on the playground."

Similar sentiments were expressed in many languages in a series of worldwide protests on Friday, some tied to the Saturday rallies in U.S. cities and other foreign capitals.

In Bahrain, a U.S. ally in the Arab world and home to the Fifth Fleet, more than 2,000 people marched in the capital, yelling "No" to war with Iraq.

More than 3,000 Palestinians marched in support of Saddam Hussein in Gaza City, filling the narrow streets with fluttering Iraqi flags and pictures of the Iraqi leader. Some chanted, "Our beloved Saddam, strike Tel Aviv," reviving a slogan from the 1991 Gulf War.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, hundred demonstrators chanted slogans in front of the American consulate and burned a U.S. flag. Leftists and student groups also burned a flag outside the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires. — AP

# Blix asked to step up pressure U.S. armada sets sail for Gulf

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JAN. 18. The Chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix, who met the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, here at the weekend, was told to step up his investigations in Iraq and to put more pressure on the Iraqi regime to cooperate with his team in tracking down the weapons of mass destruction Saddam Hussein is said to be holding.

Mr. Blix, who left Britain today on his way to Iraq, was expected to deliver a tough message to Iraq that it would need to be more upfront in its dealings with the weapons inspectors if it wants to avoid a military intervention.

"We need more accurate co-operation for their (Iraqis) sake and for the sake of peace," Mr. Blix said though he played down speculation that the discovery by the inspectors of 12 empty chemical warheads might be seized by the U.S. to justify military action.

His colleague, Mohamed al-Baradei, head of the Interna-

tional Atomic Energy, said Iraq would be told that "if you don't cooperate, unfortunately the consequences will not be very pleasant for you."

Mr. Blair voiced his "strong support" for Mr. Blix and welcomed the growing "intensity of the inspection programme". "The Prime Minister stressed how important it was for Saddam to take full advantage of this opportunity to disarm," a spokesman said.

Mr. Blix, who is under intense American pressure to push for more intrusive investigations including taking Iraqi scientists out of the country to question them, got a more sympathetic hearing in London which believes that the inspectors more "time and space" to complete their work.

Earlier, in Paris he received strong backing from the French President Jacques Chirac who opposed any attempt to pre-empt the inspection regime.

Media reports, meanwhile, spoke of a new Saudi initiative to press Mr. Hussein to go into

exile to avert a war in the region. "Under the plan, Saudi Arabia would ask for a meeting of the Arab League to nominate a delegation to go to Baghdad and urge the Iraqi leader to avert war by leaving the country," *The Guardian* reported.

It said that while the plan had support of other Arab countries, there was widespread scepticism whether Saddam would agree to it.

As public opinion against a war hardened, thousands of people came out on the streets in Britain to oppose British backing for any U.S.-led military action in Iraq.

The veteran Labour leader, Tony Benn, said neither Mr. Blair nor the U.S. President, George W. Bush, had public support with them and it would amount to a "war crime" to send people to die in a conflict nobody wanted.

Protests were also held at Britain's army base in Northwood which is expected to play a key role in the event of a war.

SAN DIEGO, JAN. 18. A seven-ship armada carrying 10,000 sailors and Marines set sail on Friday from the San Diego naval station for possible duty in a war with Iraq.

"It's sad. It's really sad, but they're going to come back and we're going to be here waiting for them when they do," said Debra Akins, of San Leandro, who was on hand to see off her 19-year-old son, Marine Lance Cpl. Omari Taylor.

Some 60,000 U.S. troops are already in the Gulf region and the Defence Secretary, Donald H. Rumsfeld, has signed orders for an additional 67,000 to go over the next few weeks. The size of the U.S. force arrayed against Iraq could reach 250,000. Earlier in the week, Marines at Camp Pendleton had a similar round of emotional goodbyes when they boarded buses for San Diego in preparation for Friday's departure.

Terri Vargas (32), of Saginaw, Michigan, said she had lost count of how many times her husband, Staff Sgt. Adrian Vargas, 31, has left home.

"This is his job. It's either like it or get out; and

I'm not going to get out," she said.

The amphibious transport ship USS Dubuque left next, followed by amphibious assault ship and mini-aircraft carrier USS Bonhomme Richard as well as the USS Cleveland transport ship. "Everything is going smoothly so far," said US Navy 3rd Fleet Commander Jackie Yost as his men left their families to sail towards a potential war. The amphibious assault ship USS Boxer and dock landing ships USS Anchorage and USS Pearl Harbour were set to follow the ships that are already en route for the Gulf, Commander Yost said.

Groups of family members of servicemen, numbering around 200, crowded onto the dockside weeping and hugging each other as their loved ones sailed out into the Pacific, escorted by coast guard vessels. "It breaks my heart that young people have to go so far away to fight for our country, even if this is a good cause," said wheelchair-bound Letty Bedwell as she waved an American flag at the departing fleet. — AFP

# We are fully mobilised: Saduam

1871 HD-1  
BAGHDAD, JAN. 17. A defiant Saddam Hussein on Friday called on his people to rise and defend the nation against a new United States-led attack even as the chief weapons inspector of the United Nations, Hans Blix, stated that he would seek an explanation from the Baghdad regime on the empty chemical warheads discovered on Thursday.

In a 40-minute televised address, delivered on the 12th anniversary of the Gulf War, Mr. Hussein promised that Iraq's enemies would face "suicide" at the gates of his capital.

His speech revealed no sign that he was prepared to bow to the demands of the United Nations nor step down as has been suggested by Arab leaders as a way to avoid war.

"The people of Baghdad have resolved to compel the Moguls of this age to commit suicide on its walls," Mr. Hussein said, referring to the U.S. "Everyone who tries to climb over its walls... will fail in his attempt."

He said the Iraqi nation was fully mobilised against the threat of a new conflict and told the U.S. President, George W. Bush, to "keep your evil away from the mother of civilisation."

"The whole nation will rise in defence of its right to live, its role and sacred sites, and their (ag-

gressors') arrows will go astray or backfire, God willing."

In an appeal for Arab support, Mr. Hussein said "Western peoples and circles" had long interfered with the nations of West Asia, "in particular Zionist Jews and Zionists who are not of the Jewish people."

"Long live Palestine, free and Arab, from the (Mediterranean) sea to the (Jordan) river," he said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Blix said today that he wanted "to have more explanations" from Baghdad about chemical warheads found on Thursday.

He was speaking in Paris one day after his inspectors found 11 empty chemical warheads at an Iraqi munitions dump.

The Iraqis had claimed the find was not linked to any prohibited weapons, but the U.S. said it was not surprised, adding that chemical munitions were one of the areas of omission in Baghdad's declaration.

At a press conference alongside the French President, Jacques Chirac, Mr. Blix said he was not certain about whether the warheads were listed.

## Deal for Saddam exile?

The German current affairs magazine, *Der Spiegel*, said that the Iraqi Government was seeking guarantees to allow Mr. Hussein and other Iraqi leaders to go into exile as a way to end the current tension. The European Union foreign policy coordinator, Javier Solana, however, said today that he had no information about any such initiative. "I have no information that I can give to you. I have heard the same rumours that you have," he told reporters during a visit to Greece.

The online version of *Der Spiegel* did not name any country. "An African nation is being discussed," it said quoting one Western and two Arab ambassadors in Dubai. — AP, Reuters

## Oil prices dip

SINGAPORE, JAN. 17. Oil prices retreated on Friday after a report that Baghdad was seeking guarantees to allow President Saddam Hussein to go into exile. North Sea benchmark Brent crude fell 47 cents to \$30.11 a barrel, while the U.S. light crude lost 25 cents to \$33.41 a barrel. Oil rallied to the highest levels since December 2000 on Thursday after the head of the U.N. weapons inspections team warned that Baghdad needed to submit credible evidence that it did not have weapons of mass destruction or would face war. — Reuters

IRAQ / SITUATION DANGEROUS, SAYS Blix

# U.S. wants to end inspections

WASHINGTON, JAN. 16. Apparently determined to go to war against Iraq, the United States finds the efforts of the United Nations inspection chief, Hans Blix, a major obstacle to its plans and wants to stop inspections on January 27 and prevent inspectors from producing a new report at the end of March that could lead to a suspension of sanctions.

Mr. Blix is scheduled to present a report to the Security Council on January 27, which is being seen by some as a crucial date after which the U.S. could take action over its threat of war against Iraq.

After the crucial date, Mr. Blix plans to start work on a list of remaining tasks Iraq must complete in order to disarm. That report will be submitted to the Council for consideration in late March and that would almost certainly delay the Security Council from authorising any military action against Baghdad.

The U.S., on the other hand, wants to avoid any delay that would force its soldiers to fight in the summer heat if they invade Iraq.

In this head-on collision be-

tween the U.S. and Mr. Blix, the Chief U.N. Inspector has the support of most other members of the Security Council. Whether this will deter the U.S. President, George W. Bush, from going ahead with his war plans is unclear. The current U.S. plans, it appears, are to launch another massive campaign against Saddam Hussein, presenting him as the source of all evil.

Mr. Blix has said he plans to tell Iraq the situation is "very dangerous" but Baghdad can still prevent war if it provides new evidence about its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes.

"The message is that they are in a tense situation and we would want them to cooperate more on the substance and provide more evidence in particular," he said on Wednesday as he left the U.N. headquarters for Europe en route to Baghdad.

Mr. Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, are visiting Iraq on Sunday and Monday ahead of their January 27 report.

"They have provided prompt access, been very cooperative in



Corporal Anatasia (left) of Israel's civil defence corps fits a gas mask onto a resident of Tel Sheva in the south of the country on Thursday. The Jewish state is bracing itself for Iraqi missile attacks in the event of a U.S.-led war against Saddam Hussein's regime. — Reuters.

terms of logistics," Mr. Blix said. "But they need to do a good deal more to provide evidence if we are to avoid any worse development." Mr. Blix plans to tell Iraq that there are major gaps in its 12,000-page declaration on

its weapons of mass destruction. He is also likely to complain about the list of scientists who worked on projects connected with development of weapons of mass destruction provided by Iraq. — AP

There is no let up in the preparations for war against Iraq. The USA is sending more troops and frontline aircraft, as well as a majestic hospital ship; the UK is sending a fleet headed by an aircraft carrier and calling up reservists; even France, a prominent sceptic at the UN, is reported to be sending an aircraft carrier to the Gulf. On the other side of the divide, Iraq and its President Saddam Hussein breathe defiance. They claim they are ready for the worst. War seems impossible to avoid and there are many predictions about when it will start. The big

international media organisations are busy redeploying their staff to cover the action. The situation becomes more threatening by the day, and the juggernauts are rolling.

Nevertheless, the die is not yet cast. Prime Minister Blair made the point, as did high American leaders, that war should not be regarded as inevitable. Iraq could yet acknowledge its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programmes, conform to the Security Council's wishes, and give the UN inspectors the satisfaction they demand. Furthermore, the Security

# Iraq's moment of truth

Council process is far from complete. Dr. Blix, head of the UN's monitoring programme, has made a report in camera to the Security Council. Publicly he has said that the inspectors have found 'no smoking gun', which suggests that nothing decisive has come out of their efforts. From many sides the demand remains that the issue should go back to the Security Council for further consideration before any military action is authorised. Meanwhile, a number of countries, Indonesia prominent among them, have stood against the tide and have opposed the notion of war against Iraq. Lined up with them are several non-official groups all over the world that fervently disagree with any resort to military action. But the clamour of warlike preparation is much louder than the faint voices of restraint.

Moreover, even if he were so inclined, it is difficult to see what President Saddam Hussein could do to avert the blow. The inspection is going ahead without serious impediment. Iraq's report to the UN about its weapons programmes - a voluminous 12,000 pages - is being scrutinised by the experts, and nothing has appeared in public to substantiate charges of a clandestine WMD agenda. Yet the pressure is unrelenting. Western spokespersons are not appeased by what the inspections have so far shown and continue to voice grave

51-9  
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wide angle  
SALMAN HAIDAR



doubts about Iraq. There is talk of secret information with American and British agencies that may be shared with the inspectors to aid them. Frequent shifting of the goal-posts adds to the uncertainty, witness the fresh demand that Iraqi scientists must be interviewed somewhere outside their country if they are to give truthful evidence. Even talk of regime change through the exile of the President fails to satisfy the most unrelenting of America's opinion makers. Such a forced departure would leave the Baathist generals in command, which would be unacceptable to such critics, who demand a more sweeping regime change than the simple ouster of the President. In this exacting situation, everything points to drastic action and military intervention.

With no WMD identified and with expanding demands on Iraq, one is forced to wonder why this vast exercise is being undertaken and what could be its essential purpose. There is a temptation to see it in simplified terms, with a rampant America eager to strike, without regard to the consequences. But there is more to it than that. Within America, a sober and careful assessment of choices before that country has long been under discussion. It is a complex argument, derived from the perceived interests and responsibilities of today's sole super power. The old certitudes, the multilateral structures of balance and countervailing force, appear now over and done with. America is obliged to rethink its way, and differing views have been expressed about its future role. This discussion pre-dates 9/11, pre-dates even

the Bush presidency. Some prominent and currently influential individuals would promote an interventionist approach, as they consider that America has an obligation to clean up the unacceptable regimes that are disordering the world. US intervention, according to this view, is beneficent and is welcomed as a liberating force by those released from a repressive regime, witness what was seen in Afghanistan. Others favour containing rather than eliminating unacceptable regimes. It is an extensive and many-sided discussion, and to follow it is a study in itself. However, it is not to be ignored and it points to a broader agenda extending beyond immediate engagement in Iraq. American actions may be driven by a variety of factors, as several have claimed: a further response to 9/11, a quest for oil, an attempt to draw even further ahead of the rest, among others. But also to be discerned are the elements of a true global plan for the future by the dominant power of today.

In this setting, Iraq's problems do not seem surmountable. If the UN Security Council balks at authorising war, a 'coalition of the willing' stands ready in the wings to go ahead. About 50 countries are reported to have been approached, mostly in quiet. India is probably among them. It is no easy choice for us, especially if there is a UN resolution to authorise action. We may be hard put to avoid giving at least token support, even though Indians are bound to be deeply disturbed by any Western-led assault on our traditional friend Iraq.

(The author is former Foreign Secretary, Govt of India)

# USA frets, Baghdad fumes

Iran 51-3

in Asia

1371

Agence France-Presse

BAGHDAD, Jan. 12. — Iraq today charged that UN weapons experts were still engaged in "intelligence gathering" beyond the remit of their disarmament mission, despite a written protest it lodged last weekend.

"The provocations are continuing every day," Mr Saddam Hussein's scientific advisor, General Amer al-Saadi, complained, even as *The Washington Post* quoted a senior US official as saying today the USA was determined that 27 January, the date on which the UN inspectors left Iraq, would mark the start of the endgame in efforts to disarm Baghdad.

The questions posed by the UN teams during their inspections of Iraqi bases, factories and colleges far exceeded the requirements of their mission and amounted to "intelligence gathering", Mr Saadi told a delegation of French anti-war activists.

The Iraqi official said Baghdad was still awaiting a formal answer to the protest letter it sent to disarmament chiefs, Mr Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei on 5 January.



UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD? Turkish troops and tanks line up for military exercises in the province of Silopi near the Iraqi border early on Sunday. — AFP

But he acknowledged that the Egyptian President Mr Hosni Mubarak today took another swipe at US-led plans to invade Iraq, saying a war would "pour oil on the flames" in the volatile region and have disastrous consequences, adds

AFP from Toshka (Egypt). Meanwhile, two ships of Russia's Pacific Fleet are preparing to leave for a long-term mission that will take them to the Gulf, naval officers in the Far Eastern port of Vladivostok said today on condition of anonymity. Its objective is to "observe the military situation in the region in the event of a possible military conflict between Iraq and the USA," the officers said.

**Iraqi media's appeal:** Iraq's official media called on the international community today to be more active in rejecting US war threats, saying UN arms inspectors had found no evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

"It's right that voices are raised throughout the world to denounce aggressive US intentions and demand the lifting of the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people but that is not enough," said *Ath-Thawra*, mouthpiece of the ruling Baath Party in Baghdad.

Al-Iraq, another official paper, urged the international community to demand the UN Security Council "make the US hysteria stop and recognise Iraq's right to see the embargo lifted."

13 JAN 2003



## Talks on Korea crisis

WASHINGTON, JAN. 7. With renewed assurances by President George W. Bush that he will not order an attack on North Korea, worried Asian allies were resuming talks on Tuesday on how to defuse a nuclear crisis that is threatening their security.

Mr. Bush said the U. S. was open to dialogue with Pyongyang, but he also told reporters at the White House on Monday that North Korea must permit international monitoring of its nuclear facilities.

"We have no intention of invading North Korea," Mr. Bush

9/11  
said, renewing an assurance that so far has failed to deter North Korea from taking steps to build new nuclear weapons.

High-level South Korean and Japanese delegations met for a second day at the State Department to share their concerns with the U.S. officials. The two allies could be vulnerable to North Korean missiles and are seeking a diplomatic solution.

Mr. Bush said North Korea must keep the pledge it made to the United States in 1994 not to build new nuclear weapons.

"We will have dialogue," he said. — AP

2003

3 JAN 2003

# Iraq is ready for war, declares Saddam

**Baghdad:** A defiant Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Monday declared his country was ready for war and issued his first public criticism of UN



S. Hussein

weapons inspectors, accusing them of engaging in "pure intelligence work."

In a 25-minute televised message on Army Day, he dismissed U.S. threats to disarm Iraq by force as "clamour, commotion and hysteria" aimed at diverting attention from US domestic and foreign policy failures, and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

"As we monitor the hiss of snakes and bark of dogs accompanied by continued aggression in the north and south of the country, we act with the confidence of the assured whose actions are not hurried or confused," he said. "Here, we have prepared for everything."

Britain, Washington's staunchest ally on Iraq, however, said war with Baghdad was far from a foregone conclusion and less likely than many commentators implied.

"There has been so much talk in the newspapers about war, suggestions that the chance of war are 100 per cent, that it's important to try and correct that impression," British foreign secretary Jack Straw told BBC Radio. "What is important for people to un-

derstand is that war is not inevitable. The proposed conflict in the Gulf made world markets on edge. Safe haven gold briefly hit its highest level in six years on Monday, oil hovered near a two-year peak and the dollar dipped.

As tens of thousands of troops mass in the Gulf and both sides dig in for possible confrontation, UN inspectors once again fanned out on Monday in search of banned weapons. A day after searching a record 16 locations, they visited four sites, including a pesticide factory thought to have been linked to VX gas.

Mr Saddam Hussein said rather than searching for weapons of mass destruction, the inspectors were instead compiling lists of Iraqi scientists, asking workers misleading questions, and gathering information about army camps and "legitimate military production... These things, or most of them, are pure intelligence work."

Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix and International Atomic Energy Agency director-general Mohamed ElBaradei are scheduled to present an interim report on inspections to the Security Council on Thursday, with a second more comprehensive report due on January 27.

The *New York Times* reported on Monday that U.S. President George W. Bush's national security team was assembling plans for a post-Saddam Iraq that included a US military presence in the

country for at least 18 months with a civilian administrator running the country's economic and political institutions.

Citing administration officials, the paper said the plan also calls for military trials of the most senior Iraqi leaders and a takeover of the country's oil fields to pay for reconstruction.

Turkey, whose bases were critical in the 1991 Gulf war to drive Iraqi forces from Kuwait, may not be as compliant in a second US-Iraq confrontation. Foreign minister Yasar Yakis told the *Hurriyet* newspaper that most Turks were opposed to a war and would not accept Turkey being used as a staging post. He said any decision on support for a war would have to be approved in Turkey's parliament, where many lawmakers say they oppose war.

Meanwhile, about 100 US special forces members and more than 50 Central Intelligence Agency officers have been infiltrated into Iraq and have been operating there in small groups for at least four months, *The Boston Globe* has reported.

Citing intelligence officials and military analysts, the paper said on Sunday the teams were searching for Iraqi Scud missile launchers, monitoring oil fields, marking mine-fields and using laser pointers to guide US pilots patrolling the northern and southern no-fly zones toward their targets. Agencies

7 JAN 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Iraq in a no-win situation

By Chinmaya R. Gharekhan

HD-10 67 1

**T**HE REPORT on Iraq's programmes for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) will present to the Security Council on January 27 will, in all likelihood, lead to the adoption of another resolution authorising a 'coalition of the willing' to use all 'necessary means' to bring about Iraq's compliance with the demands of the 'international community'.

In case UNMOVIC were to convey to the Council its conclusion that Iraq did not have, and will not have, in future, the capability to produce WMD, the Council would not be able to take or even endorse any punitive action against Iraq. But the dice are loaded against Iraq. The issues are framed in a manner as to make it impossible for Iraq to satisfy UNMOVIC's demands. The burden of proof is on Iraq. It is not unreasonable on the part of UNMOVIC to insist on some evidence to support Iraq's claim of not having WMD or programmes to produce them. But it would be not possible for Iraq to produce such evidence in all cases. Iraq is in a no-win situation.

Iraq has given free and unrestricted access to the inspectors, as acknowledged by the chairman of UNMOVIC, Hans Blix, in his statement to the Council on December 19, 2002. The inspectors have on occasion behaved in a manner that the Iraqis would be justified in regarding as offensive.

They carried out an inspection on December 13, which was a Friday, 'the Muslim day of peace' as Mr. Blix described it. The Iraqi staff was absent, doors were locked and keys were not available. The Iraqis offered to break the doors, videotaping the whole event. Eventually, it was agreed to seal the doors and to carry out the inspection the following day.

The declaration submitted by Iraq on December 7, as required under Resolution 1441, was 12,000 pages long. The moment Mr. Blix handed it over to the President of the Council

*The dice are loaded against Iraq. The issues are framed in a manner as to make it impossible for Iraq to satisfy UNMOVIC's demands.*

for the month of December, the Ambassador of Columbia, the latter promptly passed it on to the Americans. Was it mere coincidence that the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, happened to be in Bogotá at the same time on an official visit?

The Americans, in what they claimed to be lending a helping hand to the secretariat, made copies and gave them to Russia and China in New York and to Britain and France in Washington. Thereafter, 9000 of the original 12000 pages were excised and the remaining 3000-page document was given to the ten non-permanent members. Nobody seemed to mind this highly improper procedure except for Norway, which protested, and Syria, which refused to accept the expurgated text. Syria's gesture was meaningless, since it had already voted in favour of 1441.

The rationale for removing three fourths of the declaration was that the deleted portion contained 'sensitive' material. Since the P-5 already have all the expertise to make all categories of WMD, there was no harm, it was argued, in their having access to it. It is now clear that the really sensitive part of the Iraqi declaration contained information about 150 companies that had business transactions with Iraq in the prohibited areas. Iraq's declaration reportedly mentions 80 German companies, 24 American, 17 British, as well as Swiss, Japanese, Italian, French, Swedish and Brazilian firms. While most of the activities took place before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, some companies cooperated with Iraq more recently.

Mr. Blix told the Council on December 19 that Iraq had not submitted much new information. He referred to inconsistencies in Iraq's declaration as well as to issues needing more clarification in biological, chemical and missile areas. He said UNMOVIC had in its possession in-

formation that contradicted Iraq's account. He did admit that despite all the help that technology could provide, inspections could not guarantee that all possibly concealed items and activities would be found. But he expressed confidence that the extensive authority given by 1441 will make any attempted concealment more difficult.

According to present indications, it would not be possible for the inspectors to present on January 27 a categorical report one way or the other. There is still a slim chance that interviews with some of the scientists on the list of 500 given by Iraq might yield definitive information, favourable or otherwise for Iraq. On the whole, however, the report is most likely to contain enough material to indict Iraq of lack of full or even substantial compliance. Will it be enough to convict Iraq of a 'material' breach in terms of 1441? Quite likely. In that event, the Council might either ask the inspectors to make one more attempt at unearthing the truth behind Iraq's claim, thus giving one more 'final' opportunity to Iraq, or it might proceed to the second stage of the two-stage approach underlying 1441.

Will France and Russia once again play a moderating role of the kind they played in the eight weeks preceding the adoption of 1441? They could, for example, try to ensure that the authority to be given by the new resolution would be for the use of all means necessary and appropriate for the achievement of the objective mentioned in the resolution, namely elimination of Iraq's WMD programmes.

Some element of proportionality regarding the use of all means ought to be introduced. In other words, the mandate, which the next resolution might confer on the coalition of the willing, should be drafted in specific

and not general terms.

The American decision in November 2002 to go the U.N. route has brought them rich dividends in the form of legitimacy and increased support internationally. Besides Britain and Australia, the list of countries agreeing to help a military campaign includes Turkey, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Portugal and Arab states Kuwait and Qatar. Saudi Arabia, as was expected, has agreed to provide base facilities to launch the invasion. New and aspiring NATO members such as Romania and Bulgaria are eager to help. The U.S. has reportedly asked 50 countries for help. Most would fall in line, though some might not wish to publicise their participation until after it is all over.

If the real objective of the Americans is to bring about a regime change in Baghdad, will military operations help in that? Experts seem to agree that a mere 'smart' war conducted from the air cannot, by itself, do the job; ground operations would be unavoidable. If the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, were to oblige and accept asylum somewhere, it would be a great relief for all concerned. Even at the time of the first Gulf war, there were rumours of the Iraqi leader having sought asylum, including even in India! Failing that, however, the U.S. would have to organise Iraqi opposition, internal and external, to a point where they would feel confident enough to risk confrontation with Saddam Hussein.

The Americans can be counted upon to have learnt from the experience of the 1990s. They also seem prepared to stay engaged for as long as necessary and to pay the costs however high. They would not encounter too much opposition from Iraq's neighbours for their plans, so long as Iraq's territorial integrity is preserved, at least for a while. The U.S. President, George Bush, would prefer a peaceful solution, but it would be a mistake to assume that he would walk away from military operations should they become necessary to achieve his objective.

THE HINDU

2003

**IRAQ / 'SADDAM'S DAY OF RECKONING COMING'**

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All

**Bush hopeful of peaceful solution**

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**CRAWFORD (TEXAS), JAN. 3.** Rebuking the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, said he had "no heart for somebody who starves his folks". Still, Mr. Bush said Thursday he was confident a peaceful conclusion could be reached in the nuclear standoff on the Korean peninsula.

Fielding questions about the tense U.S. relations with Iraq as well as North Korea, Mr. Bush voiced skepticism that the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, would voluntarily give up any nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

"He's got to understand his day of reckoning is coming," Mr. Bush told reporters invited to tour his ranch on a cold and windy morning.

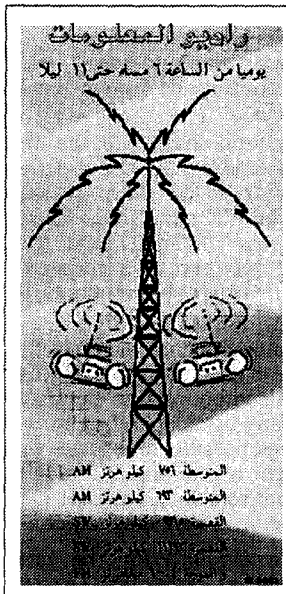
The President repeatedly insisted he was not on an inevitable path to war with the Iraqi leader—and cut off a reporter trying to explore the possibility. "I'm hopeful we won't have to go to war. And let's leave it at that," Mr. Bush said. "Hopefully he realises we're serious and hopefully he disarms peacefully".

At the State Department, the spokesman, Richard Boucher, said exile "certainly is an option" Mr. Hussein ought to consider. "The certainty of coalition forces prevailing if it comes to military action should make him consider any other options he might have."

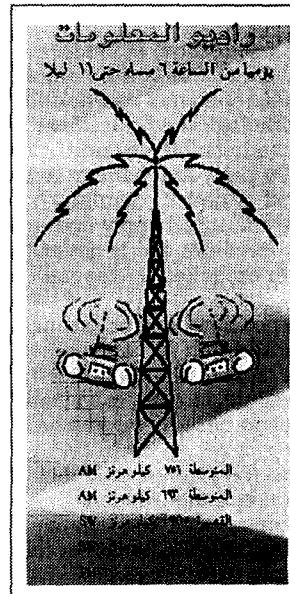
Asked if the U.S. was talking to Arab or other countries about exile arrangements, Mr. Boucher said he was not aware of any active efforts to promote Mr. Hussein's departure from Baghdad.

Mr. Boucher said the U.S. would not cut off or lessen food aid to North Korea for "political reasons," though he said the amount was still being determined. The administration will insist on a way "to make sure it

**FRONT**



**BACK**



**INFORMATION WARFARE?:** The Arabic version of the leaflets the U.S. dropped over Al Basrah and An Nasiriyah in southern Iraq. The leaflets refer to radio frequencies where the coalition forces are broadcasting details of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1441, U.N. weapons inspections, and the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein's reign. — AFP

gets to the people who deserve it and who need it," he said.

Reinforcing the position that the situations in North Korea and Iraq required different approaches, Mr. Bush said the standoff with North Korea was "a diplomatic issue, not a military issue."

"I believe the situation with North Korea will be resolved peacefully," Mr. Bush said.

At the same time, he showed no patience for Mr. Kim's leadership.

The North Korea government needs outside help — with the United States the largest donor — to feed its 22 million people.

"One of the reasons why the people are starving is because the leader of North Korea hasn't

seen to it that their economy is strong or that they be fed," Mr. Bush said. — AP

# US moves troops to the Gulf, Iraq fears invasion

Baghdad, January 2

MORE THAN 11,000 US troops prepared to head for the Gulf on Thursday and Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister accused Washington of planning to invade Iraq despite an absence of weapons of mass destruction.

On the diplomatic front, an Iranian newspaper reported what it said was a US-Russian plan to persuade Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to hand over power and go to Moscow. The Russian Foreign Ministry declined comment.

US defence officials said the order to send the desert-trained troops to the Gulf was the first deployment of a full combat division to the area since the 1991 Gulf War.

They and other troops on notice to move would double the nearly 60,000 US personnel already in the region in case President Bush carries out his threat to attack Iraq for its alleged possession of banned weapons. Bush says he has made no decision on whether to invade Iraq, which was ordered by the UN Security Council in November to disarm or face serious consequences.

Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Tareq Aziz, accused Washington of planning to invade his country, regardless of what UN arms inspectors turn up, as part of a plan to control the region's oil supplies.

"They didn't say 'let us wait for a while for the result of the inspection and then let's decide what to do'," Aziz told several groups of European activists in Baghdad to show their opposition to war on Iraq.

"When they continue their preparations for the war of aggression, what does that mean?"

It doesn't mean that they are genuinely afraid of an imaginary Iraqi threat. It means that they have an imperialist design," he said in English.

"That design is to invade Iraq, to occupy Iraq and use the national resources of Iraq for the purposes of...the American capitalist regime," he said.

"When America becomes stronger economically, when America takes over the whole oil of the region and puts it in its hands it is going to pressure politically and economically every country that needs oil," Aziz said.

World oil prices opened the year higher, but this was primarily because a Venezuelan strike pushed US stocks close to a 26-year low. Analysts said the possibility of war in Iraq was likely to push gold higher, and the dollar was slightly higher at \$1.0465 to the euro but was held back by uncertainty over an Iraq war and the U.S. economic recovery.

Meanwhile, UN weapons experts visited several suspect sites, including a currency printing house in Baghdad, a missile site and an air force base in Taji, north of Baghdad, and a lead plant south of the capital, Iraqi officials said.

Aziz said the inspections were going well and the inspectors had not found and would not find weapons of mass destruction.

United Nations chief weapons inspector Hans Blix will probably visit Baghdad between January 18 and 20 before reporting on the inspections to the UN Security Council on January 27, United Nations sources in New York said on Wednesday.

Reuters

3 JAN 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Iraq faces tougher sanctions after UN vote

NADIM LADKI & IRWIN ARIEFF  
BAGHDAD/UNITED NATIONS, DEC 31

**I**RAQ, its economy in tatters, faced tougher sanctions on Tuesday after the United Nations named goods such as drugs, trucks and boats that cannot be imported without prior approval. US and British warplanes attacked Iraqi air defences after the Iraqis flew military aircraft into the southern "no-fly" zone, the US Military said.

The 15-nation UN Security Council voted 13-0 to adopt the resolution expanding the list of civilian goods under sanctions. Russia and Syria abstained.

The United States and Britain cautioned Iraq against seeing this as a sign of divisions over its obligation — under former Council resolutions — to give up weapons of mass destruction or face "se-

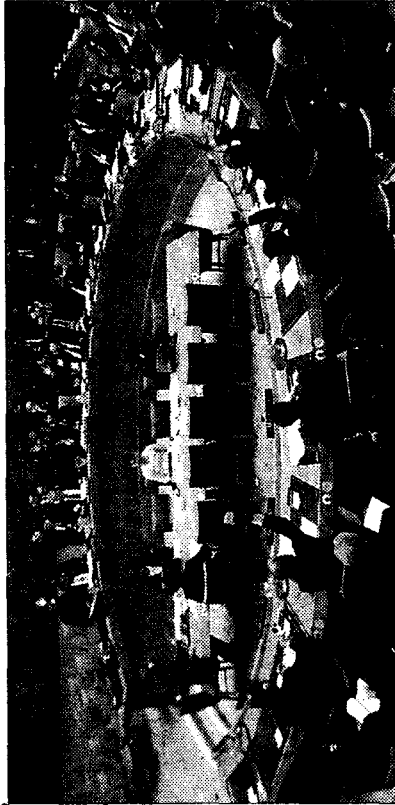
rious consequences".

Iraq said the resolution would aggravate the suffering of its people, who have been under UN economic sanctions since Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

"We confirm that the Security Council should lift the sanctions and that Iraq has met all its obligations with regard to Security Council resolutions," Iraqi envoy Mohammed S. Ali told reporters.

Additions to the UN sanctions list range from drugs to protect Iraqi soldiers from poison gas and anthrax to boats like those used in a deadly attack on a US warship two years ago.

At Florida, the US Central Command said in a statement that US and British aircraft used precision-guided weapons to target Iraqi Air Defence communications facilities and an Air Defence mobile radar in strikes on Monday.



Security Council members vote at the UN in New York on Monday. Reuters

UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, however, today said he saw no room for a US Military strike on Iraq before inspectors present their report on Iraqi weapons to the world body in late January.

A top adviser to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said the US was trying to tempt scientists to leave Iraq and entice them to giving false information with financial offers.

## UN experts scour more sites

**BAGHDAD:** UN arms experts pounced on at least seven suspect sites in and around Baghdad on Tuesday, brushing aside criticism they were acting like gangsters. Iraqi officials said UNMOVIC ballistic experts visited Al Mansour Company in Tajiyyat on the outskirts of Baghdad and Al Maamoun plant in Youssefiyah, some 30 km south of the capital. Biological teams were at a pharmaceutical research centre and Ibn Sina company in Baghdad. An IAEA team was at a plant run by Ibn Younees company on the outskirts of Baghdad. An UNMOVIC multi-disciplinary team was headed towards Habbaniyah city, 100 km west of Baghdad. Its final destination was not immediately known. — Reuters

1 JAN 2003

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