

Hunt for a word bigger than disaster

Quake toll to touch 50,000

Bam, Dec. 30 (Reuters): The death toll in Iran's earthquake could jump to 50,000, officials said today, as relief workers pleaded for more aid for survivors of one of the deadliest natural disasters of modern times.

"If we consider that, on average, five people lived in each house we can say the death toll will reach 50,000," a senior interior ministry official said, sharply raising the projected tally from the nearly 30,000 already buried.

Residents in Bam, 1,000 km southeast of Tehran, said some children who survived Friday's quake had died in the bitterly cold nights. With 90 per cent of Bam's buildings damaged, according to UN estimates, tens of thousands are now sleeping in the open.

"Two children from my family, 12 and 13 years old, survived the earthquake, but they died from exposure while out on the street some time on Friday night," one middle-aged woman said.

"Half my family is still under the debris. We buried 14 family members yesterday," she added. "Writers and poets should try to find a word bigger than 'disaster'."

Another senior official confirmed the forecast of 50,000 deaths, though President Mohammad Khatami called it premature. "We should wait until the rescue work and all the activities in Bam are finished," Khatami said in nearby Kerman, saying the present toll was "definitely not 50,000".

Such a figure could make the earthquake the most lethal since one at Tangshan in China that killed at least five times that many in 1976. Friday's tremor, which measured 6.3 on the Richter scale, struck just before dawn, killing entire families as they slept. "Instead of Bam, we now have ruins and deep sor-

row," Khatami said, adding he had instructed the housing ministry to produce a report in 10 days on Bam's seismological faults and plans for rebuilding the ancient Silk Road city.

State television said the government had earmarked around \$410 million for reconstruction.

Aid agencies say around 100,000 people are homeless and are appealing for warm clothing and blankets.

Around 30,000 people were injured. Television broadcasts showed one girl, aged about six,

British firefighters searching for survivors of Iran's earthquake were stunned to discover a former colleague was among the dead, reports Reuters.

The body of Gavin Sexton — who left the fire service in August to travel the world — was pulled from the rubble of the quake which hit the city of Bam, in southeast Iran, on Friday.

He had been travelling from India to Turkey by motorbike and only stopped in the ancient Silk Road city because his vehicle had broken down and needed repairing. He is the only known British victim.

lying in a hospital bed with tubes attached to her nose and a bandaged head. "I want to show my dolls to my mummy and tell her what has happened to us. But I can't find my mummy," she said.

Experts said Bam's mud-brick buildings did not leave the air pockets that occur when modern concrete structures collapse and their dust would have suffocated survivors.

Khatami said he had ordered an investigation into why government buildings, including hospitals, had also crumbled. "Those who are to blame will be severely punished," he said, without elaborating.



A woman grieves at a funeral for a quake victim in Bam on Tuesday. (AFP)

Iran quake toll put at 20,000

BAM (IRAN), DEC. 27. Overwhelmed relief and rescue crews picked through entire city blocks of rubble in search of survivors and bodies on Saturday, a day after an earthquake ruined this southeast Iranian city. As estimates of the fatalities reached tens of thousands, the Government appealed for international help and waived visas for foreign relief workers.

The scope of the tragedy was so vast that a reliable death toll was impossible to give. The Interior Ministry estimated 20,000 dead today, but two leading rescue officials said the final toll from yesterday's 6.3 magnitude quake could be double that figure.

The devastating earthquake killed or injured up to 70,000 people in Bam, the Iranian Health Minister, Ahmad Pezesh-

kian, said. "We estimate now that 65 to 70 per cent of the population of the city of Bam has either been killed or injured," he said amid the rubble of Bam's Imam Khomeini hospital.

He estimated Bam's population at 100,000 people, but did not venture to give a breakdown of the casualties.

"The problem is that we have not registered exactly who has been killed and who has been injured. What we have is a single casualty toll that is very, very high," Dr. Pezeshkian said.

"As more bodies are pulled out, we fear that the death toll may reach as high as 40,000. An unbelievable human disaster has occurred," said Akbar Alavi, the Mayor of Kerman city, the local provincial capital.

Rescue workers recovered 150 people alive today, Revolutionary Guards officer Masoud Amiri said. The survivors included a baby under 12 months of age whose condition was "stable," he added.

The leader of a relief team, Ahmad Najafi, endorsed the 40,000 estimate, saying that in one street alone in Bam today, 200 bodies had been extricated from the rubble in one hour's work.

Workers dug with shovels and

even their bare hands to extricate bodies and possible survivors from the remains of flattened buildings. In some parts of the city, bulldozers were moving the rubble.

A man with white turban and greying beard dug into and lifted rubble from the remains of his house. His family was buried underneath. He and four friends worked with hand and shovel. When a hand of his teenage daughter appeared, he fainted. Eventually, the bodies of his daughter, wife and two sons were brought out.

"The disaster is far too huge for us to meet all of our needs," the Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, said on Friday, declaring three days of mourning.

Airspace opened

The Government opened Iranian airspace for all planes carrying aid or relief workers, and said they would be directed to Kerman or Bam airports. Many countries responded. Planes from Britain, the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, Switzerland and Turkey have arrived in Iran. Italy and countries as far apart as South Africa and South Korea said they were flying in equipment, aid and workers.

In one of the city's cemeteries, relief workers were digging and a bulldozer was excavating a mass grave. More than 20 corpses were already lying in the mass grave. A cleric and 10 relatives were saying prayers over an individual grave.

Men and women were often seen slapping their faces and beating their chests in an Islamic ritual of mourning.

"This is the Apocalypse. There is nothing but devastation and debris," Mohammed Karimi, in his 30s, said on Friday when he brought the bodies of his wife and 4-year-old daughter to the cemetery.

"Last night before she went to sleep she made me a drawing and kissed me four times," he said of his daughter, Nazenine, whose body he held in his arms. "When I asked why four kisses?" she said, "Maybe, I will not see you again, papa," Karimi said as tears streamed down his face.

The only smiles in Bam were on the faces of a movie poster on a wall of a cinema. The cinema was ruined.

But for some, the quake brought advantages. About 800 convicts escaped from the local prison, said the prison guard, Vahid Masoumpour. — AP, AFP

Relief under way: Page 12

Over 5,000 killed in Iran quake

■ 30,000 injured ■ Many buried under debris ■ Ancient citadel destroyed

BAM (IRAN), DEC. 26. Between 5,000 and 6,000 people were killed in a massive earthquake that completely destroyed the historic centre of Iran's southeastern fort city of Bam today. More than 30,000 people were injured and about 60 per cent of the buildings had collapsed, officials and state media said.

The tremor, measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale, struck at 5.25 a.m. when most of the city's 200,000 residents were asleep, raising fears the toll may go up.

Many people were believed to be buried under debris, the media said, appealing to people to donate blood.

"There is a lot of dead and injured in Bam and everything is being done to take them out," the Kerman province governor, Mohammad Ali Karimi, said.

Many of the historic buildings in the city, which is famous for its ancient UNESCO-registered 2,000-year-old citadel, Arg-e-Bam, are made of mud brick, making them susceptible to destruction in an earthquake. Nearly 80 per cent of the citadel was destroyed, as were most of the buildings in the ancient complex around it.

In the old quarter of the city hardly a building remained upright. In one street, only a wall and trees were standing.

The survivors were beside themselves with grief, as the scale of the catastrophe swamped rescue workers. Witnesses said the road to Bam was choked with ambulances and people desperate to find family members. "People are trying to pull bodies out of the rubble. All windows are smashed," said a reporter.

Dozens of bodies littered the streets. Bereaved residents wandered the streets pleading with the authorities to speed up rescue efforts.

Two of the city's hospitals collapsed, crushing many of the staff, and the remaining hospitals were full. The wounded were being ferried to neighbouring towns.

"People have started walking toward Kerman — many complaining of a lack of aid," the reporter added. Kerman city is 190 km northwest of Bam.

About 500 people have been evacuated to hospitals in Kerman, where they are in a critical condition. State television showed the casualty hall of a Kerman city hospital where many injured lay on the floor as doctors attended to more critical patients.



A woman grieves over the body of her daughter killed in the earthquake that hit Bam in Iran early on Friday, as rescue workers search for survivors under the rubble. — AP

The Government has mounted a major rescue operation. Iran's Health Ministry appealed to international organisations to fly in aid. Mohammad Ismail Akbari, a Ministry official, said the priority requirements were disinfectants, equipment to test if water is contaminated, water pumps and electricity generators.

Iran's Red Crescent, the Islamic equivalent of the Red Cross, said rescue and relief teams had been sent to Bam from numerous provinces, including Teheran.

Relief teams set up their headquarters in a public square because their offices in the governor's building had been ruined, Mr. Karimi told state radio.

Telephone links have been severed. Authorities were in contact with the Bam area through radio and satellite phone links. The official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted a Red Crescent worker as saying water and electricity links had also been cut.

State media said the quake had also damaged towns and

villages around Bam.

The United Nations and several countries, including Russia and Germany, offered help to the victims. U.N. officials said they were releasing an immediate emergency grant of \$90,000 to help Iran in handling the aftermath of the quake.

Houses in Bam, a date-growing area, are traditionally made

of mud-brick. Hardly any building in Iran is built to withstand earthquakes, although the country sits on several major faultlines and tremors are frequent.

In June last year, a tremor measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale hit northern Iran, killing at least 229 people and injuring more than 1,000. Some 35,000

people were killed in 1990 when earthquakes of up to 7.7 on the Richter scale hit the northwest of Iran.

A leading Iranian earthquake expert told Reuters in October that earthquake education in Iran was very poor.

"Most people think what God wills, will happen." — AFP, Reuters, AP

Baghdad serial blasts claim 34

By Dexter Filkins and Raymond Bonner

Baghdad: A series of blasts, including a suicide attack on the offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross and bombings at four Iraqi police stations, shook Baghdad early on Monday, punctuating two days of violence.

Iraq's police chief and deputy interior minister Ahmad Ibrahim said at a news conference that 34 people were killed and 224 wounded in the attacks. He said 26 of the dead were civilians and eight were policemen. Sixty-five policemen and 159 civilians were wounded in the blasts, he said.

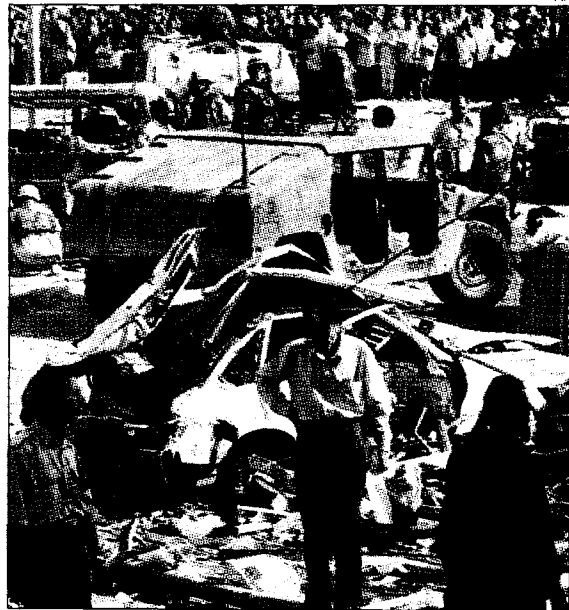
The attacks took place in a condensed time period between 8:30 and 10:15 a.m. local time, leading American and Iraqi officials to believe they were part of a highly-coordinated attack that came at the outset of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. There was a strong suspicion that foreigners were involved, and American and Iraqi officials referred to a "new element" being responsible for the bombings.

Five police stations were attacked, but one attempt was foiled when the attacker was shot. He was not killed, and according to American and Iraqi officials he identified himself as Syrian and was carrying Syrian identification.

Officials differentiated between Monday's attacks and the one on Sunday—against a highly protected hotel where deputy defence secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz was staying—which they attributed to loyalists to the deposed regime of Saddam Hussein.

In Sunday's attack, an American colonel was killed and at least 16 people were wounded when a barrage of missiles from a homemade launching pad slammed into the hotel. US military officials said they did not believe Mr Wolfowitz was the target of the attack, but they called the attack carefully planned.

The attack at the Red Cross headquarters occurred



US army soldiers and Iraqi police examine the debris after a vehicle exploded in front of a police station in Baghdad on Monday.

when an ambulance carrying explosives drove through the light protection around the building and detonated the bomb from about 40 to 50 feet away.

Compared with other potential targets in Baghdad, the Red Cross building was lightly protected—it was blocked by just some oil drums filled with sand and some barbed wire, while many buildings have truck barricades or cement walls as a security cordon. NYT News Service

IRAQ BLASTS / 3 U.S. SOLDIERS KILLED

Kurds demand self-rule

110-16
23/12

BAGHDAD, DEC. 24. Three U.S. soldiers and several Iraqis were killed in separate bomb attacks on Christmas eve, a day that began for some Baghdad residents with the scream of U.S. jetfighters and gunships swooping and firing along with a barrage of artillery aimed at anti-American resistance forces.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Kurds, among the major winners from the U.S.-led invasion, are demanding guarantees now about the size of Kurdish self-rule within the framework of a federal Iraqi state. The Kurds, ethnically distinct from the country's majority Arabs, have ruled an autonomous Switzerland-sized stretch of northern Iraq since the end of the first Gulf War more than a decade ago, under the U.S.-led aerial protection.

Thousands of Kurds took to the streets of Kirkuk on Monday to lay claim to the major oil centre where the old Ba'ath regime settled large numbers of Arabs from 1970s. "The coming months will be crucial in determining the future of the Kurds in Iraq," said Mahmud Othman, a member of the U.S.-backed interim Governing Council.

A draft legislation put forward by the Kurdish group on the Council setting out "a federal vision within a united Iraq" will shortly be examined, he said. The Iraqi rebels detonated

a roadside bomb as a U.S. convoy drove near Samarra, a hotbed of resistance north of Baghdad where rebels often attack the U.S. troops.

"Three Task Force Ironhorse soldiers were killed," sources said. Further north, a car bomb exploded outside the Kurdish Interior Ministry in Irbil at about 11 am, killing or wounding several persons, according to an official of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

A local said the bomb exploded at the barricades in front of the Ministry building.

At least four passengers in a car beside the booby-trapped car were killed, he said.

The U.S. military confirmed an explosion in Irbil, but released no further details. Irbil houses the Kurdish Parliament.

The Kurds are seeking recognition for their position well before the approval on March 1 next year of a Basic Law to govern Iraq during the transition period through 2005.

The five Kurdish representatives on the 25-member Governing Council and five interim Kurdish Ministers, including the Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, are pushing for a federal system. "The Council approved the principle of federalism for Kurdistan but we want this to be clearly set out in the new Basic Law," Mr. Othman said. — AP

Iraqi council gears up for 'trial of all times'

Associated Press
Baghdad, December 18

IRAQ'S US-APPOINTED Governing Council met on Wednesday to look into ways of appointing judges to a new war crimes tribunal that could try former dictator Saddam Hussein.

One council member, Adnan Pachachi, said Iraq's tribunal would welcome "foreign judges if we feel it's necessary". "We just started today preliminary discussions on methods and procedures to appoint judges" to the tribunal, said Mouwafak al-Rubii, a Shia physician and longtime human rights activist. A committee of highly qualified lawyers could recommend candidates to be judges on the tribunal, which will try former members of Saddam's regime for human rights abuses stretching back decades, al-Rubii said.

Saddam was captured on Saturday, and some in the Governing Council say they want to try him within months. However, he is in US custody, and the timeline and format of a possible trial has yet to be established. Amnesty International and other



AP
US soldiers take position after three Iraqi men opened fire from their car in Tikrit on Thursday.

rights groups have expressed concern about the legitimacy of the Iraqi court, saying it must conform with the norms of international law.

Governing Council members say Saddam should face the death penalty if convicted. The US-led occupation authority suspended the death penalty, and Iraqi officials have said they will decide whether to reinstate it when a transitional government

assumes sovereignty as scheduled by July 1.

Bush has said Saddam deserves the "ultimate penalty" for his crimes. Al-Rubii said the council "will do anything for a greater UN role" even though the United Nations objects to the death penalty. This will be "the trial of all times", al-Rubii said, adding that the trial will "expose presidents, kings and intellectuals" in the West and West Asia.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 DEC 2003

France, Germany agree to cut Iraqi debt of \$120 billion

Washington: France and Germany have agreed with the United States to substantially reduce Iraq's debt of \$120 billion, the White House has said.

The decision was taken after US envoy James Baker met with French President Jacques Chirac in Paris and with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder in Berlin, the White House said in a statement released here on Tuesday. France and Germany were two of the most ardent opponents of the US-led war on Iraq which ousted President Saddam Hussein.

The White House said President George W. Bush had spoken with Mr Baker about the talks with Mr Chirac and Mr Schroeder.

Mr Baker, Mr Bush's special envoy on Iraq's debt, is on a tour of several European countries to convince leaders to lighten Iraq's total debt burden.

Mr Bush believes war-torn Iraq's reconstruction could be hampered unless debt is forgiven, cut or rescheduled.

Meanwhile, South Korea

finalised plans on Wednesday to send 3,000 troops to Iraq, a top government official said. The troops, who will work on peacekeeping and reconstruction, will join some 460 South Korean medics and military engineers already operating in the volatile nation.

President Roh Moo-Hyun met with security-related cabinet ministers on Wednesday and approved the plan, national security adviser Ra Jong-IL said. No decision has been made on where to deploy the troops, Mr Ra said, and the dispatch would take at least four months.

The deployment is subject to parliamentary approval, and is expected to be passed.

Japan also plans to send its first main ground troop deployment to Iraq in late February, a news report said in Tokyo on Wednesday, as the government warned that its embassy in Baghdad received a threat warning of a possible attack.

The troops will carry out reconstruction work and other non-combat duties. Agencies

Saddam's 'death' does them apart

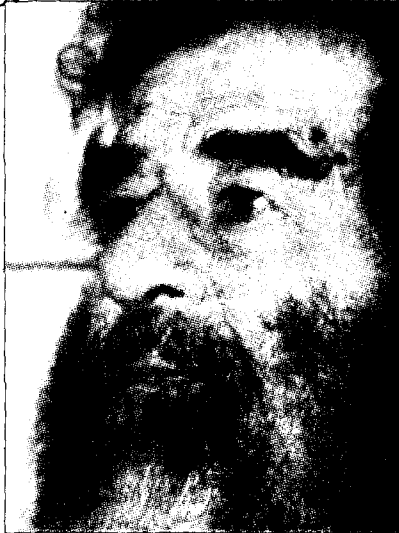
The Times, London

Dec. 16. — Britain is caught in a widening rift with the USA over the use of the death penalty against Saddam Hussein.

While President George W Bush sent a clear signal that he privately favoured execution for the former Iraqi dictator, Mr Tony Blair's envoy to Iraq said that Britain would take no part in a tribunal that could lead to a death penalty.

The warning was regarded as significant because it is accepted that Iraq's fledgling justice system urgently needs foreign expertise to conduct a free and fair trial. Without British support for a tribunal, others, such as the European Union, the UN and international legal experts would also refuse to help with a trial.

The deep ideological division between Britain and America, the two main partners in the coalition in Iraq, emerged after a day of confused speculation over the fate of the former dictator, whose detractors lined up demanding justice for his crimes.



Mr Bush also gave the strongest hint so far, however, that Washington would support the reinstatement of the death penalty and Saddam's execution, if that was the will of the Iraqi people.

The return of capital punishment to Iraq would, however, alienate Britain, most European countries and many international organisa-

tions with valuable legal expertise in preparing complex war crimes trials.

Mr Blair told the Commons yesterday that Britain would respect the decisions of the Iraqi people over Saddam's fate, but his envoy to Iraq has made it clear that the British government would not be able to assist in any Iraqi tribunal that could deliver the death sentence.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock set out the British position when he said: "The UK is against the death penalty, so we would have no part of a tribunal or a process that has the death penalty."

The policy was later confirmed by Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, who has championed the campaign against the death penalty. "The position of the British government and Parliament in respect of the death penalty is very clear. We have abolished the death penalty here, and we campaigned hard to try and extend the abolition of the death penalty," he said.

The UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, has also opposed the death penalty.

More reports on page 3

THE TELEGRAPH 17 DEC 2003

US soldiers kill 11 insurgents in Iraq

Baghdad: US forces shot dead 11 attackers who tried to ambush them in Samarra, west of Baghdad, the American military said on Tuesday, amid an upsurge in violence in restive Iraqi towns since the capture of Saddam Hussein.

US troops in Samarra "repelled a complex ambush" on Monday, the military said, as rebellious incidents occurred both in and around the capital, during which American forces killed at least four other Iraqis. The attackers in Samarra apparently let loose a flock of pigeons as a signal to announce the arrival of a patrol, a statement said. "Moments later, two men on a motorcycle firing automatic weapons used children leaving school as cover to attack the patrol," it charged.

"Soldiers, in consideration of the children and a nearby mosque, employed snipers to target the attackers and successfully suppressed the enemy's ability to inflict damage," the statement said. The convoy was attacked again



A masked Palestinian militant holds his weapon next to a portrait of Saddam Hussein during a demonstration in the Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunes on Monday in support of the former Iraqi leader.

but the fire was "ineffective" and there were neither US casualties nor damage to any vehicle. The fresh attacks eliminated hopes of an early return to peace and security in Iraq following the announcement on Sunday that ousted dictator Saddam had been netted.

As hundreds of Shiites demonstrated against Sad-

dam in central Baghdad on Tuesday, in Mosul some 1,000 students protested for their captured leader. In Saddam's hometown of Tikrit on Tuesday, three US soldiers, one with head wounds, were evacuated to a nearby hospital for the 4th Infantry Division, watched by reporters, after their Humvee vehicle hit a roadside bomb. AFP

'Good riddance' but not to bombs

Nine killed in twin car strikes

Agencies
Baghdad, December 15

PRESIDENT GEROGE W. Bush on Monday said "good riddance" to Saddam Hussein, but the former dictator's legacy continued to haunt the American leader, with car bombs killing nine Iraqis on Monday.

Bush, who has warned that Saddam's capture did not mean the end of conflict, couldn't resist a swipe at his fallen enemy at a news conference. Asked if he had a personal message for Saddam, the victorious Bush said: "Good riddance. The world is better off without you, Mr Saddam Hussein."

The President wouldn't rule out the death penalty for Saddam, saying it would be decided by the Iraqi Governing Council — whose members have openly said they might put Saddam to death.

Bush also warned that US-led occupation forces in Iraq faced continued difficulties and dangers after Saddam's capture, but Iraq was on the right track. He said the capture should convince some "fence-sitters" to support the transition under the US-led occupation.

The suicide bombers sent a different message. One car bomb ripped through a village police station north of Baghdad on Monday. The bomber and seven victims died and more than 20 people were wounded.

A second explosives-laden car blew up in Baghdad by another police station, killing the driver-bomber and wounding eight police and four passers-by. In Tikrit, which long basked in the reflected glory of its famous son, US soldiers used batons to



Iraqis stand beside a vehicle that was detonated by a suicide bomber in Baghdad on Monday. Seven policemen were killed in the attack.

disperse protesters chanting "We sacrifice our blood and souls for you Saddam."

Bush had said on Sunday, "The capture of Saddam Hussein does not mean the end of violence in Iraq. We still face terrorists."

US officials have long blamed attacks in Iraq on Saddam loyalists but also on Islamic militants backed by al-Qaida — whose leader Osama bin Laden is still evading capture, more than two years after his Afghan Taliban protectors were toppled. Analysts say bin Laden, now once again America's

undisputed most wanted man, poses a far more potent threat than Saddam.

Monday's attacks were the latest of a wave that have killed nearly 200 US soldiers and even more Iraqi policemen and civilians since Bush declared major combat over on May 1. If anyone imagined Saddam' capture would bring swift peace, the words of US-trained Iraqi policeman Ahmed Ali may cause them to think again.

"We want this to lead to more attacks on the Americans. There will be a holy war against them. It will be much worse. We all

love Saddam," he said, standing near US soldiers he works with in Falluja, confident they would not understand his Arabic.

Financial markets have welcomed Saddam's capture but analysts said that the positive effect would be fleeting.

Stocks and the dollar rose, and crude oil prices fell amid hopes of fewer attacks on Iraq's oil industry.

The US military said Saddam, who had urged his troops to go down fighting against invading US-led forces, surrendered without a shot being fired despite having a pistol.

Soldiers who caught him said that surprised them, especially after his two trusted sons died with guns blazing in July. Saddam's compliant end — looking like anything but the commander of a resistance movement — brought contempt.

"The person we saw is Saddam Hussein, collapsed, scared and a coward as he surrendered at the first chance," Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari told Dubai-based Al Arabiya television. Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, said Saddam's treatment would be "governed by the Geneva convention."

1 5 DEC 2003

SE 8
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Hole story

in 2003
① 2003

America will be judged, too

The \$25 million question — that's the reward Americans had promised for leads on Saddam Hussein — has possibly already been answered. The hole Americans find themselves in Iraq will be far more difficult to climb out from than the one from which GIs pulled out the former dictator. Indeed, in the worst case scenario, Hussein's incarceration can produce a bout of revenge attacks, both from Baathist loyalists and foreign Islamic militants. Even without such spectacular comebacks, the near certainty that Hussein, whose hidey-hole had guns and dollars but no communication equipment and no aides, was not directing armed opposition in Iraq, means that a stable Iraq and safe US forces are goals as complicated as they were before the arrest. Americans are hoping that with Hussein in custody, Iraqis will be more willing to sell information about the armed opposition since the dreaded possibility of a Saddam comeback is no longer relevant. Given how the Iraqis suffered under the dictator and the fact his 20-odd years rule produced a national fear psychosis, greater "cooperation" with the US occupiers may now happen. On the other hand, such an assumption could turn out to be simplistic. One of those assumptions was to ignore the Shia-Sunni divide in Iraq. The occupation has seen so far greater violence in Sunni areas and a more peaceful Shia response. Shias, like the Kurds, were targeted specially by Hussein and as long the ex-President was free, Americans looked a slightly better alternative. Now, however, Shia militant clerics, who are known to be unhappy about the occupation, may feel emboldened about opposing foreign forces. There is, therefore, no guarantee that if US forces do hand over Iraq to domestic civilian control by mid-2004, they will be giving Iraqi leaders a doable job.

Two other issues are raised by Hussein's arrest. First, dramatic, interesting and informative as the visuals of a salt-and-pepper bearded Hussein were, their display on TV screens worldwide raises the same question in principle as the US raised when its captured soldiers were shown on Arab TV. If the then Iraqi regime violated human rights and the Geneva convention, so has the US government although Washington's spin doctors will argue the war has ended. Such legal niceties aside, Hussein is for all intents a prisoner of war and, therefore, not available for propaganda purposes. A lot many people are also wondering what happened to those WMDs. The weapons of mass destruction that were the casus belli are now no longer mentionable in US policy circles. The war is now justified because a dreadful dictator is now history. But history will return a different verdict on American conduct.

Are you going to be new rulers, asked Saddam with a sneer

EX-DICTATOR DENIES RESPONSIBILITY FOR KUWAIT, MASSACRES, WMD

BAGHDAD, Dec. 15. — Saddam Hussein was sitting in a small, spartan room near Baghdad yesterday — without handcuffs but with an American soldier standing guard — when four members of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) arrived to identify him. "Introduce me to these gentlemen," the former dictator said with a sneer. "Are you going to be the new rulers of Iraq?" he asked sarcastically of the Iraqis who had struggled for decades to overthrow him.

By contrast, the deposed tyrant was polite and deferential to Mr Paul Bremer and Lt-Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the coalition's American leaders who accompanied the four Iraqis. "To the Americans he was completely deferential, he didn't refer to them in disrespectful terms," said Mr Ahmed Chalabi, a former exile who was one of the four Iraqi visitors and the only one whom Saddam appeared to recognise, terming the 30-minute encounter "very distasteful". But, Mr Chalabi said, Saddam treated the Iraqis contemptuously, and expressed no repentance for the horrific crimes committed by his regime.

Asked about his disastrous 1991 invasion of Kuwait that triggered the first Gulf War, Saddam replied: "I believe that Kuwait is part of Iraq."

Challenged about the mass graves where hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were buried after being executed by his paramilitaries, Saddam retorted: "Ask these people's families, they were thieves and traitors." He was equally dismissive of the thousands of Kurds whom he killed with chemical weapons in the 1988 Anfal campaign, brushing them aside as "agents of Iran, agents of Zionism".



HOLE FOR ONE: A US soldier (helmet visible) just about manages to slip into Saddam's last hiding place, a spider hole near Tikrit. — AFP

(He also denied that his regime possessed any any weapons of mass destruction "No, of course not," *Time* magazine quoted him as saying. "The US dreamt them up itself to have a reason to go to war with us," he said, according to a PTI report from Washington.)

Saddam "tried to justify his crimes... and said that he was a just but firm ruler", said Mr Adnan Pachachi, another of the four IGC members. When the members pressed him on the murder of Shia cleric and opposition leader Mohammed Sadeq al-Sadr, Saddam

made a weak pun on the fact that in Arabic, al-Sadr sounds similar to the word for chest. "Ach, you're asking me about the chest, why not ask me about the legs too?"

Saddam did not say explicitly that he had been organising the spate of attacks on US forces and their Iraqi allies, but did try to take credit for the resistance to the occupation, reminding his visitors that he had promised Iraq would fight "with pistols" against the foreign forces. — The Times

Iraq says it with bombs, page 3
Editorial: Hole story, page 8

Regards from Bush

AD DAWR/ WASHINGTON, Dec. 15. — Saddam asked to negotiate when US forces captured him down a hole, Maj. Brian Reed, who commanded the operation, said today. "He said, 'I am Saddam Hussein, I am the President of Iraq and I want to negotiate.'" Maj. Reed said the response was "President Bush sends his regards," according to a US soldier who reported the conversation. In Washington, Mr Donald Rumsfeld said Saddam was "not cooperative in terms of talking", observing he would be treated as a POW under the Geneva Convention. — AFP

SADDAM CAPTURED

W Am (D) 9:30 AM

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Tip-off came from family member

Agencies

BAGHDAD, Dec. 14. — American forces captured a bearded Saddam Hussein, hiding in a hole in a farmhouse cellar near his hometown Tikrit, the US military announced today. The US army was tipped off by a member of his family. Maj.-Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of the 4th Infantry Division that carried out the raid, said. The arrest was carried out without a single shot being fired.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we got him," US administrator Mr L Paul Bremer thus began the news conference announcing Saddam's capture. Lt-Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top US military commander in Iraq, furnished the details: "Last night, at approximately 8.00 p.m., local (10.30 p.m. IST), forces from the 4th Infantry Division, together with coalition special operations forces, conducted Operation Red Dawn to capture the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. This was done during a cordon and search operation at a remote farmhouse near the city of Tikrit."

Lt-Gen. Sanchez said after receiving intelligence yesterday morning about Saddam's possible whereabouts, "two likely locations were identified near the town of Adwar, and for operational purposes these locations were identified as Wolverine One and Wolverine Two. At about 18:00 last night, under the cover of darkness and with lightning speed, the Raider Brigade's forces were positioned and began movement towards the objectives north-west of Adwar.

"At about 20:00, coalition forces assaulted the two objectives, but initially did not find the target. As a result, the 1st Brigade Combat Team elected to cordon the area and begin an intensive search. Coalition



A video clip of Saddam Hussein after his capture at 11 p.m. (IST) on Saturday — AFP

forces subsequently found a suspicious location to the north-west of Wolverine Two.

"The area is a small, walled compound with a metal lean-to structure, a mud hut, and during the search a spider hole was detected... Saddam Hussein was found hiding at the bottom of the hole. The spider hole is about six to eight feet deep and allows enough space for a person to lie down inside of it... At about 21:15 last night, Saddam Hussein was moved to a secure area, and a further search of the hole and surrounding area was conducted. Results from the raid

include confiscation of two AK-47s, a pistol, \$750,000 in \$100 dollar denominations, and a white and orange taxi."

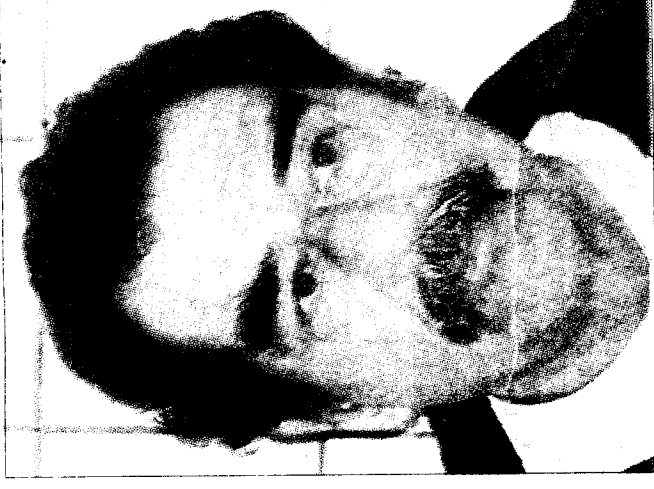
The forces sent to capture Saddam consisted of "approximately 600 soldiers" including "cavalry, engineers, artillery, aviation and special operations forces". Lt-Gen. Sanchez said the deposed leader was "cooperative and talkative" following his capture.

At the news conference, US forces aired a video showing a bearded Saddam being examined by a doctor who held his mouth open with a tongue depressor, apparently to

get a DNA sample. They then showed a photograph of Saddam after he was captured.

US commanders had said the former President played some role in the anti-US resistance that has killed hundreds of soldiers and civilians in Iraq. In the latest attack, on Sunday morning, a suspected suicide bomber detonated explosives in a car outside a police station, west of Baghdad, killing at least 17 people and wounding 33 more.

After invading Iraq, US troops placed a \$25 million bounty on his head and launched one of the most intensive manhunts in history.



After he was given a shave on Sunday. — AFP

'Caught like a rat'

TIKRIT, Dec. 14. — Maj.-Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of the 4th Infantry Division that carried out the raid, said: "Over the last 10 days soldiers had questioned five to 10 family members. We got the ultimate information from one of these individuals." Saddam was found in a hole covered by Styrofoam and a carpet beside a two-room shack, Odierno said.

When soldiers pulled the bearded man "he was very much bewildered," Odierno said. "He was just caught like a rat. When you're in the bottom of a hole you can't fight back." He said the soldiers participating in the raid didn't know who the target was until he was captured. The forces found no telephones, radios or other communications devices in the hideout, which Odierno affirmed his suspicions that the captured dictator could not have been leading the anti-US insurgency on a large scale. "I believe he was there more for moral support," Odierno said. "I don't believe he was coordinating the effort because I don't believe there's any coordination."

— AP

Carnival on Baghdad streets

Associated Press
Baghdad, December 14

AS NEWS of Saddam Hussein's capture spread, radio stations in Baghdad played celebratory music, residents fired small arms in the air in celebration and others drove through the streets, shouting, "They got Saddam! They got Saddam!"

At the news conference announcing his capture, US forces aired a video showing a bearded Saddam being examined by a doctor holding his mouth open with a tongue depressor, apparently to get a DNA sample. Then a video was shown of Saddam after he was shaved.

Iraqi journalists in the audience stood, pointed and shouted "Death to Saddam!" and "Down with Saddam!" Shop owners closed their doors, worried that all the shooting would make the streets unsafe.

"I'm very happy for the

Iraqi people. Life is going to be safer now," said 35-year-old Yehya Hassan, a resident of Baghdad. "Now we can make a new beginning."

Earlier in the day, rumours of the capture sent people streaming into the streets of Kirkuk, a northern Iraqi city, firing guns in the air in celebration. "We are celebrating like it's a wedding," said Kirkuk resident Mustapha Sheriff. "We are finally rid of that criminal."

"This is the joy of a lifetime," said Ali Al-Bashiri, another resident. "I am speaking on behalf of all the people that suffered under his rule." In Tikrit, US soldiers from the fourth Infantry Division, the unit that is responsible for security in Saddam's hometown, were smoking cigars after hearing the news of Saddam's capture.

Despite the celebration throughout Baghdad, many residents were skeptical. "I



Iraqi communists rejoice in central Baghdad on Sunday.

heard the news, but I'll believe it when I see it," said 33-year-old Mohamed al-Hasaji. "They need to show us that they really have him."

Ayet Bassem walked out of a shop with her six-year-old son. "Things will be better for my son," she said. "My son now has a future."

"This success brings closure to the Iraqi people. We now have final resolution. Saddam Hussein will never return to a position of power from which he can punish, terrorise, intimidate and exploit the Iraqi people as he did for more than 35 years," Sanchez said.

Many Arabs' joy tinged with regret

Reuters
Cairo, December 14

ARABS GREETED the capture of Saddam Hussein with divided emotions on Sunday, welcoming the arrest of a dictator yet tinged with regret that a symbol of Arab defiance against the US was behind bars.

Some feared Saddam's capture would boost President Bush, who many Arabs believe has waged a campaign against them and other Muslims after the September 11 attacks. But others said the fight against US occupation would go on.

"It is happy news but we wish it were the Iraqis who had captured him, not US troops, because this will give Bush a boost in the upcoming election," said Bahraini salesman Hussein Jafar.

US troops captured Saddam, grubby and bearded,

when he was dug out by troops from a narrow hiding hole during a raid on a farm near his hometown of Tikrit.

"I only wish it was not the Americans who got him. I don't like Saddam but as an Arab I wouldn't like to see them dragging him around Baghdad," said a Syrian student. For others, the capture was disappointing. Saddam may have been seen as a dictator who oppressed his people, but many saw him as the only Arab leader who stood up to the US.

"Of course it's bad news. To us, Saddam was a symbol of defiance to the US plans in the region. And we support any person who stands in the face of the American dominance," said Azzam Hneidi, an Islamist member of Jordan's parliament.

Others said Iraqis were not fighting for Saddam but for an end to US occupation.

A Governing Council member, Jalal Talabani, told Iran's official news agency, IRNA, that Saddam's detention would bring stability to Iraq. "With the arrest of Saddam, the source financing terrorists has been destroyed and terrorist attacks will come to an end. Now we can establish a durable stability and security in Iraq," Talabani said.

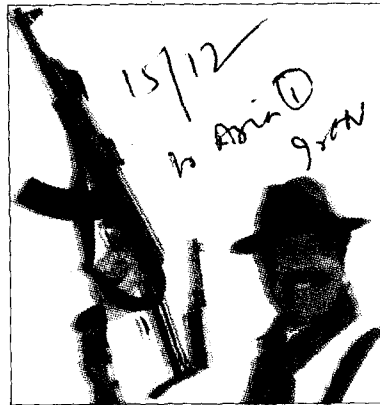
"I have been waiting for this for the last 35 years," said Zangana, director of Kurdish Human Rights Watch. He said he was a high school teacher in Iraq and escaped after the Saddam regime began forcing teachers to become members of the ruling Baath party. "I'm a Kurd and I had nothing to do with the Baath party," he said. "I refused that and thousands of Kurds refused that. A bunch of us were lucky to escape Iraq."

"Nobody is going to be happy today like the Kurds."

5/12

MARCH OF TIME

- 28 April 1937: Born in village near desert town Tikrit, north of Baghdad.
- 1957: Joins underground Baath Socialist Party.
- 1958: Arrested for killing his brother-in-law, a Communist; spends six months in prison.
- 7 Oct. 1959: Member of the Baath assassination team that ambushes Iraqi strongman Gen. Abdel-Karim Kassem in Baghdad, wounding him. Saddam, wounded, flees to Syria, then Egypt.
- 8 Feb. 1963: Returns from Egypt after Baath takes part in coup that overthrows and kills Kassem.
- Nov. 1963: Baath ousted by military.
- 17 July 1968: Baathists and army officers overthrow regime.
- 30 July 1968: Takes charge of internal security after Baath ousts erstwhile allies and authority passes to Revolutionary Command Council under Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Saddam's cousin.
- 16 July 1979: Takes over as president from al-Bakr, launches massive purge of Baath members.
- 22 Sept. 1980: Sends forces into Iran; war last eight years.
- 28 March 1988: Uses chemical weapons on Kurdish town of Halabja, killing about 5,000 civilians.
- 2 Aug. 1990: Invades Kuwait.
- 17 Jan. 1991: Iraq attacked by US-led coalition; Kuwait liberated in a month.
- March 1991: Crushes Shiite revolt in south and Kurd revolt in north Iraq.
- 17 April 1991: Complying with United Nations Resolution 687, starts providing information on weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), but accused of cheating.
- 20 Feb. 1996: Orders killing of two sons-in-law who in 1995 defected to Jordan and had just returned to Baghdad after receiving guarantees of safety.
- 16 Dec. 1998: UN weapons inspectors withdrawn from Iraq. Hours later, four days of US-British air and missile strikes begin as punishment for lack of cooperation.
- 8 Nov. 2002: Threatened with "serious consequences" if he does not disarm in UN Security Council resolution.
- 27 Nov. 2002: Allows UN experts to begin work in Iraq for first time since 1998.
- 7 Dec. 2002: Delivers to UN declara-



- tion denying Iraq has WMDs. The USA says declaration is untruthful and the UN calls it incomplete.
- 1 March 2003: United Arab Emirates, at an Arab League summit, becomes first Arab nation to propose publicly that Saddam step down.
 - 7 March 2003: The USA, Britain and Spain propose ordering Saddam to give up banned weapons by 17 March or face war; other nations, led by France, on a polarised UN Security Council oppose any new resolution that would authorise military action.
 - 17 March 2003: The USA, Britain and Spain declare time for diplomacy over, withdraw proposed resolution. US President George W Bush gives Saddam 48 hours to leave Iraq.
 - 18 March 2003: Iraq's leadership rejects Bush's ultimatum.
 - 20 March 2003: US forces open war with military strike on target near Baghdad aimed at Iraq's leadership.
 - 9 April 2003: Jubilant crowds greet US troops in Baghdad; looting spreads; 40-foot Saddam statue toppled.
 - 22 July 2003: Saddam's sons, Qusai and Odai, killed by US troops in gunbattle.
 - 31 July 2003: Two of Saddam's daughters, Raghda and Rana, and their nine children are given asylum by Jordan's King Abdullah II.
 - 5 Sept. 2003: US forces capture several of Saddam's former bodyguards in and around Tikrit.
 - 16 Nov. 2003: The last of nine tapes attributed to Saddam Hussein since he was removed from power is released. It tells Iraqis to step up their resistance to the US-led occupation.
 - 14 Dec. 2003: Officials say Saddam captured in a town outside Tikrit. (AP)

Will face justice he denied: Bush

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14. — President Bush said today that Saddam Hussein's capture marks the end of "a dark and painful era" in Iraq but cautioned that it does not mean the end of violence.

"Saddam will face the justice he denied to millions. It marks the end of the road for him and all who killed and bullied in his name," Mr Bush said in a nationally broadcast address from the Cabinet Room.

The President was alerted yesterday afternoon by the Defence Secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld, that US forces believed they had captured Saddam. But the final confirmation did not come until 4.30 pm (IST) today. That was when the national security adviser, Ms Condoleezza Rice, called the President to say that the suspect was indeed the former Iraqi leader.

He opened his address by recounting Saddam's capture at the farmhouse. "The capture of this man was crucial to the rise of a

Saddam would be put on public trial so that the Iraqi people will know his crimes. He spoke on Al-Iraqiya, a Pentagon-funded TV station.

Iraq's interim government established a special tribunal on Wednesday to try top members of Saddam's government for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

At the same time, officials said Saddam could be tried in absentia.

Mr Adnan Pachachi, a member of the Governing Council, said there's no question that the process will be an Iraqi process. Council member Mr Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri said any trial would be conducted in accordance with international norms.

Amnesty International said Saddam should be given prisoner of war status, and should be allowed visits by the international Red Cross.

**A legacy of death and destruction
Saddam trained Atta in Baghdad,**
page 3



A TV grab of a US doctor holding Saddam's mouth open with a tongue depressor apparently to get a DNA sample. — AFP

Saddam loyalists.

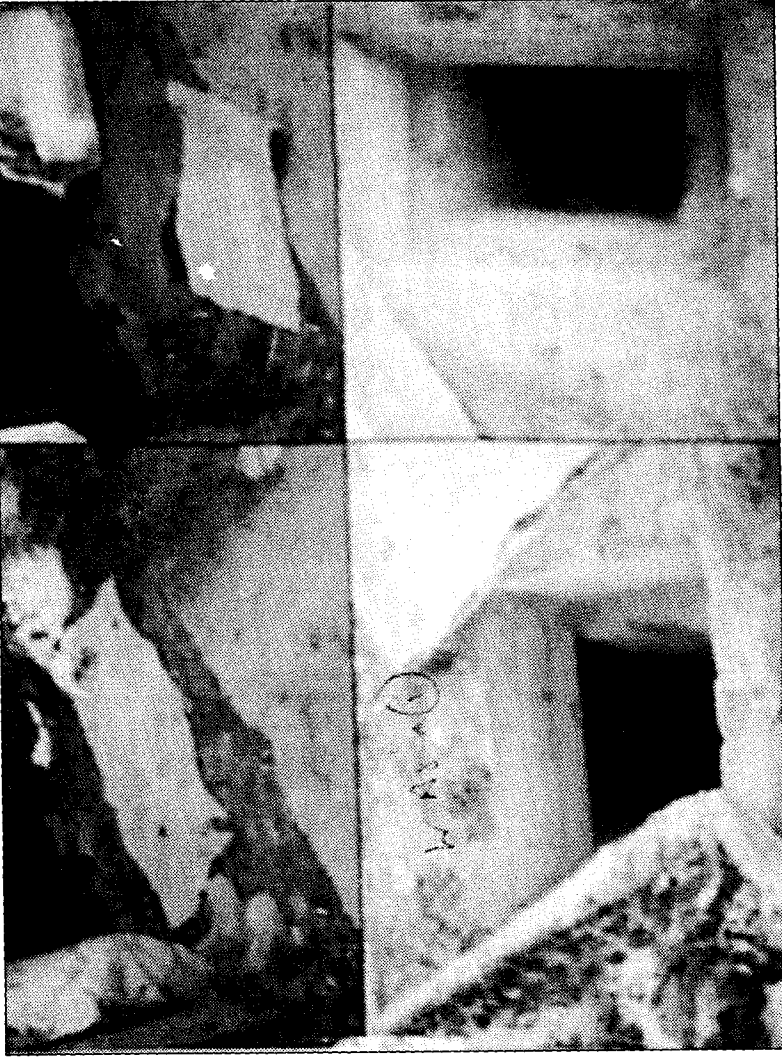
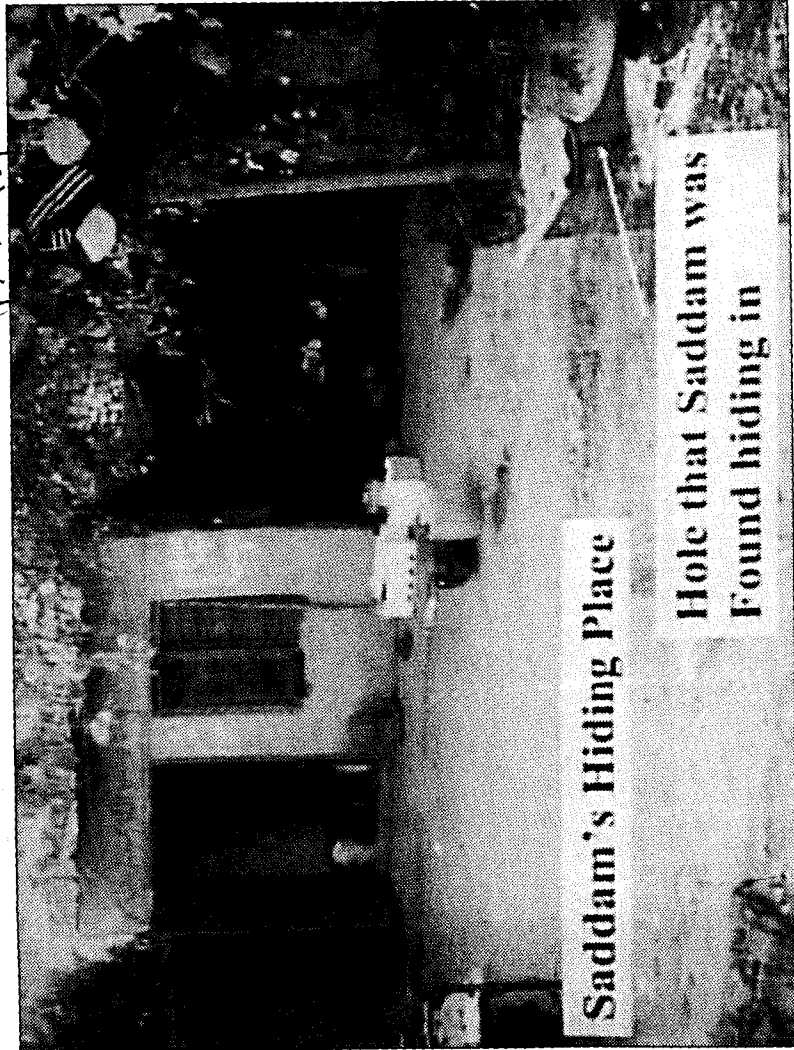
US authorities have not yet determined whether to hand him over to the Iraqis for trial. Iraqi officials want him to stand trial before a war crimes tribunal.

Mr Ahmad Chalabi, a member of Iraq's Governing Council, said

free Iraq.

Addressing the people of Iraq, he pledged: "You will not have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein ever again." At the same time, he cautioned that the capture does not mean an end to bloodshed in Iraq from terrorists and former

Lavish palaces to shepherd's hut



Tikrit, Dec. 14 (Reuters): When US forces pulled Saddam Hussein from a hole in the ground behind a two-room shepherd's hut, they were within sight of the former Iraqi President's lavish palaces in his home town of Tikrit.

"It is rather ironic that he was in a hole in the ground across the river from these great palaces he built where he robbed all the money from the Iraqi people," said Major General Ray Odierno who commands the US army's 4th Infantry Division.

Saddam, on the run since US-led forces toppled his government in April, was carrying a pistol but put up no defence as he was pulled out of the small dark pit which was covered with a piece of styrofoam and a rug behind the two-room farm building.

"He was just very much bewildered and he was taken away," Odierno told a news conference. US forces are holding Saddam in an undisclosed location.

The army cordoned off an area of two-by-two km near Ad-Dawr, some 15 km down the

Tigris from Tikrit after receiving intelligence from a mid-level Iraqi source, Odierno said.

"Over the last 10 days or so, we have brought in about five to 10 members of these families who then were able to give us more information and finally we got the ultimate information from one of these individuals."

"He could have been hiding in a hundred different places, a thousand different places like this all around Iraq and it just takes finding the right person who will give you a good

idea where he might be."

The officers in charge of the operation knew they were on the trail of a big fish, but were not entirely sure they would find Saddam. "We were going after an HVT (high-value target), possibly HVT number one. We thought it was Saddam."

The soldiers who pulled back the cover to find the cowering ex-President may not have known that, Odierno said.

"What we normally tell them is we are going after an HVT... So the soldiers knew there was

somebody in there we were actually going after who was targeted, but my guess is they probably did not know who it was until we were finished."

The 4th Infantry Division has taken up residence in the sprawling riverside complex of palaces Saddam built in Tikrit to act as a base while hunting down senior members of the former Baathist government.

Odierno said he was not surprised to find Saddam so close to the palace, but said he was probably constantly on the move around the region north of Baghdad known as the Sunni triangle.

He showed reporters a military-style metal canteen containing \$750,000 in cash which was found in the hut. Nearby, troops found boats which could have been used to transport supplies or visitors, he added.

"We have been to this area before. We have been down this road before. That doesn't mean he has been there the whole time. My guess would be he has probably 20 to 30 of these all around the country," Odierno said.

A photograph presented by the US army at a news conference in Tikrit shows the site where Saddam was captured. (Right) A combination picture of the hole in which the he was hiding (Reuters)

Tikrit lion dug out of rat hole

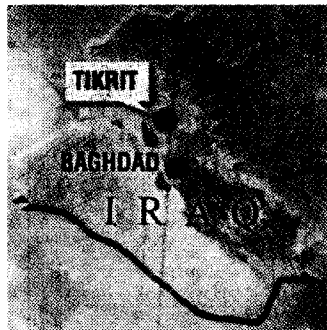
Ad-Dawr, Iraq, Dec. 14 (Reuters): US troops captured Saddam Hussein hiding in a rat-infested hole near his home town of Tikrit in a dramatic success for Washington's beleaguered occupation force in Iraq.

Grubby, bearded and "very disorientated", the 66-year-old fallen dictator was dug out by troops from a cramped hiding pit during a raid on a farm at Ad-Dawr on Saturday night (11 pm IST), US Major-General Ray Odierno said in Tikrit.

"He was just caught like a rat," Odierno said in one of the grandiose palaces nearby that had once belonged to the man known as the Lion of Tikrit.

Saddam, who had once appeared to almost believe his own declarations of invincibility and urged his troops to go down fighting the invaders, had a pistol but did not fire.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we got him," US administrator Paul Bremer told a Baghdad news



conference. "The tyrant is a prisoner."

Cheering Iraqi journalists shouted "Death to Saddam!"

Gunfire crackled in celebration as Iraqis greeted a US military video showing their once-feared leader, dishevelled and sporting a bushy black and grey beard, meekly undergoing a medical examination after eight months on the run.

He now faces a trial for his life before an Iraqi tribunal.

"It marks the end of the road for him," said President George W. Bush.

In a televised address, he told the Iraqi people: "You will not have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein ever again" — but he warned it would not mean an immediate end to violence.

As if to underline that, an explosion rocked central Baghdad minutes later. Police contested witness accounts of a car bomb, saying a truck carrying gas had blown up. Earlier, a car bomb

killed at least 17 people at a police station west of Baghdad.

The US commander in Iraq, Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez, said Saddam was "talkative". He described him as "a tired man, a man resigned to his fate". But he said Saddam was in "good health".

Adnan Pachachi, a senior member of the US-backed Iraqi governing council who spoke to Saddam in custody, said: "He seemed rather tired and haggard but he was unrepentant and defiant at times... He tried to justify his crimes."

Iraqi and US officials said some \$750,000 in \$100 bills was found near the "spider hole", close to the Tigris riverbank. Saddam had probably not been there long, Odierno said. Two other men, two rifles and a white-and-orange taxi parked nearby were also seized in what US forces called Operation Red Dawn.

Governing council members said Saddam faces trial under a tribunal agreed with Washington only last week. He may risk the death penalty.

"We want Saddam to get what he deserves. I believe he will be sentenced to hundreds of death sentences," said Amar al-Hakim, a leader of the powerful Shia party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

The capture of Saddam, the "ace of spades" and number one on a US wanted list, was in stark contrast to the bloody end of his sons Uday and Qusay, who died with guns blazing in July.

Providing details of the capture, Sanchez said the troops acted after receiving "human intelligence" that Saddam was possibly at one of two locations. After searches of both locations failed to turn up Saddam, US forces began scouring other places in the area and came upon Saddam hiding in the "spider hole" camouflaged with bricks and dirt. The soldiers saw the hole, investigated and found him inside, Sanchez said.

"Saddam Hussein was found hiding at the bottom of the hole."

The hiding place was found in "a small walled compound with a metal lean-to structure (and) a mud hut," he added. The narrow hole was equipped with a crude ventilation system that included a small fan.

Saddam had wrapped new clothes in bags, suggesting he was not planning to stay there long.

Iran ready to sign up for snap nuke checks

Reuters
Tehran, December 13

HC-15
14/12

IRAN WILL sign a binding international protocol in the next few days that authorises snap inspections of its nuclear sites by the UN nuclear watchdog, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said on Saturday.

Asked when Iran would put pen to paper, Kharrazi told reporters: "In the next few days."

The government said the formal go-ahead earlier this week for the country to sign the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This followed the decision in October to suspend the Islamic Republic's disputed uranium enrichment programme to dispel US-led concern that it might be trying to produce nuclear weapons.

Kharrazi spoke to reporters after meeting Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha, who said his country might be prepared to work with Iran on civilian nuclear technology.

Iran, OPEC's second biggest oil producer, insists its nuclear programme is peaceful and is needed to meet booming domestic electricity demand and free up its finite hydrocarbon resources for export.

Kharrazi said the protocol, the subject of heated debate in Iran earlier this year, had received the ratification needed for the country's representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to sign it in Vienna.

"It had to be approved by the Supreme National Security Council, then the government and now it is underway," he said.

Government spokesman Abdollah Ramazanzadeh said on Wednesday that once Iran had signed the document, the government would send it to parliament as a Bill. If lawmakers approved the Bill, it would need to be approved by the Guardian Council, a 12-member body dominated by conservative clerics.

Khatami backs Ebadi

Paris, Dec. 12 (Reuters): Reformist Iranian President Mohammad Khatami was quoted today as saying he had told his government to ensure that Nobel peace prize-winning lawyer Shirin Ebadi could continue her work without disruption.

Khatami told French newspaper *Le Monde* that Ebadi, the first Muslim woman to win the prize, had in the past encountered "a few problems". He gave no details, but Ebadi has powerful foes.

Despite her status as a hate-figure among Iran's religious hardliners — she has received death threats and was assigned a bodyguard by the government —

13/12
Ebadi argues passionately that Islam is not incompatible with human rights.

"I have given very firm instructions that Ebadi be allowed to continue her work in appropriate conditions," he told the newspaper in an interview for its tomorrow's edition.

"I have instructed the interior and information ministries to ensure she can work in full safety."

He did not specify what sort of support she would get from his government.

Ebadi, who received the 2003 award on Wednesday for her work to promote the rights of children and women, flouted

Iran's dress code for women by appearing at the prize ceremony without a headscarf — a move for which Khatami chided her.

"Wearing the headscarf is a tradition everyone respects in Iran. That said, and I've said this to Ebadi, as a Muslim woman it would have been better to have worn the scarf to get her prize. But everyone is free in their choices," he said.

Ebadi, seen by many as a symbol of reformist hope in Iran but labelled a political stooge of the west by conservative clerics, has said she will return to Iran despite security concerns and use her prize money to continue that work.

THE TELEGRAPH 13 DEC 2003

US fears rebel upsurge in Iraq

By Jal Taraporevala
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The chief US administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, has spoken of the possibility of increased attacks against the forces of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in the coming weeks.

This statement should be partly interpreted in terms of the political time-table spelt out by the CPA under which a provisional council is to be constituted in Iraq in May 2004 and a transitional government is to be formed a month later. This being so, the Americans seem to calculate that there could be an up-

surge in militant strikes since those opposed to the US have a vested interest to undermine the CPA's political plans for Iraq.

Besides, the Bush administration has called on NATO to consider playing a substantive peace-keeping role in Iraq. In this context, Mr Bremer's assertion is an implicit

recognition of the possibility that the rebels could step up their operations in an attempt to make it harder for the US to win the active support of NATO for this proposal. More important, given the ethnic, ideological and personality-based differences between the leading parties in the country, instability could

increase in the immediate future as a result of the various Iraqi groups jockeying more aggressively for political influence.

In particular, the US appears concerned about the growing clout of the Shiite militia of Muqtada al-Sadr, Iran's influence over the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (the largest Shiite party in the country), the absence of a party which commands wide

backing among Sunnis and the ongoing differences between the two main Kurdish groups, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. In addition, it is unlikely that there will be a let up in the rebel attacks because of the failure of the US to tackle the root causes of the continuing violence — political disaffection, the sectarian divide and the mounting problems on the economic front.

IRAQ / COMMANDOS TO PROTECT DUTCH TROOPS

119-121
6/12

U.S. soldier among 5 killed in blast

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, DEC. 5. The Iraqi resistance forces on Friday killed an American soldier by exploding a roadside bomb near a U.S. military convoy, a day ahead of the visit by the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, to Baghdad.

Four Iraqis, who were travelling in a packed bus that was crossing the U.S. convoy from the opposite direction, were also killed in the incident. The slain American soldier was travelling in the convoy of three vehicles when the bomb exploded, the U.S. military command in a statement said.

The passenger bus was damaged in the explosion. The detonation caused a large crater in the street that adjoined a prominent mosque in the city.

Earlier on Thursday, six persons were injured in a rocket attack on a police station in the town of Ramadi, west of Baghdad and resistance fighters exploded a roadside bomb that targeted a U.S. Army supply vehicle in Baghdad.

Call for NATO role

Amid the sustained Iraqi resistance and reluctance of foreign nations to send in troops, the visiting U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, on Thursday sought in Brussels, a larger NATO involvement in Iraq. "We urge the alliance to examine



An Iraqi boy wounded in a blast in Baghdad on Friday. — AP

how it might do more to support peace and stability in Iraq, which every leader has acknowledged is critical to all of us," he said.

Faced with the mounting attacks, the U.S.-appointed Governing Council for Iraq began exploring the possibility of a larger deployment of pro-U.S. Iraqi militia, such as the Kurdish Peshmerga forces to contain the growing onslaught by the resistance fighters.

Meanwhile, with the recent killing of seven Spanish intelligence officers, which was pre-

ceded by the slaying of 19 Italian paramilitary troops, the Government of Netherlands has decided to protect its 1,100 troops in southern Iraq.

A protection force of 20 commandos departed on Thursday for southern Iraq where the Dutch troops have been positioned. Another 50 commandos will leave on Monday to scan the southern desert zone where the Dutch forces are deployed.

Protest threat

The Iraqi Shia leader, Muqtada al Sadr, has threatened to

call a general strike in the Shia stronghold of Najaf, in case the U.S. forces refused to release members of a militia loyal to him. Delivering a Friday sermon in Kufa, south of Baghdad, he gave the U.S. occupation forces a 20-day ultimatum to set free members of the Imam al-Mahdi army that he heads.

Tensions between Muqtada al-Sadr's group and the U.S. occupation forces have been growing on account of the detention of Amar Yassiri, a close confidante of the cleric, two days ago.

IRAQ / RANDOM FIRING BY U.S. TROOPS ALLEGED

34 held, arms seized in raid on village

BAGHDAD, DEC. 3. A massive U.S. raid in a northern Iraqi village led to the arrests of 34 people and the confiscation of dozens of guns, the American military said on Wednesday. Residents accused soldiers of excessive force.

Initial reports said troops were hunting for Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, a top ally of Saddam Hussein who is considered a key planner of recent attacks.

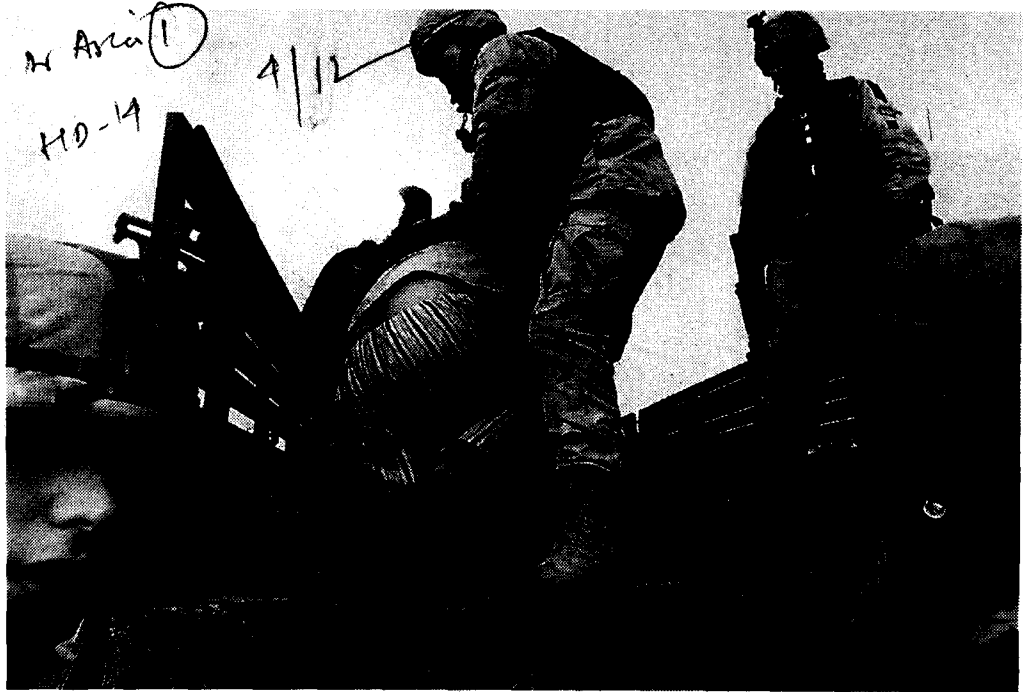
U.S. officials have posted a \$10-million bounty for Mr. al-Douri. They suspect he could also be working with the Al-Qaeda-linked militant group Ansar al-Islam.

Lt. Col. William Schafer said that although U.S. forces have been searching for Mr. al-Douri, "we did not come here specifically searching for him."

"This raid has been planned for awhile," he said in Kirkuk city. "We came with a list of names of people who have attacked coalition forces."

The raid occurred in Hawija, 250 km north of Baghdad. The U.S. military said it detained 34 people and confiscated 70 small arms along with six rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

However, many villagers said the Americans had fired randomly at people in the area.



U.S. soldiers arrest an Iraqi man during a massive raid in Hawija, near Kirkuk, on Wednesday. — AFP

Alaa Hosein, a 22-year old farmer interviewed in Kirkuk hospital, said he and his cousin were returning from their fields when soldiers opened fire.

Mr. Hosein was hit in the right leg, while his cousin was critically injured in the head.

At the town of Najaf, 80 km south of Baghdad, Honduran troops serving with the coalition were attacked with mortar fire early on Wednesday, the military said.

No damage was caused and there were no casualties among

the 360 Honduran soldiers at the base. Meanwhile, relatives of U.S. troops visiting Iraq pressed their agenda to meet with leaders of the coalition authority, hoping to voice opposition to the U.S.-led occupation.

AP

Samarra area erupts again

Agencies: Reuters, AP

RIGGA (Iraq), Dec. 2. — At least one US soldier was killed today when two almost simultaneous bomb attacks hit convoys near the Iraqi town of Samarra, scene of deadly clashes between troops and insurgents two days ago, a US officer at the scene said.

Witnesses said the convoy was escorting a truck carrying a damaged Apache helicopter from Samarra to Baghdad. The aircraft had a large hole in its rear but it was unclear whether it was accidental or through enemy action.

A witness said the last vehicle in the dozen-strong con-

USA denies capturing Saddam aide

KIRKUK, Dec. 2. — US troops conducted a big raid near Kirkuk today, but denied reports that a top former deputy of Saddam Hussein was captured during the operation.

A member of Iraq's Governing Council said Saddam Hussein's top former deputy Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri was the target of the raid.

"We get our information from the 173rd (Airborne Brigade) and the 173rd is saying they don't have him," Sgt Robert Cargie, a spokesman of the US Army's 4th Infantry Division. — AP



Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri

voy, a Humvee, was hit by a parked pickup loaded with rocket-propelled grenade or a mine. "The driver lost control and the vehicle veered across the road, crashing into a

A military spokeswoman said she had no immedi-

ate report on the bombings. **Saddam bust removed:** The US-led coalition today removed one of the four three-storey-high bronze busts of Saddam Hussein that adorned his presidential palace, now the living quarters of US overseer Paul Bremer, adds a report from Baghdad. **Bush signs N-research Bill** Mr George W Bush has signed a Bill allocating millions of dollars for research into new types of nuclear weapons and for bolstering readiness at the Nevada nuclear test site, adds a report from Washington. The Bill provides \$7.5 million for studying the possibility of developing "bunker-busting" nuclear bombs.

US troops kill 54 in Iraq battle

ANDREW MARSHALL
BAGHDAD, DECEMBER 1

US SOLDIERS killed 54 Iraqis, some wearing the uniform of Saddam Hussein's feared Fedayeen militia, in a firefight to fend off attackers in Samarra, the American military said.

The battle on Sunday came after a weekend of violence that claimed the lives of seven Spanish intelligence agents, two South Korean contractors, two Japanese diplomats and their Iraqi driver, a Colombian contractor and two US soldiers.

The bloodshed — and grisly photographs showing Iraqis kicking the corpses of the dead Spanish agents — fuelled debate in countries allied to Washington on the risks of getting involved in the mission to stabilise and rebuild Iraq.

The US military said guerrillas with mortars, assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades staged simultaneous attacks on Sunday on American convoys in Samarra which lies between Baghdad and Saddam's hometown Tikrit. US troops fought back.

The 4th Infantry Division re-



A boy gestures in front of a burned car in Samarra after US troops used battle tanks and cannons to fight their way out of two simultaneous ambushes. Reuters

month for American troops since the start of the war to oust Saddam, with at least 74 killed in action. Occupying forces also suffered their deadliest single attack during the month, a car bombing in Nassirya that killed 19 Italians and nine Iraqis. A stunned Japan mourned and debated whether to go ahead with plans to send troops, after the two diplomats were shot dead on Saturday when they stopped at a roadside food stall on their way to a conference on reconstruction in Saddam's hometown.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, re-elected less than a month ago, resisted Japan's com-

Iraqi Council reassesses power transfer plan

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi Governing Council is rethinking an agreement with the US for a power handover by July, with officials saying the Council has set up a committee to assess the best way to choose a legislature. At a Council gathering on Sunday, members agreed to set up a committee to "discover the best ways to include the Iraqi people in the process". — P71

mitment to Iraq would not waver. "There is no change in our stance," he said. "We must not be daunted by the intention of terrorists to halt the reconstruction effort and cause confusion." In Spain, the coffins of the slain intelligence agents arrived home on Sunday, a day after the men were killed when guerrillas attacked their convoy south of Baghdad with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.

The deaths rekindled deep-seated doubts about the role of Spanish troops in Iraq, but PM Jose Maria Aznar said the country would not abandon its mission in Iraq. — Reuters

Killings fuel fresh Iraq peace debate

ANDREW MARSHALL
BAGHDAD, NOVEMBER 30

THE killing of seven Spanish intelligence agents and two Japanese diplomats in ambushes in Iraq sparked fresh debate on Sunday in countries allied to the US on the risks of joining the Iraq mission.

The US Army said two American soldiers had also been killed on Saturday when guerrillas attacked their convoy with rocket-propelled grenades west of Baghdad. The attack brought to 187 the number of US soldiers killed in Iraq since May 1.

An angry Japanese PM Junichiro Koizumi vowed on Sunday not to be blown off course by Saturday's deaths—the first of the Japanese in Iraq since the US-led war began in March.

"Japan must not give into terrorism," Koizumi told reporters. "We will firmly carry out our responsibilities for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Iraq," he said. "Why does this kind of thing happen? I am furious."

The Foreign Ministry later advised all Japanese non-diplomatic citizens to leave Iraq due to the security risk.

A senior leader of Japan's Opposition underlined the government's predicament, demanding a special session of Parliament to deal with the issue.

Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi told a news conference that diplomats Katsuhiko Oku, 45, and Masamori Inoue, 30, were killed in the attack,



Bodies of two Japanese diplomat lay in a hospital morgue in Tikrit on Sunday. Reuters

which occurred near Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, 175 km north of Baghdad.

A non-Japanese driver of the diplomats' vehicle was also injured in the attack, officials said.

Earlier, Kawaguchi had told reporters that Japan would continue to carefully assess the situation to decide when it could send troops to Iraq. The two diplomats had been en route to a conference on the reconstruction of northern Iraq to be held in Tikrit, about 10-15 km from the ambush site.

Political analysts say Koizumi, whose coalition retained power in a general election this month although with a reduced majority, risks a serious blow to his popularity if troops are sent to Iraq and deaths occur. That would be an especially unwelcome prospect with an election for Parliament's Upper House set for next July.

In Spain, where public opinion was generally against

the war, Saturday's killing of the seven agents south of Baghdad reignited longstanding doubts about the role of around 1,300 Spanish troops helping to control south-central Iraq.

"Spain pays a high price," the Left-leaning newspaper *El Pais* said in an editorial. *The El Mundo* daily described the killings as: "Deaths which require explanations and reflection". Witnesses said a crowd descended on the crippled vehicles after the Spaniards were killed, kicking their corpses and shouting slogans in support of Saddam Hussein.

On Sunday morning, youths were jumping on the wreckage and pulling apart one burned-out car. "We're happy about what happened," said 20-year-old Abdul Qader, a student. "We don't like the Americans or the Spanish."

Spanish Defence Minister Federico Trillo said he would fly to Iraq to collect the bodies of the agents. —Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 DEC 2003

6 killed in Iraq rebel attack on Spanish team

Baghdad, Nov. 29 (Reuters): Six people were killed and one wounded today when guerrillas attacked a convoy of Spanish intelligence officers south of Baghdad, a Spanish defence ministry spokesman said. The spokesman had no information about the eighth member of the group.

Sky reporter David Bowden said from Baghdad after returning from the scene that he saw four bodies and that local people said eight were killed in total and another two people taken prisoner.

The ambush came hours after the top military commander in Iraq said attacks against US forces had fallen sharply in recent weeks, despite figures showing November to be the deadliest month for US troops since the

war began. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez said anti-American insurgents had struck fewer times in the past seven days than in the previous week and put the reduction down to the more aggressive tactics used by US forces.

The Sky reporter said of the attack on the Spaniards: "We

were actually driving from the town of Hilla, which is just south of Baghdad, and we saw these men lying dead on the floor (ground) by the side of the road after the ambush.

"We were told by locals there that... about 30 minutes before, they'd attacked a convoy of three vehicles. They pulled the people

out of the vehicles. They told us that in fact they'd killed eight people and they'd captured two others.

"I only saw with my own eyes four dead bodies on the road.

"We filmed for a couple of minutes and then we became the focus of the mob's attention. They were shouting praise to

Saddam (Hussein) and we disappeared pretty quickly."

Just over two weeks ago, 19 Italians were killed in an attack on a military police barracks in southern Iraq, the worst military disaster for Italy since World War two.

In his Baghdad news conference, Sanchez said the US military was reshaping its forces in Iraq to rotate in more mobile units and ship out heavy armour such as tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles. "In the past 14 days, we have seen the daily average of engagements throughout the country decline by over 30 per cent," he said.

"And over the last seven-day period, we're down to an average of 22 engagements a day," he said, against as many as 50 a day just a couple of weeks ago.

Bush moving too fast, says Hillary

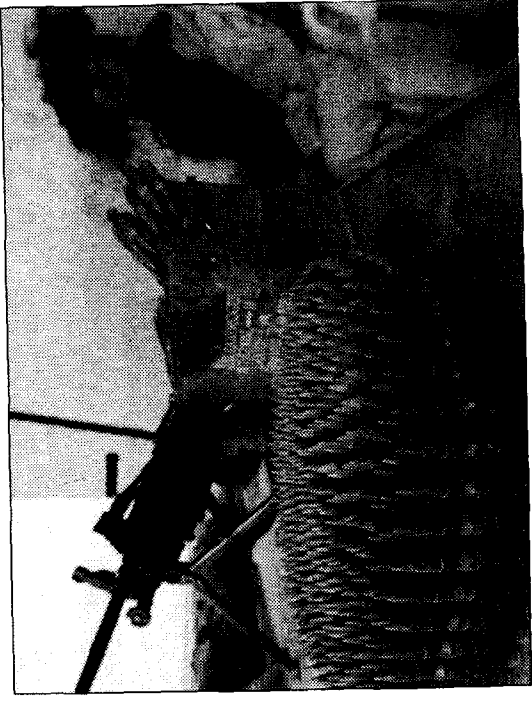
Mubarak Air Base (Kuwait), Nov. 29 (Reuters): US Senator Hillary Clinton said today President George W. Bush's administration was moving too fast in a planned transfer of power to the Iraqis by July.

"It's going to take more time than has been allotted for the

process to take hold," the New York Democrat said during a brief stopover to visit US troops in Kuwait. "I don't think we should be setting artificial timelines as this is a very challenging undertaking and we need to work with our Iraqi counterparts and make sure that the

steps that are being taken are going to work."

Washington's plan for handing power back to Iraqis has been criticised by the top cleric among Iraq's Shia majority for paying too little heed to Islam and including too little Iraqi involvement.



A US soldier with a M-60 rifle and ammunition at an observation tower in Tikrit. (AFP)

Shias critical of US peace map

G-A 27/11 2/12/03
Najaf, Nov. 26 (Reuters): Iraq's top Shia religious authority has criticised US plans for transfer of power to Iraqis as incomplete and paying too little heed to Islam, a Shia politician said today.

Resistance from the cleric, Sayyid Ali al-Sistani, could lead to rejection by many of the Shias who make up 60 per cent of Iraq's population. But Sistani appeared to have stopped short of any outright dismissal of the programme.

British foreign secretary Jack Straw, speaking hours after guerrillas fired rockets at the Baghdad coalition compound where he was staying, said the plans for transfer of power by July 2004 and polls by the end of 2005 would only improve security.

As US forces keep up the search for Saddam, a military spokesman said they had detained a wife and daughter of Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, the second most-wanted man in Iraq, who has been accused of coordinating anti-US attacks.

Lieutenant Colonel William MacDonald, spokesman for the 4th Infantry Division in Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, said the two women, along with a son of Ibrahim's doctor, were caught

during a raid in the town of Samarra yesterday morning.

MacDonald said there was no indication the former Iraqi general was in the area at the time. Last week, US forces put a bounty of \$10 million on the head of Ibrahim as they stepped up the hunt for a man seen as one of Saddam's closest henchmen.

In the holy city of Najaf, Abdul-Aziz Hakim of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) said Sayyid Ali al-Sistani, widely revered as Iraq's most influential Shia leader, believed the new US-backed roadmap was flawed.

Hakim told a news conference he had met Sistani, who rarely makes public pronouncements on politics, to discuss the plan. "He didn't find anything that assures Islamic identity," Hakimn said.

Al Qaida suspect held

Yemen's security forces yesterday detained a top al Qaida suspect who had evaded arrest despite heading the Arab state's wanted list for nearly two years.

The official Yemeni news agency, Saba, said Mohammad Hamdi alAhdal, also known as Abu Asem alMacci, surrendered to police after they surrounded a house in the capital, Sanaa.

THE TELEGRAPH

27 NOV 2003

Iraqi council asks UN to endorse time-table

United Nations: The US-appointed Iraqi governing council has asked the UN security council to adopt a new resolution endorsing an agreement it had entered into with Washington for transfer of power to a local government by June and general elections by the end of 2005.

The Iraqi request was contained in a letter from council chairman Jalal Talabani which

POWER TRANSFER

15 as a deadline for Iraqis to submit a timetable for drafting a constitution and holding elections.

In the letter, Talabani promised to establish the "principle of civilian control" over the armed forces and security forces and to draw up a "fundamental law to administer the Iraqi state by the end of February."

The law would respect human rights and basic freedoms including "freedom of religion, religious practices and equality among all citizens," he said.

"In the light of what had transpired, it has become appropriate for the security council to adopt a new resolution taking into consideration the new circumstances," he added.

The council members, who were expecting a letter on these lines, are already discussing the elements of a new resolution but differences remain between the positions taken by the United States and Britain on one hand and Russia, France and Germany on the other.

Washington and London would like the council to immediately endorse the timetable drawn up the governing council on November 15 in consultation with them.

But Moscow, Paris and Bonn want the resolution to encompass much more, including a major role for the United Nations and enunciation of a political process that would include all Iraqis who are opposed to violence, all neighbouring countries and the world body at all stages.

Meanwhile, the security council has unanimously decided to set up a new committee to continue tracking down the financial assets removed from Iraq by persons connected with Saddam Hussein, his followers and the companies that his regime controlled.

Suicide blasts kill 16 in Iraq

ASSOCIATED PRESS

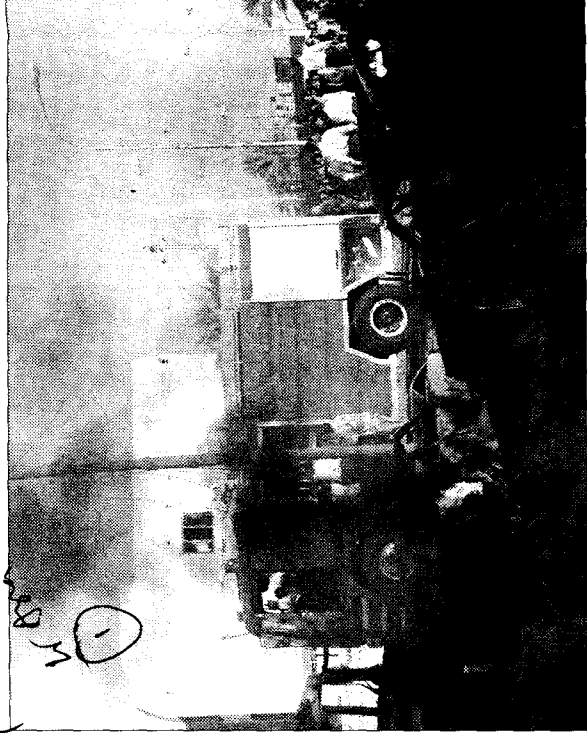
BAQOUBA, Nov. 22. — Two car bombs, one of them driven by a suicide attacker, exploded today at police stations in a pair of towns near Baghdad, killing at least 16 people, most of them policemen, US and Iraqi officials said.

The first blast occurred in Baqouba, about 60 km north-east of Baghdad. Minutes later, a suicide driver exploded his car at the gate of the police station in Khan Bani Saad, a crowded market town about 20 km south of Baqouba on the road to Baghdad. Lt. Hussein Hazem said six officers died in the Baqouba explosion, which left a large hole at the entrance to the building. He said at least 10 civilians were hurt.

Capt. Ryan McCormick of the 4th Infantry Division said the Khan Bani Saad explosion killed six policemen and three civilians apart from the suicide driver. Iraqi police said one of the dead was a 5-year-old girl. Ten people were injured, Capt. McCormick said.

Capt. McCormick said a police guard fired on the approaching vehicle but could not prevent the blast. He said there were no US or other coalition casualties. There have been five vehicle bombings in Iraq since Wednesday targeted mostly against Iraqis who support the coalition.

Khan Bani Saad and Baqouba are part of the so-called Sunni Triangle north and west of the capital that has seen fierce resistance to the US-led occupation.



A vehicle burns after a suicide bomb attack outside the Baquba police station on Saturday. — AFP

Missile hits civilian cargo plane

BAGHDAD, Nov. 22. — A civilian plane belonging to international express courier DHL was hit by a SAM-7 surface-to-air missile over Baghdad today forcing it to make an emergency landing, the US military said. A DHL plane took off from Baghdad airport this morning and was hit by a SAM-7 surface to air missile, said a military official who asked not to be identified. "It caught fire, it turned around and came back to the airport where it safely landed. The fire was taken out. There are no injuries," he added. Jordan's Royal Wings has suspended its only commercial flights to Baghdad. The airline will decide on Tuesday whether it will restart its service to the war-battered city. —AFP

Gearing up to counter the worsening insurgency in Iraq, US military has begun using 2,000 pound bombs and precision-guided missiles against the resistance fighters, media reports said, PFI adds from Washington.

France, Russia, Germany call for greater Iraqi role

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNHQ, Nov. 22. — France, Russia and Germany have urged the USA and Britain to ensure that the move towards self-government in Iraq includes all its nationals opposed to violence and called for an Afghanistan-style conference with the participation of major powers, neighbours and all parties in Iraq. The three countries which opposed the war in Iraq also called for greater UN role in the country.

The Russians said the conference can be held outside Iraq if the security conditions do not permit holding it inside the country but stressed that it should be attended by Iraqi groups, Iraq's neighbours and international representatives to set specific steps to implement the agreement between the US and Iraqi Governing Council.

"It is also essential to involve and make accountable all states of the region without exception, to enable Iraq to become part of the region once again," French ambassador Mr Jean-Marc de La Sabliere said, supporting the Russian proposal.

German UN ambassador Mr Gunter Pleuger called for broadening the political process to include "all political and societal forces that reject violence and terrorism."

However, the USA and Britain said it is for the Iraqis to decide the process they want to follow and American UN ambassador Mr John Negroponte told the Council that his country would consider "very seriously" the proposal for a conference if Iraqis made it.

British ambassador Mr Emyr Jones Parry told reporters after the meeting that "it is for Iraqis to look at options and then identify the best means. We cannot be perspective." The debate in the 15-member Council followed a briefing by the USA and Britain on the progress made towards return of sovereignty to Iraqis.

IRAQ / RESISTANCE FIGHTERS CONTINUE ATTACKS

Oil Ministry, two hotels hit by rockets

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, NOV. 21. Iraqi resistance fighters on Friday fired rockets concealed in donkey carts at three targets — two Baghdad hotels mostly housing Westerners and the Oil Ministry building.

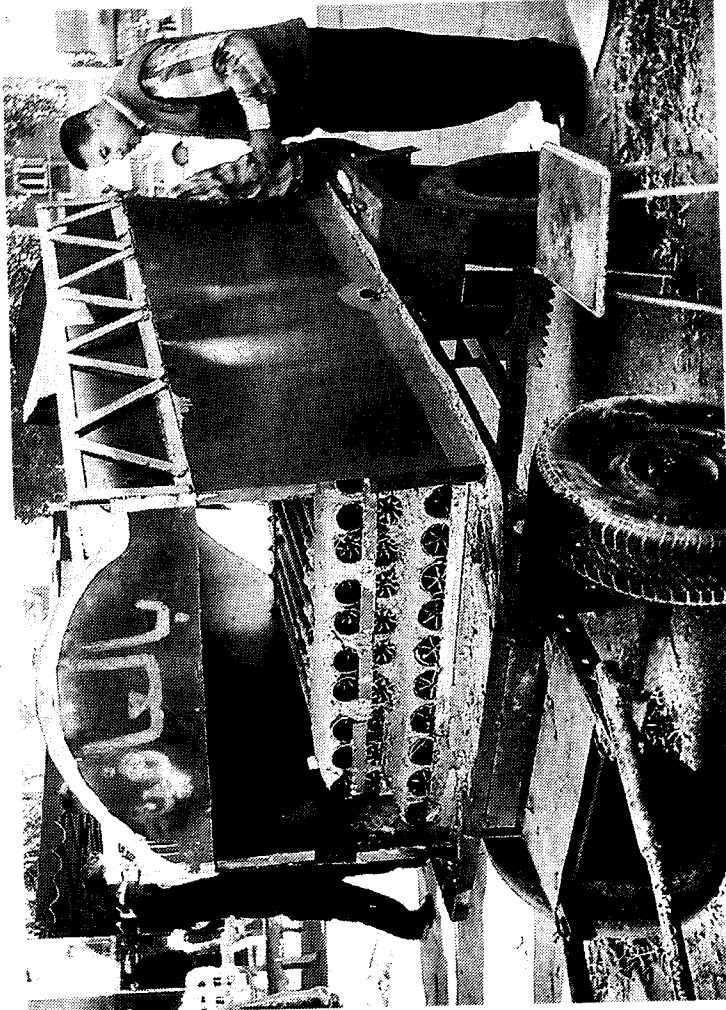
Early in the morning, rockets slammed into the 16th and 17th floors of the Palestine Hotel used by mainly by Western journalists and foreign contractors. One rocket hit an unoccupied room, blowing a large hole in the wall.

The nearby Sheraton Hotel on the edge of the Tigris river was also almost simultaneously hit in the well-coordinated attack — a hallmark of the Iraqi resistance. The rockets punched holes in the building, and one hit the main lift shaft. Several people were wounded and two of them had to be taken to hospital, but no deaths were reported. Both the hotels attacked were well-guarded with large U.S. troop deployments and fortified with concrete barriers. Resistance fighters had carried out a similar rocket attack last month on the Rashid Hotel, a symbol of U.S. occupation of Iraq, narrowly missing

the river were destroyed during the Iraq war, the U.S. military and air force had deliberately spared the impressive, multi-storied Oil Ministry building, because of its importance in reviving the coveted Iraqi oil industry. Revenues generated from oil sales were meant to fund part of Iraq's reconstruction.

The resistance fighters used donkey carts for concealing and firing the rockets, and the U.S. military sources reportedly conceded that the unconventional tactic had caused surprise. Television pictures showed a cart turned on its side after the attack. Several rockets were seen lying on the ground.

Meanwhile, resistance fighters continued to target supporters of the U.S. occupation. On Thursday, a suicide car bomber killed at least four people in the northern city of Kirkuk, close to the offices of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). PUK's leader, Jalal Talabani, heads the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council. Earlier on Wednesday, a car bomb exploded in Ramadi, outside the house of Sheik Amer Ali Suleiman, a leader of one of the largest Sunni tribes in the area and known to be close to the Americans.



A donkey cart, loaded with a makeshift rocket launcher filled with 30 rockets, near the Italian embassy in Baghdad on Friday. — AFP

the visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, who was residing there then. Eyewitnesses said the Oil Ministry building was ablaze and releasing thick black smoke, after it was hit by three rockets. Most of the Iraqi Ministries straddling the Tigris

Iraq oil ministry, hotels bombed

Donkey carts latest in guerrilla arsenal

Baghdad, November 21

GUERRILLAS FIRED rockets from donkey carts on Friday into Iraq's oil ministry compound and two Baghdad hotels used by foreign contractors and journalists, in the latest strikes on targets linked to the US-led occupation.

Iraqi police found a third cart loaded with 21 rockets near the Italian and Turkish embassies. A US soldier said a fourth cart also carrying rockets had been found in the same area.

Flames and smoke belched from the oil ministry complex, which controls Iraq's most important industry, crucial for funding reconstruction after decades of conflict.

Guests streamed out of the heavily-fortified Sheraton and Palestine hotels, which face each other near the banks of the Tigris, after rockets punched holes in their walls, scattering concrete and broken glass. "We saw a big flash — there was just one big bang and then lots of crashing glass," said Dihyaa Salem, a manager at the Sheraton. "There was screaming as everyone left their rooms."

At least one person was badly wounded and others suffered cuts from flying glass. One rocket hit an unoccupied room in the Palestine, blowing a large hole in the wall.

"There was one person badly injured. I saw him taken away" said Loay Yunnis, general manager of the Palestine. "There was blood all over."

Another rocket hit a lift shaft in the Sheraton, sending debris crashing down through the lobby's glass ceiling.

Colonel Peter Mansoor of the 1st Armored Division said both the oil ministry and the hotels were hit by rockets fired from launchers hidden under agricultural goods on donkey carts.

Several held over Turkey blasts

TURKEY SAID on Friday it had arrested several people in connection with twin truck bomb attacks on British targets in Istanbul that killed 27 people, including Britain's top diplomat.

"Some people have been arrested but it's too early to give any information about them," Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told a news conference, declining to give further details.

The Turkish daily *Hurriyet* said on Friday that seven people had been arrested over the second pair of blasts, which it said were carried out by Turkish suicide bombers. A spokesman at the Istanbul Governor's incident room could not confirm the report.

Reuters, Istanbul

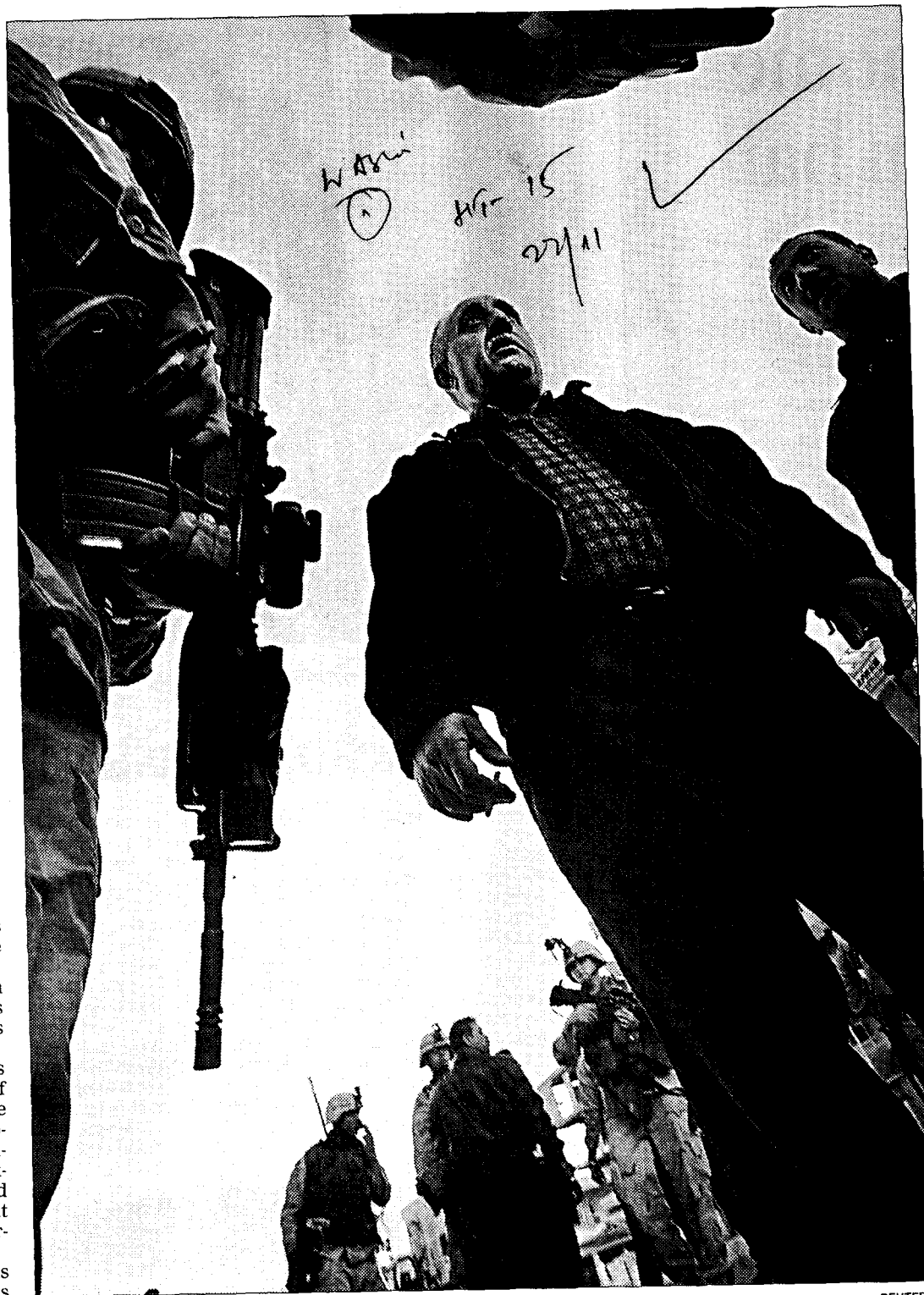
"The peace of Ramzan was once again shattered by terrorists who would target civilian structures," Mansoor said as firefighters tried to contain the oil ministry blaze.

Close to the Palestine hotel, a donkey cart was lying on its side with several rockets spilling out on to the road.

"This shows the variety as they try to get one step ahead of us and they're going to use varying techniques. Most people would not think of a donkey cart being used to fire rockets from," US Colonel Brad May said. "It's certain that you'd have the element of surprise by using a donkey cart."

US soldiers said a man was also detained near the hotels with rockets in a van.

Reuters



US soldiers talk to an eyewitness after Friday morning's attacks in central Baghdad.

Al-Qaida plans bio, chemical attacks: UN

United Nations, November 21

THE AL-QAIDA terror network may attempt a biological or chemical attack in "just a matter of time", according to an yet unpublished United Nations report. Some members of the al-Qaida are also likely to possess portable surface-to-air missiles and may use them to target military transport planes.

The threats were among several findings detailed in the report by the UN's al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee which also cited a shifting of the terror network's strategy, a move towards "softer" targets and a warning that the group was working towards a biological or chemical attack, according to CNN.

Heraldo Munoz, the Chilean ambassador to the UN and head of the sanctions committee, said the panel believes it's "just a matter of time" before al-Qaida attempts a biological or chemical terrorist attack.

"The only restraint they are facing is the technical complexity to operate them properly and effectively," he said. "All I can say at this point is that al-Qaida and some of the associates have tried to get hold of chemical and biological weapons."

However, the killings and detentions of several members of al-Qaida has damaged the terror network, Munoz said.

"They don't have today the capacity to attack the World Trade Center as they did on the 11th of September, 2001," Munoz said adding "that capacity they don't have, that has been destroyed."

"But they do have the capacity to hit a synagogue in Istanbul, or to hit a hotel in Bali, or in Jakarta, as we have seen," the Chilean ambassador said.

The report said al-Qaida may now move away from targeting commercial air transport because of heightened security at facilities.

The terrorists may try to target sea routes and may be "looking for targets of opportunity", Munoz said.

PTI

Blackhawks down

5/10/11 A boomerang effect? n RBLA ①

The skies over Iraq are becoming as unsafe for American military helicopters as are the highways for the coalition's motor vehicles. It is significant that after the Blackhawks and Chinooks were brought down by ground fire, the cry "Al Qaeda" went up. Not because there is specific evidence that Osama bin Laden's organisation has opened yet another anti-American front, more likely because US military officials see a certain pattern, a certain expertise in the manner in which the attacks on the helicopters are being conducted. A certain embarrassing familiarity perhaps, because it were US agents who had delivered the initial lessons on how choppers could be chopped down. Maybe not to Iraqis, and probably not to Al Qaeda cadres, but certainly to the Afghan mujahedin that were absorbed into the Taliban and then inducted into Osama's outfit.

When the Russians invaded and occupied Afghanistan essentially to effect a regime change, the armed helicopter was their chief weapon against the resistance that took root in rural areas of the mountainous region and gave birth to the mujahedin. The ability to strike hard from helicopter gun-ships gave the Russians the upper hand — until the Americans equipped the mujahedin with shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, the Stinger in particular, and trained them how to use it. Once the potency of the helicopter was neutralised, the Russians were forced into reverse gear. History may not be duplicating itself in Iraq these days, but with helicopters being knocked out so frequently, the lessons they taught in Afghanistan could now be coming back to haunt the Americans. Which once again confirms the inherent dangers in extending covert support to "non state players". A US official once said that if you tried "using a sledgehammer to crack a walnut", would he have to concede that on home soil the Iraqi folk are tough nuts?

THE STATESMAN

21 NOV 2003

US, UK plan new resolution on Iraq

¹¹⁻⁹
United Nations: The United States and Britain plan to draft a new resolution on Iraq for the security council which seeks to give international legality to the agreement between Washington and the 25-member Iraqi Governing Council for transfer of power to a provisional government in June next year.

Diplomats and officials ^{20/11} said they expect little resistance from other council members but there could be some haggling on the language.

The resolution is expected to come up in the second week of December after the Governing Council presents timetable for drafting of the constitution and transfer of power under a security council resolution.

The security council resolution adopted on October 16, which authorised a multinational force for Iraq and called on all member states to help in stabilisation of Iraq, had also asked the Governing Council to submit a timetable for drawing up constitution by December 15.

Prior to adoption of the October 16 resolution, Russia, France and Germany had demanded that it also include timetable for restoring the sovereignty. But the US had rejected that idea. As a compromise, it agreed to the provision that the Governing Council submit timetable by December 15. PTI

Iraq Council to curb US military role

Baghdad, November 17

IRAQ'S GOVERNING Council wants to significantly reduce the role of the US military after the rapidly advanced handover of sovereignty in July next year.

The US-appointed Governing Council signed a groundbreaking agreement with the US civil administration in Baghdad on Saturday, paving the way for a new transitional Iraqi government to take power much faster than originally intended.

US officials, including the defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, have insisted that US troops will stay in Iraq. But the governing council wants to limit their presence as much as possible. It envisages a much restricted role for US troops — simply guarding the national border and oil installations — leaving the majority of internal security duties to

Iraqi forces. There has also been a suggestion of inviting a UN-led multinational force to replace the coalition.

Entifadh Qanbar, a senior member of the Iraqi National Congress, the party led by the Pentagon-favoured exile, Ahmad Chalabi, said on Sunday that US troops should stop patrolling Iraqi cities and confine their operations to securing the country's long, porous borders once the new government was established.

"American troops will go to their camps in Iraq," said Qanbar. "They will stay there and they will protect the Iraqi borders. Everything else will be in the hands of Iraqis."

In recent weeks the governing council has increased pressure on the US administration to hand over responsibility for security to Iraqis, who they say are better suited to the job because they

Saddam must be killed, says Bremer

THE US administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, on Monday described former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein as a "voice from the wilderness" and said the ousted President needed to be captured or killed.

Asked about a new audiotape aired by an Arabic TV station on Sunday that was purported to be by Saddam, Bremer said the toppled leader had no support in Iraq except among his "band of thugs".

"This is a voice from the wilderness here. This is a man who is followed by a small band of murderers and they have no vision for the future of Iraq. They have a vision of the past, a past of violence and corruption," Bremer said on NBC's *Today* show.

Reuters, Washington

speak Arabic and understand local cultural influences.

Adnan Pachachi, a former Iraqi foreign minister and another member of the governing council, said the Iraqi government might invite a UN-led

multinational military force to replace the current, often unpopular, US-led operation.

"We have been told by many countries they are prepared to send troops to Iraq after they are asked by a sovereign Iraqi gov-

ernment when the occupation has ended," he said.

Yet the US military appears keen to have a significant role in the future Iraq. Under the agreement signed between the governing council and the Coalition Provisional Authority, the US administration in Baghdad, coalition forces are to be given "wide latitude to provide for the safety and security of the Iraqi people".

Rumsfeld has argued that the role of the US military was separate from the handover of political power: "We're working to bring in additional coalition forces; we're making plans for the rotation of our forces out and new coalition forces in," he said.

Despite the speedier timetable for the transition of power, the French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, said the process was still too slow.

The Guardian

VV
IRAQ / MOUNTING CASUALTIES

110-14
18/11
U.S. presses tanks into Tikrit

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, NOV. 17. Faced with mounting casualties inflicted by the growing Iraqi resistance, the U.S. occupation forces, in a show of strength, pushed tanks and troop carriers on the streets of the guerilla stronghold of Tikrit, a few hours after the Al Arabiya television channel aired an audio statement, purportedly by the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, exhorting Iraqis to wage war against the Americans and their local supporters.

"Fighting them (occupation forces)...is a legitimate, patriotic and humanitarian duty and the occupiers have no choice but to leave our country...as cursed losers," the tape said.

The statement claimed as that of Mr. Hussein is the first to be aired in two months. It follows a wave of successful attacks by Iraqi resistance, capped by the crash of two Black Hawk helicopters on Saturday, in which at least 17 U.S. soldiers were killed.

A rocket-propelled grenade apparently hit one of the helicopters, which then swerved from its flight path and slammed into another chopper causing the twin-crash.

A roadside bomb in the restive northern Iraqi city of Mosul on Sunday wounded five American soldiers, the U.S. military spokesman said.

With Iraqi resistance fighters attacking with greater sophistication, the U.S. occupation forces, for the first time since the war was officially declared over on May 1, fired satellite guided missiles on an alleged guerilla training camp on Sunday.

On Monday, M1 Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles and armoured personnel carriers rolled through the streets of Mr. Hussein's hometown, Tikrit, and fully armed infantry soldiers stood prominently at street corners.

U.S. soldiers have during this month resumed using weapons of war, including 500-pound bombs, mortars and missiles.

The U.S. occupation authorities have outlined their "exit strategy", revolving around the handover of political power to an Iraqi transitional government in June next year.

Analysts point out that the U.S. side was desperately trying to capture or kill Mr. Hussein so that a face-saving formula to stage a complete U.S. withdrawal could be evolved.

Coalition bashing

A national Iraqi endeavour

There can be no camouflaging the military significance of the latest round of attacks on the coalition forces. The strikes against the British in Basra and the Italians in Nasariyah establish that all alien troops are unwelcome enemy. The several other "token" participants in what is nothing short of an occupation operation have no reason to feel any less threatened than the Americans leading the poor show. Also noteworthy is the fact the most recent strikes are in the southern sector of the country and not within the so-called Sunni-triangle which was Saddam Hussein's stronghold. True the anti-coalition forays may be more frequent in areas in which the former dictator held sway, but it is becoming apparent that the formidable resistance is national and spreading across the country. The alibi constantly changes. It is now supposed that Saddam's army had prepared itself for such counter strikes by stockpiling weaponry in so many places that the coalition will never be able to detect all of them, and guerrilla warfare will fast become the battle order. The coalition will not be able to muster enough men to fight all across the country, and increasingly the deployment-pattern is shifting to protection of its own installations and dispositions. The enforced siege-mentality means that little or no pro-active measures are possible to provide ordinary folk the security that has eluded them ever since the American pulled down Saddam's statue but failed to snuff out his influence, or convince the population that they are liberators.

Is Iraq going to be Nam all over again? A vicious circle is developing since the only counter-punch that the coalition can deliver is centred around bringing its massive firepower to bear, riding roughshod over the local populace which only leads to Uncle Sam & Co. incurring further public wrath. That Iraqis working as part of the coalition's law-enforcing apparatus are being singled out for "special attention" would make it impossible for the Americans to hand over greater responsibility to the security organisation it had hoped to create. Which ought to precede any attempt at transferring other manifestations of power and authority to the locals. Unsound political strategies have a habit of making a right royal mess of military tactics.

HARD TO ESCAPE FROM IRAQ

Back in September, when Jacques Chirac had urged a speedy handover of power to the Iraqis as the best way to clear the mess in Iraq, Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser of the United States of America, was scathing. "The French plan, which would transfer sovereignty to an unelected group of people, just isn't workable," she said. But that was two months and many American soldiers' deaths ago.

Now it's just what's needed to get US troops out of the line of fire before George W. Bush faces American voters less than a year from now. In Bush's emergency talks on Wednesday with the US occupation chief, L. Paul Bremer, it was agreed that "Iraqization" will go into high gear. Legal control will be handed over promptly to a bunch of unelected but pro-American Iraqis, then they'll hold an election sooner or later, and we'll worry about a constitution much later.

But what might have worked two months ago will be a lot harder to pull off now. Why should the Iraqis accept the rule of the Pentagon protégé, Ahmed Chalabi, a convicted embezzler with a 22-year jail sentence awaiting him in Jordan, who has spent practically his whole life abroad? And even if Washington were willing to give control of the transition to the United Nations (which it still isn't), what countries would send troops to Iraq to replace American soldiers — even under UN auspices — after what happened to the Italian troops in Nasiriyah?

Power struggle

The Bush administration can hand over "power" in Iraq to anyone it likes, but the armed resistance won't stop and the major local players will pay little attention. Already, their main preoccupation is manoeuvring for position in the scramble for power that would follow a US pull-out — a scramble that could easily end in a civil war.

Imagine the scenario four months from now: March, 2004. There is an Iraqi government of sorts, with "President" Chalabi or some dignified nonentity at its head, but several of its ministers have been killed by the resistance. There is an Iraqi police force and the beginnings of an army, but both are heavily infiltrated by the resistance and their training and morale are so poor that they need US military back-up whenever anything serious happens. And every day, something serious happens: a roadside bomb, a suicide attack, mortar rounds hitting some American base.

The US is still losing several soldiers each day, but the Bush administration can't pull the American troops out of Iraq unless it is willing to see its puppet government massacred and the bodies dragged through the streets of Baghdad on live television *before* the November election. A strong anti-war candidate has emerged from the Democratic pack — Howard Dean or Wesley Clark — and is leading Bush in the polls. What would the Bush administration do then?

Syria next

I think it would do absolutely anything to turn the situation around — and the obvious thing is to drop all the recent nonsense about bringing democracy to the Arab world and get back to the earlier nonsense about Iraq being part of the "war on terrorism".

If the resistance is really just coming from a combination of Saddam loyalists and "foreign terrorists" (as most official American sources still insist), then obviously the solution is to stop the foreign terrorists from infiltrating into Iraq. Where do they come from? According to the sources, mostly Syria and Iran. We have to "root them out" in their lairs in Syria and Iran. Since Iran is a big, mountainous country whose government has popular support, and Syria a much smaller, mostly flat country with an unpopular government, the choice makes itself. Also, if the target is Syria, then Israel (at least, under Ariel Sharon) would be glad to help.

This is obviously crazy stuff — invading a country just to rally popular support during an election campaign — and its long-term consequences would be calamitous for west Asia, the US and international rule of law. Sadly, that does not mean that it's impossible. In fact, it's getting likelier by the week.

Bush agrees on free Iraq by June

SUSAN SACHS

BAGHDAD | NOVEMBER 15

96-1611
THE Bush administration has agreed to restore independence to Iraq as early as next June, apparently hoping the move will change the perception of the US as an occupying power and curb the mounting attacks on American forces in the country, Iraqi and American officials said.

The plan to accelerate the transfer of power was put forward by Iraqi political leaders this week, and then taken to Washington by L. Paul Bremer, the American administrator in Iraq. Late on Friday, officials said, a newly returned Bremer has-

tened to tell members of the Iraqi Governing Council's inner leadership circle that the White House had broadly accepted the plan. Bremer is to meet with the full 24-member council on Saturday.

The agreement envisions giving Iraqis control over their own wealth and political affairs in advance of writing a constitution or holding national elections, while maintaining the presence of American and other foreign troops to assure stability, officials said.

"This is good for everyone," said Ahmed Chalabi, a council member who saw Bremer on Friday night. "We

will have the US forces here, but they will change from occupiers to a force that is here at the invitation of the Iraqi government."

The plan to give power to an Iraqi provisional government represents a sharp change in American policy for post-war Iraq. Over the past month, it became clear that the Iraqis in the governing council — the only na-

tive, albeit unelected political authority — were not willing to risk a public split over the process of drafting a constitution, which would inevitably open up a divisive debate over the future role of the Muslim clergy. The deadlock demonstrated the new muscle

Three US soldiers accused of beating Iraqi POWs

WASHINGTON: Three American soldiers — Master Sgt Lisa Girman, Staff Sgt Scott McKenzie, and Spc Timothy Canjar — are to be arraigned on charges of assaulting Iraqi prisoners of war in southern Iraq six months ago, the US Army said on Friday. The Army said if convicted Girman faces up to 25 years in prison, McKenzie 23 years and Canjar up to 21 years and six months. — Reuters

of Iraq's majority Shiites, long oppressed by deposed ruler Saddam Hussein.

Bremer, administration officials said, will insist that the Governing Council provide him with a single Iraqi interlocutor — some kind of executive — to provide more consistency in his dealings with the Iraqi political body.

Whatever the final shape of the agreement reached between Bremer and the Governing Council, Bush made it clear this week that he had no plans to pull out the American military presence for some time — perhaps not until Saddam Hussein is caught.

IRAQ / INCREASING VIOLENCE CAUSES CONCERN

U.S. looking for ways to hasten transfer of power

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, NOV. 13. Faced with increased resistance on almost a daily basis in Iraq and a damning intelligence report, the Bush administration is looking for ways to accelerate the transfer of power in that country, but without giving the impression that the U.S. is straying from its original objectives.

According to the new scheme of things, the Republican administration is studying if the timetable for self-government could be moved up, and according to a media report, is toying with the idea of first holding elections and turning over the country to a temporary government even before a constitution is in place.

The process will be over by the middle of next year and would have taken care of two things: the demands of the Iraqis and many in the international community for the speedy transfer of power; and getting out of the mess before the November presidential elections of 2004.

It is believed that an Interim Iraqi leader would be named

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who will have the authority to govern the country until such time as a constitution could be written and elections held.

There is also the apprehension apparently in administration circles of disturbing the existing scheme of things or in making the Shia-Sunni divides sharper.

Administration officials are tight-lipped on what is transpiring in the White House and in other circles as far as this new Iraq plan. But the general thinking is that anything to speed up the process over handing over power will lessen the danger to American and coalition troops in that country.

"We're looking at all sorts of ideas and we do want to accelerate the pace of reform", remarked the Secretary of State, Colin Powell. The President, George W. Bush, had called for a meeting of his national security advisors on Wednesday — a session that was attended by the top American civilian administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, who has rushed to Washington for consultations. The Bush administration is saying that the Iraqi Governing Council would have

to be consulted first; and is stressing that whatever comes by way of decision will be from the Council and not imposed by the U.S.

It is also an open secret that Washington is not quite enthused at the way in which its Council has been functioning. In fact, an unnamed administration official has been quoted in a agency report as saying that one thinking is for a smaller council of about ten members — as opposed to the present 24 — or making one person as a strong leader of the present council.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bremer refused to subscribe to the notion that the Iraqi Governing Council is "failing" and has said that there are a lot of discussions going on in Iraq and in the U.S. on the way to go forward.

He was asked if the administration has changed its position and whether there would be an interim government before a constitution is written "...there are lots of discussions being held in Baghdad among members of the Governing Council; a lot of discussions here and there", he replied.

THE HINDU

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IRAQI VIOLENCE / OIL PIPELINE ABLAZE

14 Iraqis killed in clashes with U.S. troops

14 NOV 2003

BAGHDAD, NOV. 1. Fourteen Iraqis were killed yesterday in clashes with U.S. soldiers in a western suburb of Baghdad.

On the same day, a U.S. soldier was killed in an explosion in Kalidija, 85 km west of the capital, the U.S. military said today in Baghdad. Four other troops were hurt in the incident.

Back in Baghdad, a crowd of hundreds gathered to protest the incarceration of their fellow Iraqis by occupation forces, a resident told CNN. Some people in the crowd of hundreds carried posters of the former President, Saddam Hussein, and others carried religious banners on the first Friday prayers of Ramadan.

Some of the Iraqis began throwing stones at a military patrol and setting tyres on fire. Then mortars were fired at a police station, and U.S. forces called in tanks and aircraft, a U.S. military official told the news network.

The clashes lasted seven and a half hours, and five Iraqis were also injured.

There were no American casualties, the military source told CNN.

The bloody clash came on the same day that the U.S. Consulate in Baghdad warned Americans in Iraq to be vigilant over the weekend because of rumours about 'a day

of resistance'. A roadside bomb killed at least two U.S. soldiers on Saturday in Mosul, and many parents kept children away from classes in the capital after leaflets attributed to Mr. Hussein's party warned of a 'Day of Resistance' against the U.S. occupation.

However, there was no sign of a renewed wave of attacks which the resistance was allegedly planning for Baghdad on Saturday.

As the day progressed, traffic appeared to return to normal in the capital.

Insurgents were active elsewhere, attacking a U.S. convoy on Saturday near Heet, 120 km northwest of Baghdad, according to witnesses.

They said one man held up part of the wreckage from one vehicle and shouted "with our blood and souls, we sacrifice for you, Saddam." U.S. military spokesmen had no confirmation of the attack.

Other witnesses said an oil pipeline was on fire on Saturday about 15 km north of Mr. Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, an area of widespread opposition to the occupation. Witnesses said they suspected sabotage because the blaze was preceded by an explosion.

Sabotage to pipelines and the decayed

state of Iraqi's infrastructure have slowed efforts to revive the giant oil industry, considered the key to rebuilding its economy.

The U.S. military said two U.S. soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division were killed and two wounded in the roadside bombing in Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city, which Iraqi police initially reported as a land mine. Identities were withheld pending notification of relatives.

Iraqi police Lt. Walid Hashim said the men were inside two civilian cars when the blast occurred.

He rushed to the scene and saw that the drivers were dead while the two passengers were badly injured.

"I tried to pull one of the dead out but his leg was going to come off. They were cut all over by shrapnel (and) one was wounded in the abdomen and was moaning," Lt. Hashim said.

The two deaths would bring to 122 the number of American soldiers killed by hostile fire since the U.S. President, George Bush, declared an end to hostile combat on May 1 when added to the total given by the Department of Defence on Friday.

A total of 114 U.S. soldiers were killed between the start of the war March 20 and the end of April. — DPA/AP

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Mortar attacks on US hub in Baghdad

Baghdad, Nov. 11 (Reuters): Several blasts echoed across the Iraqi capital Baghdad tonight, and two plumes of smoke could be seen rising from the sprawling grounds of the US-led administration in the city, Reuters witnesses said.

The explosions, which sounded like mortars and which came in two separate bursts, follow a trend of mortar attacks on the compound in central Baghdad in the past 10 days that have wounded several people.

Reuters reporters heard up to 10 blasts in two bursts around 25 minutes apart. The smoke in the compound could be seen for some minutes.

"We've heard them, we don't have any information on anything at the moment, we're investigating," said a US army spokesman, speaking from the compound on the west side of the Tigris river.

According to the US military, several vehicles were damaged but no casualties have been reported in the blasts.

An army spokeswoman

PIA
said: "Several vehicles were damaged in the green zone but there have been no injuries reported at this time."

Reuters photographer Akram Saleh, who lives close to the entrance to the complex, said he heard the sound of what seemed to be six mortars flying overhead. He said the projectiles did not seem to go into the compound but flew further.

The mortar attacks have underscored the growing boldness of guerrillas confronting US-led occupation forces in Iraq, more than six months after President George W. Bush declared major combat over on May 1.

The US-led administration has its headquarters inside the so-called "green zone", containing several of Saddam Hussein's old palaces and which now house US military bases and the headquarters of the Coalition Provisional Authority ruling Iraq. US-led forces ousted Saddam in April.

Washington has blamed Saddam loyalists and foreign Islamic fighters for mounting

attacks on US-led occupation forces and Iraqis seen as supporting them.

Army chief vows action

Earlier, the top US military commander in Iraq signalled today his forces would take tougher action against insurgents, warning he would not hesitate to use any weapon at his disposal to defeat them.

Both the US-led occupying coalition and their enemies have upped the ante in recent days. Guerrillas have shot down helicopters and the US military has used aerial bombing for the first time since the official end of major combat in Iraq.

"Although the coalition can be benevolent, this is still the same lethal formation that removed the former oppressive regime (of Saddam Hussein)," Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez said. "We will not hesitate to employ the appropriate levels of combat power," he said as a slide of a fighter jet dropping bombs was displayed behind him.

Iraq vow on date with power

Baghdad, Nov. 9 (Reuters): Iraq's foreign minister promised today to keep to a US timetable towards sovereign government as another American soldier's death added to the pressure for a handover of power.

The soldier died and a comrade was wounded when their vehicle hit an explosive device in central Baghdad late yesterday, the US military said. Another bomb wounded a British soldier in the less volatile southern city of Basra.

Facing US pressure to speed up drafting a constitution to lay the ground for a sovereign government, the US-appointed Iraqi governing council plans intensive discussions to draw up a political roadmap, interim foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari said.

Washington has set a December 15 deadline for the council to agree a mechanism for creating a constitution, which would pave the way for democratic elections.

"The ball is now in our court

and we must deliver," Zebari said. Facing daily guerrilla attacks, the US is keen to put an Iraqi government in place and hand more responsibility to Iraqi police and soldiers.

With yesterday's fatality, attacks by insurgents have now killed 150 US soldiers in Iraq since President George W. Bush declared major combat over on May 1. Washington blames attacks on US forces on die-hard supporters of ousted President Saddam Hussein and foreign militants, some allied to the al Qaeda guerrilla network.

Al Qaida was also suspected of a devastating suicide bombing in Saudi Arabia yesterday which diplomats said killed at least 20 people, in a Riyadh compound housing mainly Arab foreigners.

In Iraq, attacks have been centred on US forces in Baghdad and the surrounding "Sunni triangle" region, but in mainly Shia southern Iraq, a bomb near

a hospital was detonated as a British convoy drove past today, and one soldier was wounded in the hand, a military spokesman said.

Zebari, speaking after meeting visiting Spanish foreign minister Ana Palacio, said he had assured her the December 15 deadline would be met, although implementation of the political roadmap depended on security conditions. He conceded the Council was slow to take decisions but said it was a force for unity and stability in Iraq.

Zebari was responding to a *Washington Post* report that US officials were considering alternatives to the council to ensure the US-led administration could hand over power as troops are withdrawn.

US officials believe members of the US-appointed body are too focused on their own interests, the *Post* said, citing senior US officials.

Last evening, guerrillas at-

tempted a mortar attack on the headquarters of the US-led administration in Baghdad for the third time in a week. One round landed near a nearby railway station but there were no casualties, Iraqi police said.

US soldiers around Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, 175 km north of Baghdad, have launched a new operation in the hostile Sunni area to hunt down guerrillas and senior Saddam loyalists.

The US army said "Operation Ivy Cyclone" would last several days and involve aggressive raids to root out resistance to the US-led occupation forces.

On Friday night, US planes dropped 500-pound bombs on suspected guerrilla hideouts around Tikrit. It was the first time planes had dropped explosives since the official end of major combat. The bombing followed the shooting down of a US Black Hawk helicopter in Tikrit, which killed all six people on board.

NOV 2003

Red Cross to shut offices in Baghdad, Basra

Geneva, Nov. 8 (Reuters): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said today it had decided to shut its offices in Baghdad and the southern city of Basra because of concerns over staff safety.

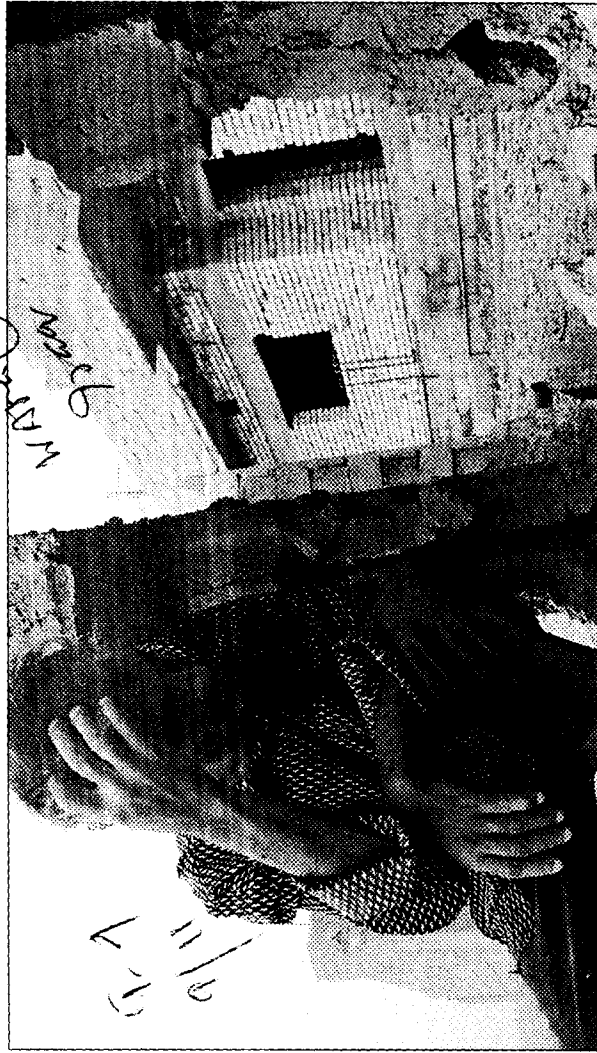
A car bombing at the Red Cross headquarters in Baghdad last month killed 12 people and shocked the foreign aid community, surring doubt about whether US-led coalition forces can bring order to the country.

"We are temporarily closing our offices in Baghdad and Basra," Florian Westphal, spokesman of the Swiss-based group, said. "We are still discussing what to do with our foreign staff. The situation is extremely dangerous and volatile."

He declined to elaborate, saying: "We are trying to ensure we don't go public with too many details on this because we feel it may be problematic for our people on the ground."

He was confirming a report by Zurich's *Tages-Anzeiger* newspaper, which quoted ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger as saying that the group had decided not to operate in Iraq under military protection. This, he said, could not be reconciled with its concept of independent humanitarian action.

"But we will remain present in northern Iraq. Our future activity will focus on visiting pris-



Jamal Mohammed in front of his house which was destroyed during an attack by US forces in Tikrit on Saturday. (Reuters)

oners, re-establishing family contacts and providing emergency aid in the areas of water and medicine," he said.

The Italian branch of the Red Cross said its 32 doctors and nurses who have been in Iraq since April would continue work at Medical City, a sprawling hospital in northern Baghdad, along with some 40 Iraqi staff.

"The Italian Red Cross will stay in Iraq, but this is not con-

trary to the decision by the international committee, which has warned us to increase security measures," a spokesman said.

The ICRC had had around 30 international and 600 Iraqi staff active in Iraq before last month's bombing.

The attack was the bloodiest on an international organisation since a massive truck bomb devastated the UN's headquarters in the capital on August 19,

killing 22 people, including Sergio Vieira de Mello, the top UN envoy to Iraq. It was the first the ICRC had suffered in its 140-year history and prompted it to reduce international staff. The Red Cross has been in Iraq continuously since 1980, through three wars.

War zone

US warplanes, in a swift response to the downing of another

er American helicopter, bombed targets in Iraq today for the first time since President George W. Bush declared major combat over on May 1.

The US army said the air strikes targeting suspected guerrilla hideouts in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit was a "show of force" after insurgents killed six soldiers when they shot down a Black Hawk helicopter yesterday.

As the American military reported the deaths of two more of its soldiers in a bomb attack in Iraq, US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage told a news conference in Baghdad that Iraq was still a "war zone".

And in a grim reminder of Saddam's decades-long dictatorship, Iraq and American rights investigators told a conference today they had identified 260 mass graves containing the bodies of at least 300,000 Iraqis murdered by his regime.

Today's new attack by insurgents in the volatile town of Falluja, west of Baghdad, two US soldiers were killed and one was wounded when a roadside bomb was detonated near their convoy.

Loud explosions, probably caused by mortars or rockets, echoed across the Iraqi capital Baghdad this evening in the third apparent attack on the city by insurgents this week.

Gulf westerners on high alert

Riyadh, Nov. 8 (Reuters): The US shut its diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia today and its close ally Britain declared there was a high threat of terrorist attacks in neighbouring Bahrain and Qatar.

Warning that guerrillas could be on the verge of carrying out attacks in Saudi Arabia, both Washington and London urged their nationals in the Gulf Arab state to remain vigilant. "The embassy continues to receive credible information that terrorists in Saudi Arabia have moved from the planning to operational phase of planned attacks in the kingdom," said a US advisory published late yesterday.

Diplomats estimate there are 35,000 US and up to 30,000 British citizens in Saudi Arabia. Osama bin Laden, in an audio tape released last month, promised suicide attacks inside and outside the US. Supporters of the Saudi-born militant have threatened both Saudi rulers and Western expatriates who hold key jobs in the kingdom.

Suicide bombers killed 35 people, including nine Americans, in an attack on Western residential compounds in Riyadh six months ago. Saudi Arabia blamed bin Laden's al Qaida network and launched a crackdown on Muslim militants. "God willing, we will obliterate them soon... We are hunting them down regardless of how long it takes, until we rid this country of them," Crown Prince Abdullah, the country's de facto ruler, said today.

Five militants have died in clashes with security forces since Monday, when authorities said they had foiled a planned attack on Muslim pilgrims in the holy city of Mecca. But diplomats say a statement posted on an Islamist website on Wednesday by Mujahideen of the Arabian peninsula "suggested Westerners were in the militants' sights. Diplomats who saw the statement say it condemned both "Crusader" Western powers and "tyrant" rulers of Saudi Arabia but made clear that for now the targets were foreigners. "We are proceeding ahead along the path we have begun, targeting at first..."

soldiers of the army...

Black Hawk down again in Iraq

Tikrit, Nov. 7 (Reuters): A US Black Hawk helicopter crashed near Saddam Hussein's hometown in Iraq today, killing six people on board, and US soldiers said it had been probably been shot down with a rocket-propelled grenade.

Apache attack helicopters were scouring the area around the crash in Tikrit, 175 km north of Baghdad, hunting for guerrillas who may have brought the Black Hawk down. If confirmed to have been attacked by guerrillas, it would be the third US helicopter shot down in two weeks.

The US military said two soldiers had also been killed in the northern city of Mosul, one in a bomb attack yesterday morning and one in an ambush today.

"At approximately 0600 GMT this morning a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter went down," Major Josslyn Aberte of the 4th Infantry Division said. "At this stage we don't know if it was due to mechanical failure or another reason."

But soldiers in Tikrit said initial reports suggested the helicopter had been hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

A column of smoke rose from the crash site, and US troops sealed off the area. Soldiers at

the base said they heard two explosions and ran outside to see the destroyed helicopter.

A military spokeswoman said the helicopter had burst into flames after crashing on the banks of the Tigris river.

The Black Hawk is the US army's frontline utility helicopter, designed to carry 11 combat-

Turkey not to send troops

Ankara, Nov. 7 (Reuters): Reversing an earlier decision, Turkey said today it would not deploy troops to help the US secure post-war Iraq after encountering strong opposition from the US-appointed Iraqi governing council.

Political analysts said the move would expose the problems US forces are having in restoring order in Iraq but said it should not harm ties between Washington and Ankara. Turkey took its decision after US secretary of state Colin Powell rang foreign minister Abdullah Gul last evening to discuss Iraq, the foreign ministry said.

ready assault troops, and is also used for medical evacuations.

Last Sunday, guerrillas shot down a US Chinook helicopter west of Baghdad as it carried troops on a rest and recreation break, killing 16 American soldiers in the deadliest single strike on US-led forces since they invaded to oust Saddam.

On October 25, guerrillas brought down a Black Hawk in Tikrit, hitting one of its engines with a rocket-propelled grenade. The helicopter made an emergency landing, and all five crew members escaped before it was engulfed in flames. The attacks brought to at least 141 the number of US soldiers killed in action since Washington declared major combat over on May 1.

Saudi terror threat

The US said today that terrorists were close to carrying out attacks in Saudi Arabia and that US diplomatic missions in the Gulf Arab state would close tomorrow to review the security situation. An US advisory said: "The embassy continues to receive credible information that terrorists in Saudi Arabia have moved from the planning to operational phase of planned attacks in the kingdom."



US soldiers console each other during a memorial at the al Asad air base near Tikrit for the 15 victims of the Chinook helicopter that was shot down by guerrillas on Sunday. (Reuters)

Bravado disappears!

Handwritten: 5/16
Bush's worries multiply

Bravado has oozed out of the President of the United States, George W Bush. The Iraq situation is worsening rapidly; from an incident a day the average has risen to three dozen a day. Body bags keep coming home, Congress is restive and allies are apprehensive. The blame game in Washington has intensified. Two broad currents can be discerned in the stand taken by the powerful Senate Intelligence Committee; both are uncomfortable for Bush. The Committee want some documents from the White House, the Pentagon and from Defence and State Departments and they are getting impatient. Democrats on the Committee think the White House is to blame for doctoring intelligence reports from professional agencies, Bush's fellow Republicans would like to deflect blame to the CIA chief, George Tenet, appointed by President Clinton. He has been summoned to give evidence and the President has had to give up some documents; argument over others continues. Rumsfeld is making noises which must be uncomfortable for Bush but the Secretary of Defence has his own hide to protect. All are agreed that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction and was threatening no one. The effort is to establish who was responsible for the lie.

An analysis of the blasts, the ambushes, the explosions that are now so commonplace in Iraq, does allow for the possibility that foreign terrorists are infiltrating into the country. Assuming this is so, the question arises, why did this not happen when Saddam was in charge? Who supplied the motivation? Is not Bush responsible for the iron entering into the souls of Iraqis — the devastation of their cities and their land, the indignities heaped upon their people, the hardships suffered by helpless men, women and children? And let it be noted that all the while Iraq's oil wealth is sought to be systematically plundered by America even while it protests in Security Council Resolutions that Iraq's natural resources are for the Iraqis.

Across the Atlantic, friend Blair is in plenty of trouble. The Report of the Hutton Inquiry, expected by the end of the year, will prompt movement away from the prime minister. Even if Blair is not held personally responsible at law, he has plenty to worry about. Not the least of his worries is the near certainty of Michael Howard being anointed leader of the opposition Conservative Party. Duncan Smith made a poor leader; as long as he was around he was, however unwittingly, of great help to the prime minister! This will change rapidly. It would not have come to this if Blair had not clung to his chair and allowed Gordon Brown to take over. Thus do self centred politicians hurt their own parties.

It is too late now for Bush to interest the UN into taking over completely in Iraq; he could have done it soon after announcing the end of hostilities in May. Having insisted as late as Security Council Resolution 1511 that any Iraqi government can only come out of the quisling Iraqi Governing Council, he has also slammed that door. Even before the shooting down of the US helicopter near Baghdad with the loss of 15 soldiers and injuries to 22 others, an American opinion poll showed more than 50 per cent had no confidence in the President. The percentage can only grow. Paul Bremer's boast that he would now get Saddam dead or alive, will fool no one; not even the religious right back home. A desperate Bush is planning a triumphant state visit to Britain; if he thinks he can replicate the hysterical audience on board the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln*, he has another guess coming!

US chopper downed in Iraq

13 soldiers killed in deadliest attack since end of war 6 months ago

Fallujah (Iraq): Thirteen soldiers were killed and 20 wounded when a US military helicopter was downed outside the flashpoint town of Fallujah on Sunday. It was the deadliest day for American troops in the six-month-old occupation of Iraq, and the second-deadliest since the US invasion itself.

The coalition also announced the death of a US soldier in a roadside bomb attack in Baghdad early in the morning as insurgents made good on threats to make the weekend a bloody one for the Americans.

The Chinook helicopter was fired at with an "unknown weapon" as it was ferrying US troops to Baghdad, where they were to catch a flight for leave outside the country, coalition officials said.

The coalition would not speculate whether the weapon was a surface-to-air missile, of which hundreds are said to be in circulation.

The Chinook shutdown was a major new blow in an Iraq insurgency that escalated in recent days—a "tough week", in the words of the US occupation chief.

Only the 28 Americans killed on March 23, the third day of the war, surpassed Sunday's daily death toll. The Baghdad command said a search was under way at the site for possible other survivors.

The heavy transport, the biggest US target yet shot from the skies by Iraqi insurgents, came down at about 9 a.m., the US command said. It belonged to the army's 12th aviation brigade, supporting the 82nd airborne division.

"Someone fired two missiles from the area of a date palm grove about 500 metres from where the stricken copter came down," said villager Thaer Ali, 21. The missiles flashed toward the helicopter from behind, as usual with heat-seeking shoulder-fired missiles such as the Russian-made SA-7. The old Iraqi



Iraqi men gather around a burning truck after a convoy of US soldiers in civilian vehicles was hit by a roadside bomb in Fallujah on Sunday.

army had a large inventory of SA-7s, also known as Strelas.

Although listing 33 casualties, a spokesperson in Baghdad said 25 passengers and five crew, all probably American, were aboard the helicopter, which was travelling with another Chinook that carried another 25 people.

It was at least the fourth time since the US declared an end to major hostilities on May 1, that the coalition has reported helicopters being hit by anti-US forces.

The latest attack came in the wake of a warning on Friday by the US State Department of "credible information that terrorists have targeted civil aviation in Iraq".

Some Iraqis were jubilant. "The Americans are pigs. We will hold a celebration because this helicopter went down—a big celebration," said wheat farmer Saadoun Jara, la near the crash site. "The Americans are enemies of mankind."

In Washington, US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that

the US would continue its efforts to stabilise Iraq despite the latest attack. Mr Rumsfeld confirmed the 13 deaths but said the losses would not dissuade President George W. Bush's administration from continuing its global war on terror.

"The only thing to do is to take the war on terror to the terrorists," he said. "You can't just hunker down and hope they don't hit you again," he added. Agencies

● US may recall Iraqi army units, Page 8

Reconstructing Iraq

THE virtuous intention expressed by the USA, of giving Iraq back to the Iraqis as soon as it becomes practicable, is of a piece with all imperial occupations. These always finish by making a virtue of their own intervention – “giving independence” to their captive peoples, leading them to freedom, returning to them their “sovereignty”. The interregnum is usually represented as having been for their own good, while they perform some spectacular act of redemption, make up for their backwardness or receive instruction from their occupiers in the arts of governance.

The case of Iraq makes clear the extreme limitations which countries can expect on their own autonomy as they are “returned” to their own people. Before a Constitution can be drawn up for Iraq, before any question of elections, the economic future of the country must first be sewn up. In economic affairs, there is no democracy. This became clear in September 2003, when the Iraqi Governing Council announced at the meeting of the G-7 in Dubai that the country’s industries (with the exception of oil) were to be opened up to foreign buyers. “Foreign investors” were to be given highly favourable terms on which to take over banks, insurance, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, power, telecommunications and all the other lucrative infrastructural necessities of the modern sector. BBC World described this as “waiting for the world’s investors to gamble on a country rich in potential.”

When the constitution is finally drawn up, the elections held, the democratic assembly finally in place, the people of Iraq, those happy recipients of their own country, will find their wealth has passed under the control of others

councils have been set up in rural areas of Iraq, as tokens of the coalition’s commitment. In small towns, mainly in southern Shia Iraq, the heads of these councils are paid a monthly salary by the Coalition Provisional Authority. They have no resources. In this sense, they prefigure the likely wider democratic set-up planned for Iraq for next year or whenever. The sovereignty of the people

them against any re-appearance of Ba’athism, state control of the economy, and the re-emergence of dictatorships, save the dictatorship of the global market, that supreme instrument for equity and social justice.

Why bother with democracy at all, if the allocation of the wealth of Iraq has all been determined beforehand? Indeed, not only has the wealth already been disposed of, so has the nature of the democracy which they may expect already been defined – there will be no Islamic state, for a start, there will be no return to state control. The restrictions on the future freedoms of the people have been staked out long in advance of their attainment.

There have been small experiments in local democracy: councils have been set up in rural areas of Iraq, as tokens of the coalition’s commitment. In small towns, mainly in southern Shia Iraq, the heads of these councils are paid a monthly salary by the Coalition Provisional Authority. They have no resources. In this sense, they prefigure the likely wider democratic set-up planned for Iraq for next year or whenever. The sovereignty of the people

ple remains quarantined from the sovereignty of the owners of the economy.

Of course, the vast programme of privatisation remains largely in the realm of theory; since the “security environment” remains too precarious even for the tax holidays, concessionary rates and knockdown prices at which Iraqi assets are being sold.

This is why the Madrid Conference on 23-24 October 2003 was such a vital PR spectacular: it had to demonstrate, not so much to the world as to sceptical Iraqis, that, despite the perverse unilateralism of the USA in the invasion, a global cooperative effort is now being undertaken to rebuild the broken country. The World Bank and United Nations studied 14 sectors of Iraq’s economy and estimated these need \$36 billion over four years. A report by the CPA found an additional \$19.4 billion to rebuild sectors not covered by the World Bank report. More than 70 countries were persuaded to queue up to tell the world what they proposed to do to help the unfortunate of Iraq. Their representatives trooped ritually up to the podium to announce the extent of their munificence.

It was a kind of symbolic re-birthing of Iraq. The “donors” were like the powerful fairies at a christening, come to bestow their gifts on the newborn – from the USA, with its promise of \$US 20 billion, to India, which offered a further \$US 10 million, a hospital and 500 tonnes of wheat, to tiny Sri Lanka with its modest dower of a hundred

tonnes of tea, and impoverished Vietnam with its promise of rice.

Nothing was too small or insignificant to be pledged to the infant country. Colin Powell, presided over the coerced largesse of the international community like a large clumsy midwife.

The success of the conference was assured in advance. At the end of the two days, no less than 33 billion dollars had been committed to reconstruction. It had been estimated – these figures plucked out of the air by international financial institutions – that US\$ 56 billion would be needed over four years; the promised 33 billion appeared to ensure a spectacular beginning.

Nothing is what it seems in the epic of Iraqi Freedom. Even the extensive donations of billions of dollars are, for the most part, no such thing. Before the Madrid Conference, figures published by the British Charity Christian Aid, estimated that at least \$ 5 billion had been passed to the ruling CPA for development purposes, partly from confiscated Iraqi assets, partly from the sale of oil, although barely one-fifth of the sums have been accounted for.

The USA had already announced its own \$US 20 billion. Japan, which had promised \$1.5 billion, increased this to \$5 billion, but in the form of loans. Saudi Arabia’s \$US 1 billion was at least half in the form of projects and export credits. The World Bank offered a loan of \$US 3.5 billion, and the International Monetary Fund a

loan between \$US 2.5 billion and 4.25 billion over three years. The President of the Governing Council promised that Iraqis would not forget those who had helped them in their hour of need; but he added ominously that they would also never forget those “who had turned their backs.” Do we detect here the opinions of an independent entity, or is this the ventriloquial ventriloquism of a USA, trapped by the promises of its own vainglory?

At least 10 billion of these generous endowments are in the form of loans. Now since Iraq already has an outstanding foreign debt, estimates of which vary from about \$ US 120 billion to as much as \$ US 350 billion, the last thing Iraq needs is extra debt before the fresh start.

Nabeil Ahmed as-Musawi, member of the Governing Council said in September, “We cannot delay the development of the economy of Iraq while we are waiting for the constitution to be fully written.” He suggested that any future government “may favour US companies and its allies, because they were the first to help us.” The World Bank judges that Iraq would probably be unable to spend

ey, and its mystic ability to wash away all traces of hatred, sin and blood.

more than \$6 billion in the first year, partly because of the time required to start up projects and partly because of the security situation. The vast sums of money are conjured forth arbitrarily: they bear little relation to any identifiable reality on the ground. It may be remembered that in January 2002, a conference on Afghanistan was accompanied by similar exaltations. We would not “walk away” from Afghanistan. Pledges of between \$4 and 5 billion were promised. While the USA was obliged to spend more than twice what it had committed, many of the other promises failed to materialise.

In September 2003, Bush requested a further US \$87 billion in emergency spending from Congress, including US \$66 billion for military purposes in Iraq. With the occupation costing about US \$5 billion a month, Bush declares that the operation will last “as long as necessary.” One of the reasons adduced by the USA for its invasion of Iraq was the claimed collusion between the Saddam regime and Al-Qaida. At the outbreak of war, there was no evidence of any connection between a secular tyrant and a religious extremist organisation; six months after the “end” of the conflict, it is clear that Bush has brought about the situation he mendaciously pleaded in order to gain popular support for the invasion. His prophecy of war without end is self-fulfilling, with its limitless demand of tribute, in money, time and human sacrifice.

Among the imaginary but awesome sums required for the “rehabilitation” of Iraq, lies the most inescapable element of Western ideology: a fanatical belief in the profane redemptive power of money, and its mystic ability to wash away all traces of...

(The author lives in Britain. He has written plays for the stage, TV and radio, made TV documentaries, published more than 30 books and contributed to leading journals around the world.)

Saddam might have hand in attacks: US

DOUGLAS JEHL
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 31

SADDAM Hussein may be playing a significant role in coordinating and directing attacks by loyalists against US forces in Iraq, senior officials said on Thursday.

The officials cited recent reports that Saddam is acting as a catalyst or even a leader in the armed opposition, probably from Tikrit, his hometown and stronghold. A leadership role by Saddam would go far beyond anything previously acknowledged by the Bush administration, which has sought to portray the former Iraqi leader as being on the run and irrelevant.

Officials acknowledged that the reports of a significant role by Saddam could not be corroborated, and one senior official cautioned that recent intelligence reports contained conflicting assessments. Nonetheless, three senior officials described reports



From
New York Times

House passes Iraq Bill; Senate next

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives gave final approval on Friday to \$87.5 billion legislation to occupy and rebuild Iraq, handing President George W. Bush a major victory despite concerns he has charted a perilous, costly course. The US Senate was expected to follow on Monday.

Students grill Wolfowitz over Iraq invasion

WASHINGTON: US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz fended off hecklers at Georgetown University during a speech on Thursday. "We hate your policies!" shouted one young woman, standing 10 metres from Wolfowitz who went pale and clenched his jaw. "Killing innocents is not the solution but rather the problem," she said.

"I have to (fringe) you'd be happier if Saddam Hussein was still in power," he replied dryly before recalling the regime's cruelties. A visibly shaken Wolfowitz caught his breath to tell others, "you and I should both calm down." He later said that the Iraq war was "not an ideological, but a moral issue."
—Agencies

For more than six months, officials have been saying they believe Saddam is spending nearly all of his time trying to evade detection by US-led forces. In the meanwhile, Saddam has issued at least five audio recordings that have served as calls to arms.

But over the last month or two, US officials said, there have been signs that his role may be more significant. They said there were indications that Saddam may be playing a role in bringing together factions of loyalists involved in the attacks. Some of the meetings may have been conducted in moving cars to avoid detection by US forces, one US official said.

"Everyone has always recognised that it's important to get Saddam," the Pentagon official said. "But with these continued reports that Saddam may be behind some of the attacks, or coordinating them or leading them, there's now a military reason as well."
—NYT

of a larger role by Saddam as credible, and a Defence Department official said the information had given a fresh sense of urgency to the US-led manhunt for the former Iraqi leader.

"There are some accounts that say he is somehow instigating or fomenting some of the resis-

Ibrahim, who is No. 6 on the US most-wanted list, has been described by some Defence Department officials as having recently been in contact with members of Ansar Al-Islam, a militant group that had been based in northern Iraq before the US-led invasion and which is linked to Al Qaeda.

Political contributors land Iraq contracts

EDMUND L. ANDREWS,
ELIZABETH BECKER
WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 31

EXECUTIVES, employees and political action committees from the 70 companies that received government contracts for work in either Iraq or Afghanistan contributed slightly more than \$500,000 to President Bush's 2000 election campaign, according to a study of the contracts released on Tuesday.

The overwhelming majority of contracts for billions of dollars of reconstruction work in Iraq and Afghanistan went to companies run by executives who gave more money to Bush than any other politician over the past 12 years.

Among the biggest contributions to Bush's election and re-election efforts were executives and employees from Dell Computer at \$113,000; from Bearing Point, a business consulting firm, at \$119,000; from General Electric at \$72,000; and from Halliburton at \$28,000, says the report.

Prepared by the Center for Public Integrity, a non-profit research group, the report said the contractors' executives and employees have contributed \$49 million to political candidates and parties since 1990.

The report is the result of a six-month investigation, which obtained information on 70 contracts through Freedom of Information Act.
—NYT

Law and order vacuum in Iraq leads to violence

By Jal Taraporevala
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The sharp spurt in violent attacks in Iraq has come at an especially critical juncture for the Bush administration. The growing security threat perceptions will make it exceedingly difficult for the US to muster a sufficiently large multi-national peace-keeping force under the terms of the resolution approved by the Security Council earlier this month. The American move to disband the 400,000-strong Iraqi armed forces and large sections of the country's security apparatus has created a law and order vacuum which has contributed to the mounting spiral of violence.

The militant strikes are also a reflection of the inability of Washington to narrow the

wide differences between the main political parties in Iraq on such core aspects like a new basic law for the country and a decision on whether the state should be Islamic or secular in character, the choice between the parliamentary and presidential systems of government and the extent of the powers to be devolved to the various regions.

More important, the failure of the Americans to adequately address the problems of unemployment, the chronic shortages of essential items and the revitalisation of oil exports has created an economic environment in which militancy has taken root.

Besides, the upsurge in violence has prompted a number of international relief agencies to scale down their activities in Iraq. This, in turn, will place added pressure on

the social infrastructure which is so essential for distributing some of the \$35 billion in aid raised at the Madrid Donors' Conference last week. In any case, this aid package is not as sizeable as US officials claim since it falls \$20 billion short of the original target and because a significant portion of the assistance is made up of loans and export guarantees and not outright grants. Given these factors, US efforts to shift much of the blame for the current ills facing Iraq on the violent activities of the remnants of the former Baathist regime and Islamist forces are unlikely to succeed.

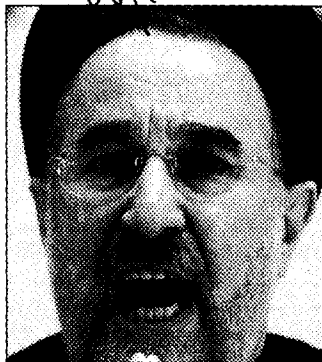
Iran refuses to share Qaida secrets with US

Tehran, Oct. 29 (Reuters): Iran said today it would not share intelligence with the US about al Qaida members it is holding and dismissed charges that anti-American fighters were slipping across its borders into Iraq.

US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage said yesterday Washington was prepared to resume limited contacts with the Iranian government but that relations would not improve until Tehran shared intelligence on al Qaida.

"We don't have any relations with American security services so there is no reason to do anything on this issue," government spokesman Abdollah Ramazanzadeh said.

President Mohammad Khatami rebuffed a call by President George W. Bush yesterday for Iran and Syria to tighten their borders to stop fighters crossing into Iraq. "The accusations are not new, they have al-



Mohammad Khatami

ways made such baseless charges," Khatami said.

The US has attributed an upsurge in violence in Iraq in part to foreign fighters that the American military has numbered between 1,000 and 3,000.

Washington broke off talks with Tehran over Iran's neighbours Afghanistan and Iraq in May after accusing Iran of shel-

tering al Qaida members behind bombings in Saudi Arabia on May 12 which killed 35 people, including nine Americans.

Iran denies cooperating with al Qaida and says it has caught and extradited hundreds of suspected members of Osama bin Laden's network who fled from Afghanistan and Pakistan in the last two years.

Ramazanzadeh noted that Armitage's comments on resuming talks with Iran were the first such remarks from a US official for some time but added that Tehran was waiting for Washington to take "practical steps" to improve relations. "It is not possible to threaten a country, to block its assets, to accuse it and then want talks," he said. Washington broke ties with Tehran shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution. Low-level talks have occasionally taken place in third countries to discuss specific issues.

40 killed as blasts rock Baghdad

5/11 2010
Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Oct. 27. — Car bombers struck the International Committee of Red Cross headquarters and three police stations across Baghdad today, killing about 40 people and injuring over 200 in a spree of destruction that terrorised the Iraqi capital on the first day of Ramzan.

The string of bombings, all within less than an hour, was the bloodiest attack yet in the city of five million by insurgents targeting the American-led occupation and those perceived as working with it. It also appeared like a dramatic escalation in tactics. In past weeks bombers have carried out heavy suicide bombings, but in single strikes.

The US military said one American soldier was killed and six US troops were wounded in the bombing at the al Baya'a police station in the city's ad-Doura district. Iraqi police Brig. Gen. Ahmed Ibrahim, the deputy interior minister, put the Iraqi death toll at 34, including 26 civilians and eight police.

Car bombs also exploded at the al-Shaab and al-Khadra police stations.

The Red Cross said 12 of the dead Iraqis were killed at its office, including two of its own employees.

The bombings came hours after clashes in the Baghdad area killed three US sol-



An Iraqi police officer and a US soldier near the Red Cross headquarters on Monday. — AFP

diers overnight, and a day after insurgents hit a hotel full of US occupation officials with a barrage of rockets, killing a US colonel and wounding 18 other people.

More reports, photographs on page 2

Rocket attack on Iraq's American hub kills 1

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Oct. 26. — Anti-American forces struck at the Al Rasheed Hotel with a rocket barrage that killed one soldier, wounded 15 people and sent scores of American officials running for safety, including the visiting deputy defence secretary, Mr Paul Wolfowitz. The hotel is the main centre of operation for the US-led coalition ruling Iraq.

Shaken, but unhurt, Pentagon deputy, Mr Paul Wolfowitz, said after the attack: "This will not deter us from completing our mission in Iraq." The dead American was a colonel.

But the bold strike from nearly point-

blank range exposed the vulnerability of even heavily-guarded American facilities in Iraq, where American forces sustain an average of 26 low-profile attacks daily. Mr Wolfowitz had come to assess ways to defeat a stubborn six-month-old insurgency.

A day earlier, attackers fired rocket-propelled grenades forcing down a US Army helicopter north of Baghdad just hours after the defence secretary left that area on the second day of a three-day visit. One soldier was injured.

The Al Rasheed houses officials of the US-led occupation office — the Coalition Provisional Authority — and US military personnel. The 6:10 a.m. attack, awakening people across central Baghdad, left

the concrete western face of the 18-story building pockmarked with a half-dozen or more blast holes.

American command said the 15 wounded included seven American civilians, four US military personnel and four other civilians working for the coalition. The command did not immediately identify the dead American, but in a transcript of remarks to a limited audience, Mr Wolfowitz referred to the victims of the attack, "including a colonel who tragically died".

Iraqi police said the attacker or attackers, in a white Chevrolet pickup, had boldly driven to the edge of the city's main Zawra Park and Zoo, just half a kilometre southwest of the hotel, towing

what looked like a portable, two-wheeled generator or compressor.

A police commander, said that when security guards approached, the assailants drove off, but rockets within the blue trailer apparently had been set to fire via a timer and suddenly ignited, flashing toward the hotel, a clear shot looming just over the treetops.

The American administration blames die-hard Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters for the continuing guerrilla war. But other Iraqis opposed to the US occupation are also believed to be taking part in the resistance. The US administration increasingly cites a gradual handover of security responsibilities to Iraqi security forces as the key to success.

New flag, new anthem

BAGHDAD, Oct. 26. — Iraq will soon have a new flag and national anthem, as part of efforts to sever all links with the era of Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath party, a member of the US-installed Government Council said today.

"We have created a committee within the council to chose between different proposals to change the flag and the national anthem," Mr Muwaffak al-Rubai said. "For the national anthem, there is a consensus to go back to the one which existed before the early 1980s and which was called: 'My homeland, my homeland,'" he said. Saddam brought in a new song glorifying his former ruling Ba'ath party, entitled: "A country that has spread its wings to the horizon." — AFP

THE STATESMAN

27 OCT 2003

Iran will take 10 years to change, says Ebadi

Tehran, Oct. 26 (Reuters): Iranian lawyer Shirin Ebadi, surprise winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, says it could take 10 years to make major progress on freedom of expression, equality for women and other human rights causes in the Islamic Republic.

Stressing education and hard work rather than protest and confrontation, Ebadi said the task for herself and others like her was to teach Iranians to demand their rights.

"If just a few people want something it has little effect. But if many people ask for one thing I'm sure they can have it. The important thing is to inform people," she said in an interview late yesterday. "I know it takes time, but I'm sure we'll be successful. We just need 10 years... Ten years is a very short time in the history of a country."

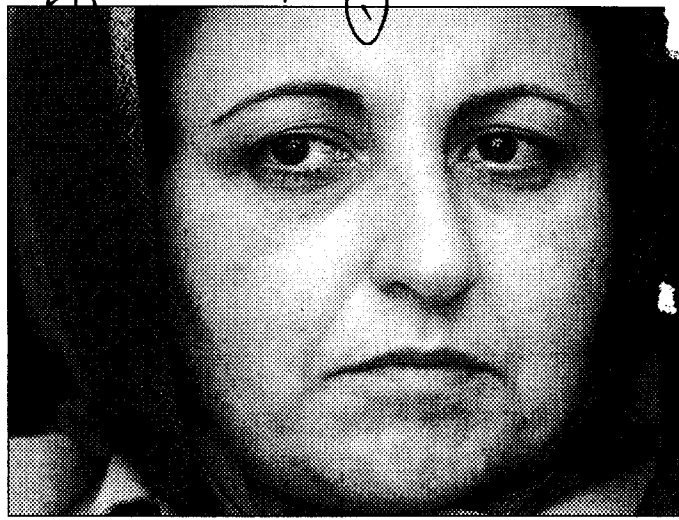
The first Iranian and the first Muslim woman to win the prestigious award, Ebadi, 56, has become the focus of fierce debate in Iran as the Nobel prize laid bare deep divisions in the country of 66 million people.

The diminutive but robust lawyer was mobbed by thousands of well-wishers on her return to Iran earlier this month after winning the award.

But congratulations from the government were muted, and the hardline media dubbed her a political tool of Western countries bent on undermining the Islamic state.

The Nobel Committee emphasised Ebadi's work championing children's and women's rights. In Iran she is best known as a tough lawyer who took on clients others dared not defend.

"Human rights (in Iran) have



Shirin Ebadi in Tehran on Sunday. (Reuters)

improved compared with 20 years ago but that doesn't mean we don't face problems," said Ebadi, wearing a green headscarf and clutching a walking stick after injuring a toe at home.

"The most important issue is freedom of expression. When there's no freedom of expression how can we object about human rights?" Scores of liberal newspapers have been closed down and dozens of journalists, students and pro-reform activists jailed by Iran's hardline judiciary in the past four years.

Ebadi also expressed grave concern about women's rights in Iran, pointing to the fact that a woman's life is officially considered only half as valuable as a man's and a woman's divorce rights are far weaker than her husband's. Asked how such inequalities could be changed when deeply religious clerics controlled the main levers of

power in Iran, Ebadi insisted that Islam was not to blame.

"After 20 years of legal studies I can say definitively that with a correct interpretation of Islam human rights can be respected. The problem is the interpretation," she said.

"Children are the future, the hope. When they learn to question things, things can change," she said in her small office surrounded by law books and bouquets sent by well-wishers.

Many Iranians, impatient for change, have urged Ebadi to throw herself into politics, an idea she firmly rejects. Instead, she said she would continue her legal work and set up new non-governmental organisations working on human rights. "There are hundreds of well-informed people in Iran working to push society forward. I'm not alone. I'm the symbol of a trend in Iran," she said.

Baghdad blast on US war brain

Baghdad, Oct. 26 (Reuters): Guerrillas today blasted rockets at Baghdad's most heavily fortified hotel where US deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz was staying, killing an American soldier and wounding 15 people, US officials said.

Wolfowitz, who escaped unhurt, vowed that the US would not be cowed into abandoning Iraq.

The incident occurred a day after tens of thousands of protesters marched around the White House in the first large-scale demonstration against the occupation of Iraq since President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat on May 1 (See Page 4).

The bold attack on the hotel with the tightest security in Baghdad undermined Washing-

ton's claim that it is steadily defeating the guerrillas. The rockets crashed into the Rashid Hotel around 6 am (0300 GMT), sending rapid explosions echoing across the city and throwing several guests from their beds.

Some people were carried out of the hotel on stretchers and others walked away spattered with blood after the missiles destroyed rooms on storeys below Wolfowitz's on the 12th floor.

Wolfowitz, an architect of the US war on terror and an intellectual force behind the invasion of Iraq, was led away by security forces. He appeared composed after descending a stairwell past thickening smoke and bloodstains with a fire alarm blaring, witnesses said. But he looked shaken when he addressed re-

porters a few hours later.

"These terrorist attacks will not deter us from completing our mission, which is to help the Iraqi people free themselves from the types of criminals who did this and protect the American people from this kind of terrorism," an unshaven Wolfowitz said in a trembling voice.

Guerrillas fired 20 rockets from a homemade launcher disguised as a power generator, US defence officials said. Some of the rockets did not explode and another 11 rockets failed to launch from their canisters, they added.

The rocket launcher was on a blue trailer that was pulled into a side street near a park 700 to 800 metres from the hotel a few minutes before the attack, they said. The rockets were launched usi-

ng a timer. Iraqi security guards exchanged gunfire with the attackers and wounded two of them.

Wolfowitz, on his second visit to Iraq in three months, had called for the speedier formation of Iraqi security forces. Members of his party had been dressing ahead of a breakfast meeting.

One 11th-floor room was destroyed, according to a journalist who saw the devastation. Part of the ceiling collapsed, the door was blown off, a hole was punched in the wall and smoke poured from the room.

Brigadier General Martin Dempsey, commander of the 1st Armoured Division, later told Wolfowitz: "I don't think this was targeted at you. I don't want you to take this personally."

"I don't," Wolfowitz replied.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2003

110-10
21/10

IRAQ: NO MATERIAL CHANGE

THE UNITED STATES has agreed to alter the profile of its unjust occupation of Iraq under the pressure of overall circumstances. A new resolution, 1511 (2003), 'unanimously' adopted by the United Nations Security Council on October 16, emphasises that the Coalition Provisional Authority, the instrument by which the U.S. rules Iraq, has only a temporary role. It recognises the Governing Council of Iraq and the cabinet as the principal elements of the country's interim administration and the embodiments of its sovereignty in the transitional period. The resolution asks the Authority to "return governing responsibilities and authorities to the people of Iraq as soon as practicable." By way of speeding up the processes through which Iraqi state structures will be re-established, the Security Council has invited the Governing Council to provide by December 15 a timetable and programme for the drafting of a new constitution and the holding of democratic elections. It has resorted to ambiguous phraseology in an effort to meet the concerns of those countries that do not want to send troops to serve under the Authority's command. However, the reference in the resolution to "a multinational force under unified command" does not signify that the U.S. will relinquish its grip on military affairs in the conceivable future. An attempt has been made to curb the Authority's control over the Iraqi economy. The resolution insists that an independent mechanism to audit finances be set up on a priority basis and that the oil and other revenues of Iraq be used in "a transparent manner... for the benefit of the Iraqi people."

These changes in the Authority's status will remain largely symbolic so long as it wields effective military power. However, the U.S. administration would not have countenanced even these alterations had it not been under

pressure on multiple fronts. It is clear that Iraqi patriotic resistance is deep, extensive and resourceful. Over a 100 American soldiers have been killed since formal military operations came to an end. The U.S. has already sunk more than \$ 80 billion in its Iraqi operations. While Congress has sanctioned another \$ 87 billion for military actions and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, the American public has begun to resent the colossal expenditure of money in foreign lands when its own needs are being neglected. President George W. Bush's ratings have dipped drastically in opinion polls and the political turmoil has badly affected his administration. These developments form the background to the renewed U.S. attempt to pressure other countries to participate in the military operations and share the costs of reconstruction. However, the Security Council resolution has failed to satisfy the other major powers, notably France, Germany, Russia and China, which have made it clear they will not join any multinational force under the present circumstances.

India rightly decided in July not to send troops to Iraq despite intense U.S. lobbying and pressure. It must stay resolutely with that decision. Participation in a multinational force under "unified", that is, U.S. command, will make India a party to the unjust occupation of Iraq and violation of its sovereignty. Secondly, as New Delhi has recognised, the real role envisaged is not peacekeeping but "peace enforcement". Thirdly, it would be irresponsible to stake the lives of Indian soldiers as 'cannon fodder' for somebody else's war of occupation. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee recently informed Mr. Bush that, among other things, India had no troops to spare for operations elsewhere since they were required for internal security duties. Nothing has happened for India to resile from this position.

THE HINDU

21 OCT 2003

US troops besiege top Shia cleric in Karbala

Karbala, October 18

US TROOPS on Saturday sealed off roads around the office and house of an Iraqi Shia cleric whose followers the military has blamed for starting a shootout which killed three soldiers.

Soldiers surrounded the buildings in Iraq's holy Shia city used by local cleric Sayyid Mahmoud al-Hassani with armoured vehicles as helicopters circled overhead. Three US military policemen and two Iraqi policemen were killed on Thursday night in fighting in the city. The deaths bring the total number of US casualties to 101 since hostilities were formally declared over on May 1.

The US military said the shootout was started by supporters of Hassani, himself a sympathiser of radical Shia leader Moqtada al-Sadr who opposes the US-led occupation of Iraq and had last week established an alternative government.

US officers would not comment on whether they were hoping to arrest Hassani. His supporters said he had left his home after the shootout in which local people said eight of his followers were killed.

Shias are a majority in Iraq and were repressed by Saddam Hussein, a Sunni. Moderate Shia leaders have advocated cautious cooperation with Iraq's occupying forces in the hope of securing power in a future government. Most attacks on US forces have occurred in the so-called "Sunni Triangle" just off Baghdad, but Thursday's attack showed increasing anti-US sentiment among young followers of Shia clerics.

US charges Saddam 'arms supplier'

A FATHER and son from California have been arrested and charged with brokering an illegal arms deal that provided Iraq with armoured patrol boats shortly before the war, Federal officials have said.

The arrests of Sabri Yakou, 69, and Regard Yakou, 43, are the first from investigations in post-war Iraq by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, who are tracing the former president's sources of weaponry.

The elder Yakou, an Iraqi native who is a legal US resident, appeared before a magistrate this week on charges of violating US Arms control laws. He was arrested at Reagan National Airport after arriving from Bangkok.

AP, Washington

On Friday a US military armoured personnel carrier returned to the scene of Thursday's shooting and opened fire on gunmen in rooftop positions. Later guards outside Syed al-Hassani's office were seen unpacking weapons including clubs, rifles, grenades, anti-tank missiles and rocket-propelled grenades. "These were guards protecting Syed Mahmood. Americans opened fire without warning," said a witness. Polish troops, who lead the multinational forces in

the area just south of Baghdad, watched the cleric's office from a distance. In the alley outside the office there are still bloodstains on the floor. The military has established a night curfew in Karbala.

Other supporters of the cleric threatened further attacks against the US and Polish troops in the area. "They want to arrest the Syed but he has got nothing to do with politics, he just concentrates on religious matters," said Abdul Hussain, who was at the office during the shooting. "All the guards are from the tribes and all are against the Americans now."

Annan no to staff return...

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan believes the security situation in Iraq is still too risky to send staff back, despite calls for the UN to play a political role, his spokesman said on Friday. The Security Council adopted a resolution on Thursday that gives the UN scope to play a political role.

...But Seoul agrees on troops

South Korea said it would send additional troops to help US forces in Iraq. "The government will decide on the number and timing of the dispatch after considering public opinion," said a spokesman. He did not clarify whether the new troops will be combat or non-combat forces. South Korea had sent 675 non-combat troops to Iraq earlier, and plans to contribute \$200 million in the next four years to help rebuild Iraq.

Reuters

RUSSIA, FRANCE & GERMANY VOLTE-FACE ■ TROOPS COMMITMENT FOR NOW RULED OUT

Security Council adopts Iraq draft

Associated Press

UNHQ, Oct. 16. — The UN Security Council today unanimously adopted a resolution aimed at attracting more troops and money to stabilise Iraq and putting it on the road to independence.

In a diplomatic victory for the USA, Washington picked up support from key opponents of the US-led war against Iraq — France, Russia and Germany. A day earlier, the three countries had failed to get the USA to include in the resolution a timetable for restoring Iraq's sovereignty.

The USA also won backing from China and Pakistan, and finally and most surprisingly, from Syria (which abstained), the only Arab nation on the Security Council and a staunch opponent of the war.

The amendments would give UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan greater scope to participate in the drafting of a new Iraqi constitution, and the political transition, and would state for the first time that the mandate of the multinational force authorized by the resolution would expire when an Iraqi government is elected.

France, Russia and Germany many changed the focus to

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US sanctions against Syria

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16. — The US House of Representatives has voted 398-4 to sanction Syria for its alleged ties to terrorist groups and purported efforts to obtain nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The legislation, the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act, voted yesterday also calls on Damascus to end its occupation of Lebanon. Mr George W Bush last week ended two years of opposition to the legislation, and has indicated he will sign it. — AFP

the quick restoration of Iraq's sovereignty, forcing the USA to make clear it has no intention of remaining an occupying power. The resolution states that "the day when Iraqis govern themselves must come quickly."

Earlier today, Germany, France and Russia announced after a 45-minute conversation among their leaders that they would vote in favour of the resolution in a bid to bring international solidarity to the reconstruction effort.

The announcement by German Chancellor Mr Gerhard Schroeder at a European Union summit in Brussels marked a dramatic shift by the three countries. "We agreed that the resolution is really an important step in the right direction," Mr Schroeder said after the conference call with Presidents Mr Jacques Chirac and Mr Vladimir Putin.

But in a blow to Washington's hopes that the resolution would attract troops and money to stabilise the country, leaders of the three countries ruled out any military commitments for now. They also fudged on financial contributions.



French ambassador to the UN Mr Jean-Marc de La Sabliere

FIRST ATTACK AGAINST AMERICANS IN PALESTINIAN AREAS

Blast hits US convoy in Gaza, 4 killed

Agence France Presse

GAZA CITY, Oct. 15. — Four Americans were killed and another was wounded today in a road-side bomb explosion which hit a convoy of US diplomatic vehicles travelling in the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian security officials said.

The blast went off just after 10 a.m. as the convoy was travelling in the Beit Hanun area near the Erez border crossing which leads into southern Israel. The blast is the first attack of its kind in the Palestinian territories against a US target. Israeli forces stormed the area a short time later.

A US diplomatic source said all the victims were American citizens but did not confirm that four people had been killed.

Top US envoy Mr John Wolf, the man appointed by President George W Bush to oversee the implementation of the "roadmap" peace plan, was not in the convoy, added the US diplomatic source, who asked not to be named.

Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat strongly condemned the attack and offered his condolences to Mr Bush. Palestinian Prime Minister Mr Ahmed Qorei and chief negotiator Mr Saeb Erakat had similar words.

Israeli forces backed by combat helicopters staged an incursion into the northern Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the attack.



PEACE IN PIECES: Palestinian policemen collect evidence at the site of a roadside explosion against a US diplomatic convoy in Beit Hanun on Wednesday. — AFP

Barrier resolution vetoed

The USA has vetoed an Arab sponsored UN Security Council resolution condemning Israel for erecting a security barrier that cuts into the West Bank with the Arabs now pledging to take the issue to the 191-member General Assembly, PTI adds from UNHQ.

The veto came at the end of a day-long debate yesterday during which Israel came under sharp criticism from most of the 40 speakers. Ten of the 15 members of the Council supported the resolution while Britain, Germany,

Cameroon and Bulgaria abstained.

US ambassador Mr John Negroponte said the resolution "was unbalanced" and "did not further the goals of peace and security."

Syria, the only Arab member of the Council who had moved the resolution, rejected an alternative draft put forward by the United States and insisted that its draft be put to vote. The Palestinian UN observer Mr Nasser al-Kidwa regretted the American decision and said there can be no "road map" peace process so long as Israel is building the barrier.

Ebadi calls for release of detainees



TEHERAN, Oct. 15. — Nobel Peace Prize winner Ms Shirin Ebadi today demanded that Iran's rulers free all political prisoners and detainees. "I hope political prisoners and journalists would be freed as soon as possible," Ms Ebadi told her first news conference in Iran since she won the prize in a surprise decision on Friday.

She also rejected the claims that the peace award had been granted to her for political reasons. "I believe this is not a political matter and I am of the opinion that the world, through this award, has come to recognise the freedom-seeking campaign of Muslim women."

Meanwhile, Iran's conservative-run judiciary has criticised her winning the prize by saying it "does not have much credibility". — AP

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15/10

IRAQ / ONE KILLED, 12 HURT

W. Amn (1)

Blast outside Turkish embassy

BAGHDAD, OCT. 14. A car bomb exploded near the Turkish embassy on Tuesday, killing the driver and wounding more than 12 others, U.S. officials and witnesses said. The suicide attack came amid widespread Iraqi anger over Turkish plans to deploy troops in the country.

It was the latest in a string of bombings to shake the Iraqi capital. Two days ago, a car bomb targeted the Baghdad Hotel, home to U.S. officials and members of the Iraqi Governing Council. At least eight people including the bomber were killed.

In Tuesday's attack, the car tried to approach the embassy in the mid-afternoon and suddenly exploded, witnesses said.

A concrete security barrier close to the embassy absorbed most of the blast and prevented further damage and injuries, U.S. officials said.

Osman Paksut, Turkey's ambassador in Baghdad, said that three embassy employees were slightly injured. "The bomb explosion shattered all windows and caused some cracks in the building," he said. "Computers are not working and baths are unusable.... This is undoubtedly the work of circles who don't want Iraq to stand up as a normal, stable, democratic country... This is the act of those who want to turn Iraq into a terror paradise."

Col. Peter Mansoor of the U.S. 1st Armoured Division said the vehicle's driver was killed. However, Iraqi witnesses said a second person also died and more than a dozen injured.

Salam Tawfik Hussein (29), who was riding by in a pickup truck behind the bomber, said 16 people were treated at the Al-Kindi Hospital, among them a co-worker. Following the explosion, witnesses said about 50 people gathered in the street

behind the embassy chanting pro-Saddam Hussein slogans and waving 250 dinar Iraqi notes with the ousted leader's picture. Police detained several of them.

"I was in a building across the street. I rushed over and saw that a car had exploded in front of the embassy," said Ahmed Hashem (30), a graduate student at Mustansiriyah University. "One person is dead. I know that because I helped carrying him into the ambulance."

Mr. Mansoor said an investigation by the FBI and Iraqi police had begun.

"About three days ago, we received indications that there might be increased danger on the Turkish Embassy," Mr. Mansoor said. "We revved up security measures based on those indications. The measures we took did prevent loss of life and serious injury to people in the area."

In Ankara, a Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman condemned the attack and said the incident shows "how grave the security situation in Iraq is" and "how strong the need is for everyone to immediately contribute to ensure security and stability in the country."

Turkey's Parliament last week approved a Government request to send peacekeeping troops to Iraq, a move hailed by the United States, which is seeking more international forces to help ease the burden on U.S. soldiers. The Turks would be the first major contingent from a Muslim country.

But Iraq's Governing Council and the country's Kurdish minority have expressed sharp opposition to the presence of troops from Turkey, Iraq's neighbour.

Many Iraqis fear Turkey seeks to dominate or grab territory in their country. — AP

15 OCT 2003

Rousing welcome for Ebadi

Tehran, Oct. 14 (Reuters): About 3,000 Iranians, chanting "Free political prisoners" and "Liberty and justice are the slogans of our nation", welcomed home Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi at Tehran's main airport today.

Human rights lawyer Ebadi's Nobel prize has ignited mixed passions in her home country, reflecting the deep political divisions between reformers and hardliners over the future of the Islamic Republic.

Welcomers, many holding aloft pictures of Ebadi, crowded the main building of Tehran's Mehrabad international airport. A large white banner proclaimed: "We welcome home Shirin Ebadi, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize."

In a separate part of the air-

Khatami walks prize tightrope, award ignites mixed reactions

port complex, Ebadi was greeted by members of her close family, parliamentarians and representatives of President Mohammad Khatami's reformist government.

"I feel like a child who has returned to her mother, like a drop of water which has returned to the ocean," she told reporters.

Asked what she thought Iranian authorities should do with dozens of political prisoners, some of whom she has defended, who are held in Iran's jails, she said: "I hope they will be released."

She flew in from Paris, where she had been attending a confer-

ence when informed of her Nobel win on Friday.

Outside the airport, well-wishers, many clutching long-stemmed white flowers, punched the air as they chanted daring political slogans. Security at the airport was not noticeably tighter than usual.

"It's a proud day, not just for Iranians but for the whole world," said Bahram, a 25-year-old interpreter.

"It's so emotional and unbelievable. Everyone here came to support her and her causes," said Zahra, 23, a student who like many of the women present sported a white headscarf as a symbol of peace.

Earlier today, President

Khatami said he was pleased an Iranian had won the Nobel Peace Prize but played down the importance of the award.

Ebadi, 56, has long been a thorn in the side of Iran's clerical establishment — a vocal advocate of women's and children's rights who has taken on some of the prickliest defence cases of political activists.

"I am happy that one of our compatriots has won this award," Khatami was quoted as saying on the official Irna news agency. But he added: "The Nobel Peace Prize is not that important, the awards for literature and science are more important."

Hardliners in Iran have described the country's first Nobel Peace Prize as a political move sponsored by the country's enemies and lambasted Ebadi for attending a Paris news conference last week without her headscarf.

15 OCT 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

Shirin's Prize

Nobel for the Iranian crusader debunks
facile 'axis of evil' equations

THE Nobel committee in Oslo is given to treating its citations for the peace prize as political statements. This year's honour to Shirin Ebadi, a crusader for civil liberties in Iran, is no different. But in sharp contrast to some rather ludicrous choices in recent times, Ebadi's invitation to Norway trains the spotlight on a little documented, though tremendously significant, movement for reform. The struggle for women's rights in Iran is the central battleground in the tussle between the country's orthodox mullahs and a band of moderate politicians. It is also emblematic of a wider unease in the Islamic world — between the fundamentalists and reformists. Just as the Iranian revolution of 1979 set the stage for a more theocratic and dictatorial West Asia, the current bid for reform in Iran could mobilise the silent majority in many Arab countries.

When the Ayatollah and his men swept to power 24 years ago, one of their first priorities was herding women into chadors. Women could not leave the country without a man's permission, their testimony in court was deemed to be only worth half a man's. Strictures were announced on

how a woman must be veiled, who she may associate with, and which professions she may pursue. It was, for instance, decreed that women may not serve on the bench — and Ebadi, one of the first women to be appointed a judge in Iran — lost her job. It is dangerous to dwell on hierarchies of victimhood in a totalitarian regime, but it would be fair to say that the status of Iranian women is as good an indicator as any of the country's transition to democracy.

And this transition can be seen in so many ways. In Iran's reformist president, Mohammad Khatami's hesitant efforts to instal women in positions of some power. In the persistence of activists like Ebadi to track human rights violations. And as Azar Nafisi demonstrated so poignantly in her 2003 memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, in everyday attempts to reclaim the private from public intrusions, perhaps the biggest struggle in totalitarian societies — by reclaiming their imagination and sense of irony. In these times of black-and-white "axis of evil" formulations, Ebadi's honour must serve as a reminder of the complexities in a civilisational society like Iran's.

Prize splits Iran

Paris, October 11

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IRANIAN HUMAN rights activist and lawyer Shirin Ebadi, who has been imprisoned by the theocratic authorities, threatened by hardline ideologues and fell foul of her country's conservative clergy, has become the first Muslim woman and first Iranian to win the Nobel Prize.

Ebadi, 56, represented prominent dissidents and took on cases to highlight discriminatory laws against women, arguing that legal equality is compatible with Islam. "My problem is not with Islam, it's with the culture of patriarchy," she had told the Guardian earlier this year. "Practices such as stoning have no foundation in the Quran."

At a news conference here on Friday, where she appeared without a headscarf, Ebadi said in her view there is no difference between Islam and human rights. She hoped the award would send a strong signal to Iran, currently suspected of developing a nuclear weapons programme. "This prize shows above all that Islam and human rights are not incompatible."

But the award has come as an embarrassment to the conservative clerical establishment that wields ultimate authority in Iran. State tele-



Shirin Ebadi

vision hesitated for a few hours before acknowledging the award. Conservatives called it a politically motivated decision to undermine the country's leadership.

Iran's President Mohammad Khatami and his reformist allies may see the Nobel as a means of renewing demands for democratic and social reform. Vice-President Ali Abtahi called it "very good for every Iranian".

The Nobel also exposed the battlelines between the nation's conservatives and reformists who exchanged fire in Saturday's newspapers. Iran's conservatives accused the Nobel committee of pandering to the West's political agenda. Ranged against them, reformists hailed her as a catalyst for change. While conservative-controlled state

TV and radio were still agonising over how to broadcast the news, Iranian girls had seen the award on US satellite stations and were excitedly ringing each other.

The reformist press splashed Ebadi's smile across the front pages but conservative newspapers such as *Resalat* made no mention. Other hardline periodicals tucked a few dismissive column inches in the back pages. The conservative *Jomhuri-ye Eslami* even confused her with another lawyer, giving the news a small space on page two with the caption: "Westerners give Ebadi Nobel Peace prize."

State-run radio and TV made passing mention of the award as their final news item. On Saturday, Ebadi was the top story on the front page in the reformist dailies but hard-line newspapers ignored the news. The hard-line daily *Siyasat-e-Rooz* gave priority on its front page to the discovery of an Iron Age cemetery in Spain.

The reformist-controlled official IRNA newsagency carried a piece saying: "The award was one of the sweetest prizes in the history of the land." The phrase played with Ebadi's first name Shirin which is Persian for sweet.

The Guardian & Reuters

Muslim nations want USA out of Iraq

Putrajaya (Malaysia), Oct 11

MUSLIM NATIONS nations demanded "eviction of all foreign forces from Iraq" as they began a summit here on Saturday, with only Turkey defending plans to deploy its troops alongside the coalition. But divisions over Iraq threatened to prevent Islamic leaders from finding a unified voice to address a widespread feeling that the war against terrorism has turned into a war against Muslims.

Abdelouahed Belkeziz, Secretary-General of the 57-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said occupying

forces should quickly withdraw from Iraq to give the UN a chance to reconstruct the country.

The OIC Summit, in Malaysia's new administrative capital of Putrajaya, began with meetings of senior officials. Foreign ministers will meet on Monday and the leaders' summit takes place on Thursday.

Up to 35 heads of state are expected to attend in what will be the largest gathering of Muslim leaders since the September 11 2001 attacks. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan is also scheduled to attend, along with non-members Russian President Vladimir Putin and Philippines

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who both rule over large, rebellious Muslim minorities.

Belkeziz said of all the conflicts involving Muslims, the occupation of Iraq and the Palestinian problem needed to be addressed most urgently. But the lead delegate from Turkey's team said though Ankara would have liked a UN mandate to help restore order in Iraq, it was more important to act. "We decided to do something. Of course, it's easy to stay away ... to criticise the occupation. Everybody among the Islamic countries has to make a choice ... what should be the position of Islamic coun-

tries to stay out and wait for something else and to just observe the tragedy going on?"

When later asked if troops would definitely not be deployed in the Kurdish north, where Turkey is regarded with deep suspicion, the Turkish delegate said: "No. We already have troops there, we will not be sending any more. They will be deployed elsewhere."

Iraq's other northern neighbours, Iran, predictably wanted the US-led forces out. "All OIC members are urging the occupiers to leave Iraq and give power to Iraqis," Ghomali Khoshroo, Iran's Deputy For-

eign Minister, told reporters.

Belkeziz also condemned Israel for failure to live up to peace process commitments, while Bashar Jaafari, leader of Syria's delegation, expected the summit to discuss the Israeli attack on its territory a week ago.

Veteran Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, hosting the summit before his retirement on October 31, said the OIC would have little influence as long as US politicians were inclined to support Israel.

"We can go to war, but we have no capacity to go to war. We (Muslims) have allowed ourselves to become weak. People

bully us," Mahathir said.

Malaysia has said that Muslim states should not heed US calls to send peacekeepers to Iraq unless the UN takes control of such operations. Washington wants troops from other countries to help relieve the burden on its 130,000 troops there.

Other conflicts that the summit will touch upon include the situations in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Azerbaijan, the Philippines and Somalia.

The OIC has often been dismissed by critics as a toothless talk shop with few concrete achievements.

Reuters & AP

1 2 OCT 2003

Iran's White Dove

Selection of peace laureate Shirin could be an ambiguous message

The Pope, George W Bush and several other weighty contenders were pipped at the post for the Nobel peace prize by a relatively unknown Iranian woman dissident, Shirin Ebadi. As is frequently the case with this controversial honour, this year's award can be interpreted in an ambiguity of terms. Of all the Nobel categories, the peace prize is the most politicised as well as the most coveted: If for no nobler reason than that the bestowal of this honour is a form of endorsement by western democracies who have often used the award as an ideological instrument. So what could be the motivations — apart, of course, from the inherent value of the contribution made by Ms Ebadi to the cause of human rights — for the Nobel committee's selection? As a Vatican source remarked, the selection of a woman, and a Muslim too, is a matter of "great satisfaction". It is indeed. But for what reasons? If it is to affirm the need better to understand the often suppressed role of women in all our polities, and simultaneously to redress the increasing western stereotyping of Islamic society as an inherently closed and repressive structure, the award is certainly laudatory. But it wouldn't be, if by selecting a 'dissident' voice to honour, the Nobel committee has indirectly reinforced the regressive image of an undemocratic, anti-women Islam in urgent need of 'reform'.

Indeed, the homing in on Iran could itself be significant. For, in recent months, Washington has made it clear that after Iraq, a nuclear and fundamentalist Iran was a possible target for intervention. Such a unilateral assessment of contemporary Iran might not be shared by many. Though still a deeply conservative society, Iran has come a long way from the days of Ayatollah Khomeini and the infamous fatwa against Rushdie in particular and dissent in general. Unfortunately, the Nobel citation has uncannily echoes of White House policy statements emphasising the need to overhaul Islam and harmonise it with western-style democracy and human rights. It is not so much the words of the citation that give unease as the implicit message between the lines: "No society deserves to be labelled civilised unless the rights of women and children are respected... Ebadi is a conscious Muslim. She sees no conflict between Islam and fundamental human rights. It is a pleasure for the Norwegian Nobel committee to award the peace prize to a woman who is part of the Muslim world, and of whom the world can be proud..." The last line is a giveaway, tacitly distinguishing between a 'Muslim world' and the rest of the world.

Nobel Law-reate: Ebadi First Muslim Woman To Win Coveted Award

Iranian activist wins Nobel for peace

Oslo
10 OCTOBER

IRANIAN lawyer Shirin Ebadi, a human rights and democracy activist, won the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for efforts that include promoting the rights of women and children in Iran and worldwide.

She is the first Muslim woman to win the award. "This prize doesn't belong to me only, it belongs to all people who work for human rights in Iran," Ms Ebadi said from Paris. She said the call from Oslo saying she had won was a shock "and then I was very happy and glad."

Later, at a news conference, where she appeared without a head scarf, she said: "There is no difference between Islam and human rights. Therefore, the religious ones should also welcome this award. The prize means you

plans to produce nuclear weapons. "I hope it will have an effect in Iran. As a person who has actively been involved in human rights, I am against war and conflict, and countries and nations do not need war," she said.

The state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported Ms Ebadi's win hours after it was announced and government spokesman Abdollah Ramezanzadeh said there was no official reaction. Iranian state media did not immediately report the news.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said Ms Ebadi had "spoken out clearly and strongly in her country, Iran, far beyond its borders." It said Ms Ebadi, the first Iranian to win the prize, has stood up as a "sound professional, a courageous person, and has never heeded the threat to her own safety."

She is the third Muslim to win

the prize. Yasser Arafat won the prize in 1994, sharing it with Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres and prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. In 1978, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat shared the prize with Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin for jointly negotiating peace between the two countries.

The 2002 Nobel peace laureate, former US President Jimmy Carter, was delighted with the news. "Her personal courage in the defence of rights for women and children is an inspiration to people in Iran and around the world. She proves that one person, standing on principle, can make a positive difference in the lives of many," Mr Carter said.

The 56-year-old Iranian was her country's first female judge, her husband, Javad Tavassolian said, and received her law degree from the University of Tehran. — AP



EBADI: PEACE DE RESISTANCE

can be a Muslim and at the same time have human rights."

She also said she hoped the award would send a message to the Iranian government, which has been accused of pursuing a nuclear weapons programme. The International Atomic Energy Agency has given Iran until the end of October to prove it has no

Twin strikes kill envoy and 10 Iraqis

Spanish diplomat chased and shot

Baghdad, October 9

GUNMEN KILLED a Spanish air force sergeant working for intelligence services at the Spanish embassy in Iraq on Thursday, shooting him in the street as he fled his home in bare feet and undershorts.

The Spanish Foreign Ministry in Madrid said Jose Antonio Bernal was killed outside his home in Baghdad's up-market Mansur neighbourhood early on Thursday. He was 34 and married with one daughter.

Witnesses said three men pulled up outside his two-storey house in a brown car. One appeared to be a cleric, wearing a black turban.

"The cleric knocked on the gate and the diplomat opened it," Adeb Mustafa, a mechanic who saw the incident, said. "(The Spaniard) was bare-foot, wearing only his undershorts. As soon as he saw the cleric, he pushed him and ran to his left down the street."

A security guard at a school on the same secluded street said the men had drawn pistols and chased Bernal for nearly 50 yards. "They chased him down the road firing their pistols at him all the time," Ahmed Ismael said.

"One bullet struck him in the head and he collapsed on the street. The three men jumped back into the car and sped away."

Spain has about 1,300 troops in Iraq, mostly concentrated in Shia areas south of Baghdad.

The Spanish government of Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar has been an unflinching supporter of President Bush on Iraq.

Madrid's Foreign Ministry described Bernal as an infor-

mation attache working for Spain's National Intelligence Center. A Spanish Defence Ministry spokesman said that Bernal was a first sergeant of the air force attached to the embassy.

Guerrillas opposed to the US-led occupation of Iraq have targeted Americans and other coalition forces, diplomats, Westerners and Iraqis seen as cooperating with the occupying forces.

Spain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs told Spanish state radio the motive for the attack was unclear.

"We don't know right now...if they targeted him because they knew him personally or if it was because he was member of the Spanish embassy or simply because he was a Westerner and they knew where he lived," Ramon Gil-Casares said.

"This was a terrorist act... We don't know why he opened the door, whether it was because he knew some of them. He was a professional in security matters and we don't know why he opened the door with that kind of training."

The United Nations in Baghdad has been hit twice by suicide bombers, including a major attack on August 19 that killed 22 people, including the top UN diplomat in Iraq. A truck bomb at the Jordanian embassy on August 7 killed at least 17 people.

A member of Iraq's Governing Council was assassinated last month.

Madrid said Bernal had been posted to Baghdad for the past two years. Spanish state radio said a security team was assigned to the embassy but that he did not have a personal bodyguard.

Reuters



Iraqi policemen celebrate after their unit's graduation in Basra on Thursday. AFP

Car bomb targets police station

Baghdad, October 9

A **SUICIDE** car bomber drove through the gates of a Baghdad police station on Thursday morning, causing an explosion that killed at least 10 people and left scores wounded.

The attack appeared to target a police station in Sadr City, a Shia suburb formerly known as Saddam City in north-east Baghdad.

Five civilians and at least three policemen died in the explosion, along with the suicide bomber and his passenger. At least 28 people were wounded.

Police Major Majid Abdel-Hameed said the car, a white

Oldsmobile, drove at speed up to the police station, crashed through the gates and then exploded. Security guards had fired on the car but were unable to stop it.

"It was definitely a suicide bomb," a policeman at the scene said. "We found the head of the attacker. It had been blown off his body. He was bearded, and his body was charred."

US army captain Sean Kirley, of the 2nd Armoured Cavalry, said the blast created a crater in the police station courtyard that was about 10ft across and 4ft deep.

A Baghdad police spokesman said the yard in front of the building had been filled at the

Dictionary sexes up a definition

John Ezard
London, October 9

ONE OF the supreme phrases of 2003 has made its way into an Oxford mini-dictionary of words and phrases.

The term "sex up" takes its bow on Thursday between hard covers in *The Language Report*, a book which calls itself "a front-line account of what we're saying".

The phrase was used in the 1990s to indicate what a couple in a relationship do to each other. But the new book carries it in the sense meant by Andrew Gilligan in his celebrated *BBC Today* programme remark on May 29. The book defines it as "to enhance something to give it greater appeal or impact".

The author, the editor and translator Susie Dent, notes: "The phrase was particularly prominent in 2003 when the British government was accused of 'sex[ing] up' intelligence reports on Iraq."

In a foreword Dent writes: "In the 2000s, a newly-minted word has an unprecedented opportunity to be heard beyond its original speaker. With 24-hour TV and news coverage, and the infinite space of the internet... repetition of a new word today takes a fraction of the time it would have taken a hundred years ago."

Among other new words listed are speed dating and moblogging, the writing of internet diaries and accounts while on the move.

The Guardian

Ex-Iraq soldiers clash with troops, 2 die



A US soldier in riot gear watches former Iraqi soldiers waiting to collect payments in Baghdad. (Reuters)

Baghdad, Oct. 4 (Reuters): Unemployed former soldiers in Saddam Hussein's disbanded army clashed with occupying troops in Baghdad and the southern city of Basra today in violent protests that left at least two Iraqis dead.

The British army said one of its soldiers shot dead an armed Iraqi during an angry demonstration in Basra by hundreds of men who had gathered to collect redundancy payments after being laid off from the Iraqi military. Major Simon Routledge said a British soldier heard gunfire and then shot and killed an Iraqi holding a weapon. British troops also fired rubber bullets to disperse the crowd.

Hundreds of former Iraqi soldiers also rioted at a disused airport in Baghdad where redundancy payments are handed out. They hurled rocks and rushed towards US soldiers who beat them back with batons and fired shots in the air.

Officials at a nearby hospital said one Iraqi had been killed and several wounded in the violence. The US army said two of its soldiers were wounded.

The US-led administration in Iraq disbanded the country's army in May, sparking several angry demonstrations by soldiers who said they faced destitution in a country whose econo-

my has been battered by war and years of dictatorship and sanctions. The administration later agreed to pay compensation to the hundreds of thousands of men who had served in the army.

Washington is setting up a smaller military force to take the place of Saddam's bloated army. Today, the first recruits in the

Bush seeks more time

Washington, Oct. 4 (Reuters): President George W. Bush today asked for time in working out a plan for Iraqi self-rule even as he faces doubt from UN secretary-general Kofi Annan about US plans.

"The transition to self-government is a complicated process, because it takes time to build trust and hope after decades of oppression and fear," Bush said in his weekly radio address. "Yet we are making steady progress, and we will keep our promise to fully return Iraq's government to Iraq's people."

"Our coalition is helping to train and equip Iraq's new army, so that Iraqis can take over border protection and other security duties as soon as possible," Bush said

New Iraqi Army graduates from basic training. "Gone is the brutality of the old regime," Iraq's US governor, Paul Bremer, said in a speech at the graduation ceremony. "The New Iraqi Army will be responsible to its citizens and will serve to protect Iraq from external threats."

Late yesterday, guerrillas attacked a US convoy near Baghdad with gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades, killing a 4th Infantry Division soldier and wounding another, the US army said. It said American troops pursued the attackers, killing two and wounding one.

At least 85 US soldiers have been killed in action in Iraq since Washington declared major combat over on May 1.

Missile fracas

Poland apologised to France today for claiming that its troops had found advanced French-made missiles in Iraq that had been produced this year.

The report sparked strong criticism from French President Jacques Chirac, who called it wrong and drawn up without proper checks.

However, neither Polish nor French authorities denied that the Roland-type anti-aircraft weapons were discovered near the Iraqi town of Hilla in a zone controlled by the Polish force.

President's love poem to First Lady

Washington, Oct. 4 (Reuters): President George W. Bush has immortalised one of the key moments of his presidency in a love poem to his wife, the First Lady revealed yesterday.

Laura Bush told a gathering at the US Library of Congress marking a weekend celebration of books in the nation's capital that her husband had written the poem while she was away in Russia this week and had presented it to her on her return on Thursday.

"Dear Laura," the poem began, "Roses are red, violets are blue, oh my lump in the bed, I miss you."

"The distance, my dear, has been such a barrier, next time you want an adventure, just land on a carrier."

The President, wearing a flight suit labelled "commander-in-chief", flew to the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in a navy jet on May 1 to make his declaration that major combat in Iraq was over.

'COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FAR FROM COMPLETE' ■ AMERICAN PRESIDENT UNFAZED

No WMD found as yet, admits US inspector

The Times, London & agencies

WASHINGTON, Oct. 3. — An American weapons inspector heading a team to Iraq has reported to the US Congress that they have not found any weapons of mass destruction in that country, dealing a blow to President George W Bush's hopes of substantiating his claim that Mr Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs.

However, chief weapons inspector Mr David Kay in his report to the US Congress yesterday made it clear that Mr Hussein had much to hide. The 13-page report detailed elaborate efforts by Mr Hussein's regime to destroy evidence, disperse material and intimidate or even attack the searchers. Concealment continued even after the war ended.

Mr Kay, the head of Iraqi Survey Group, said in his report: "We have not found at this point actual weapons... (But) we have found substantial evidence of an intent of senior level Iraqi officials, including Mr Hussein, to continue production at some future point in time of weapons of mass destruction."

He added that his team



Mr David Kay, the head of Iraqi Survey Group

'We are not yet at the point where we can say definitively either that such weapon stocks do not exist or that they existed before the war and our only task is to find where they have gone'

had found "dozens of WMD-related programme activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the UN during the inspections that began in late 2002."

On the issue of whether the former Iraqi regime had been in the process of reviving efforts to develop a nuclear weapons programme — another ground advanced by Mr George W Bush for going to war without UN backing — Mr Kay said investigators had found no evidence beyond a possible tentative

restart "at the very most rudimentary level".

"It clearly does not look like a massive resurgent programme," Mr Kay said on Capitol Hill after briefing lawmakers in private. There was evidence, however, that Iraq was carrying out "a very full-scale programme" to extend the range of its missiles beyond the permitted distance.

Although the team has not found any WMDs, "we are not yet at the point where we can say definitively either that such weapon stocks do not exist or that they existed before the war and our only task is to find where they have gone," he said.

Reacting to the report, Mr Bush today said the search for possible WMDs in Iraq made clear that Mr Hussein had deceived the international community and was "a danger to the world".

He seized on possible evidence of covert programmes to make illegal weapons and said that extensive work remains to be done. "But these findings make clear that Mr Hussein actively deceived the international community, that he was in clear violation of UN Security Council resolution 1441 and was a danger to the world."



THE ROYAL BLUSH: Cards from a Russian deck featuring top US politicians. (From left) Mr George Bush Sr as ace of hearts, evangelist William Franklin Graham III as king, Mr George W Bush as jack, his wife Mrs Laura Bush as queen and his brother Mr John Ellis "Jeb" Bush as the ten of hearts. — AFP

Bush's popularity plummets

UNHQ, Oct. 3. — With American army bogged down in Iraq, unemployment rising and economy failing to pick up, the public confidence in President George W Bush's ability to deal effectively with both foreign and domestic problems is plummeting, a new opinion poll shows. Mr Bush's popularity has been sliding over the past five years and now a clear majority is uneasy about his ability to make right decisions on the nation's economy, a New York Times/CBS poll has found. Over all, the poll found, Americans are for the first time more critical than not of Mr Bush's ability to handle both foreign and domestic problems, and a majority say the president does not share their priorities. Thirteen months before the 2004 election, a solid majority of Americans say the country is seriously on the wrong track, a classic danger sign for incumbents, and only about half of Americans approve of the US President's overall job performance. — PTI

Blasts kill 4 Iraqis

At least four Iraqis were killed and five injured in two explosions in Kirkuk and Tikrit overnight, AP adds from Tikrit.

The US military said two Iraqis were killed as they were trying to place a roadside bomb in Kirkuk. Two others were killed south of Tikrit when a bomb exploded at a traffic circle near Mr Saddam Hussein's hometown.

Annan, Russia rap new Iraq draft

Associated Press

UNHQ, Oct. 3. — France and Russia have said the new US draft resolution on Iraq did not meet their demands and UN Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan said it did not follow his recommendation for a quick transfer of power to an interim Iraqi government.

But the revised resolution won support from Britain, which signed on as a co-sponsor, and a sympathetic response from Bulgaria and Spain. Germany, which joined France in proposing major amendments to the initial US proposal, gave a warm first response to the new text.

The revised resolution endorses a step-by-step transfer of authority to an Iraqi interim administration but sets no timetable for the handover of sovereignty and leaves the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority in overall control until elections are held at some future unspecified date.

France's UN ambassador Mr Jean-Marc de La Sabliere said it didn't meet Paris' expectations on the key issues of a central role



Mr Putin: put off

for the UN and launching a political process in the hands of the Iraqis to stabilise the country and make it more secure, a French diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

In Moscow, President Mr Vladimir Putin today said Moscow was "not yet satisfied" with the revised US draft, adds PTI. "We are not yet satisfied, however, they (the USA) have desire to reach a compromise," Mr Putin told the World Economic Forum's Russia session here.

He underscored the need to give greater role to the world community in Iraq dispensation and said any UNSC decision must ensure this.

Backlash on Bush as arms elude hunters

Washington, Oct. 3 (Reuters): The US-led team hunting for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has not found any stockpile of biological or chemical weapons, but will keep searching the country, CIA adviser David Kay said today.

But President George W. Bush defended his decision to attack Iraq, brushing off doubts from Americans and citing what he said was preliminary evidence from Kay that Baghdad had been developing unconventional weapons. "I can't think of any people who think the world would be a safe place with Saddam Hussein in power," Bush said.

Democrats cried foul, saying the report on the search for weapons of mass destruction showed there had been no immediate threat to the US from Iraq and the war appeared to have been fought under false pretenses.

Bush awoke to headlines the US team found no biological or chemical weapons in Iraq and that a CBS-*New York Times* poll showed a drop in American confidence in the President's skill in handling crises. The poll released yesterday found that most Americans — 53 per cent — believed the Iraq war was not worth it and that Bush's approval ratings were near a record low for his presidency.

Bush said he did not make decisions based on polls. "Sometimes the American

people like the decisions I make, sometimes they don't. But they need to know I make tough decisions, based on what I think is right, given the intelligence I know, in order to do my job, which is to secure this country and to bring peace."

Kay, heading the search for chemical and biological weapons as well as evidence of any effort to develop nuclear weapons, presented a classified interim report to US lawmakers behind closed doors.

"We have not yet found stocks of weapons, but we are not yet at the point where we can say definitively either that such weapons stocks do not exist or that they existed before the war and our only task is to find where they have gone," Kay said.

The team has also not found any evidence to confirm pre-war reporting that Iraqi military war-prepared to use chemical warfare against US-led forces.

Much evidence has been "irretrievably lost," Kay said. "It is far too early to reach any definitive conclusions," he said.

"Despite evidence of Saddam's continued ambition to acquire nuclear weapons, to date we have not uncovered evidence that Iraq undertook significant post-1998 steps to actually build nuclear weapons or produce fissile material," Kay said. "However, Iraq did take steps to preserve some technological capability

from the pre-1991 nuclear weapons programme," he said.

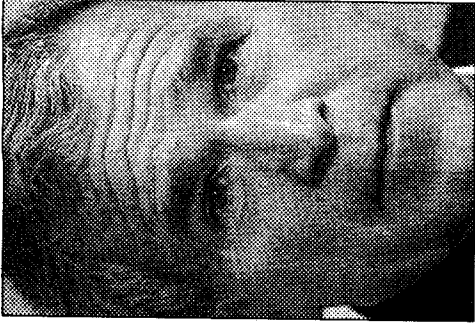
Kay cited several factors making it difficult to determine with confidence what happened to Iraq's banned weapons, including possible deliberate dispersal and destruction of material and documents.

Any actual biological or chemical weapons or material was likely to be small, with the bulkiest items able to fit in the space of a two-car garage, he said. The team has discovered dozens of WMD-related activities and significant amounts of equipment Iraq concealed from the UN during inspections in late 2002, Kay said.

Bush used this disclosure in his defence. "Specifically Dr. Kay's team discovered what the report calls, and I quote, dozens of WMD-related program activities, and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the UN during the inspections that began in late 2002."

Democrats saw it differently. California Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi, the minority leader in the House of Representatives said after meeting Kay: "I have concluded that there was no imminent threat."

She said there was a "big difference" between having weapons of mass destruction programmes, which are aspirations to having such weapons, and actually having those weapons on hand.



George W. Bush

Mice turn tasters

Bangkok, Oct. 3 (Reuters): Thailand is going to use mice to test food for poison before it is served to President George W. Bush and 20 other Asia Pacific leaders at a regional summit in Bangkok this month, a top health official said today.

Department of medical sciences chief Somsong Rugsapao said samples of dishes served at the October 20-21 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit would be injected into mice. "We'll have a result within a minute. If it's safe, we'll tell waiters to start serving," he said.

Paris/Moscow, Oct. 3 (Reuters): France and Russia today joined UN boss Kofi Annan in criticising a US draft resolution aimed at coaxing more troops and cash from reluctant allies to help rebuild Iraq.

"Our first impression is...this revised project does not incorporate the change in approach that we are advocating," said French foreign ministry spokesperson Hervé Ladsous.

France wants a provisional Iraqi government set up as soon as possible, gradually receiving executive powers in a process overseen by the UN.

Russian President Vladimir Putin today said the US draft was unsatisfactory, but held out hope for a compromise.

"So far we are dissatisfied with the resolution proposed by our US partners," he said in answer to a question at a forum in Moscow.

The comments by France and Russia, both of whom hold a veto on the UN Security Council, followed criticism of US policy in postwar Iraq by UN Secretary-General Annan yesterday.

Annan made it clear to Security Council ambassadors that the UN could not play a proper political role in Iraq under terms wanted by the US, UN officials and diplomats said.

While not refusing outright to participate in the political process, Annan said the US

France, Russia oppose draft

draft envisaged an impossible UN role.

It was one of the few times during his five years in the job that Annan had opposed Washington so bluntly on a crucial issue.

Before President George W. Bush launched a war in March to topple former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, France and Russia mounted a campaign to keep him from securing UN backing.

US-led forces, primarily American and British, went to war without a UN resolution in support of their action and ousted Saddam in April.

Post-war occupation forces have faced persistent guerrilla ambushes and bomb attacks which have killed more than 80 US soldiers since major combat ended on May 1.

Bomb attacks have killed Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer al-Hakim, whose Shia party was in a US-sponsored governing council,

and more than 80 of his followers, as well as top UN official Sergio Vieira de Mello and 21 other people in Baghdad in August. Thousands of Iraqis thronged Najaf today for a ceremony mourning Hakim.

Postwar turmoil pushed Bush back to the United Nations to seek troops and cash to help control and rebuild the oil-state of 26 million people but he has faced concerted opposition.

Ladsous said France's criticism of the US approach "is shared by a good number of countries, including those in the Security Council". He reiterated France did not intend to use its veto to block a new US resolution.

A leading member of Iraq's governing council said today the country's new constitution should be drawn up by an elected committee — a move that could drag out the process far longer than Washington wants.

Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, who represents an influential Shia party on the US-appointed governing council, said once the constitution was written it should be approved by a national referendum before being adopted.

His comments were another blow for US efforts to secure a resolution giving the UN a broader mandate in Iraq, with France and Germany, who opposed the war, wanting a quick handover of power to Iraqis.

IRAQ / 'STILL OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS'

U.S. moves revised draft in Security Council

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, OCT. 2. Wasting no time after assuming the Presidency of the Security Council for October, the U.S. has presented its revised draft of the resolution it is seeking on Iraq. It shared the draft with the other four permanent members and has also shown it to Germany.

Later on Thursday, the U.S. delegation will discuss the draft with the 15 members of the Security Council; but word from New York is that deep reservations remain on the text even if the Bush administration is saying that changes and ideas proposed by many nations over the last several days have been incorporated.

According to the draft, the U.S. still has not indicated a firm date for the transfer of sovereignty to Iraqi hands other than saying that "The day when Iraqis govern themselves must come quickly".

France has been consistently making the point that six months are sufficient for this to take place which the U.S. considers 'unrealistic'.

One view in New York is that the draft expands the U.N. role

but not to the extent desired by countries such as France and Russia.

Though France has said that it is not going to stand in the way of a new resolution, the feeling in New York is that the ideal would be a consensus.

A resolution needs nine votes to get through in the Security Council. But if major powers such as France abstain, it would send a different message.

Three soldiers killed

BAGHDAD, OCT. 2. Three U.S. soldiers were killed in separate attacks in a span of hours, raising to 88 the U.S. military death roll in nearly six months of Iraq's occupation amid fresh attacks today.

A soldier was killed late yesterday in a rocket-propelled grenade attack in Samarra, 100 km north of Baghdad, at the same time as another was struck down by small arms fire in the capital. The attacks came just four hours after a bomb claimed the life of a soldier in Tikrit, the hometown of the ousted strongman, Saddam Hussein. — AFP

Officially, the word here is that the resolution could pass the Council anytime this week but that the U.S. will be open to suggestions on the wording until the time of vote.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has been talking to his counterparts from Spain, France, Russia, Germany and Britain.

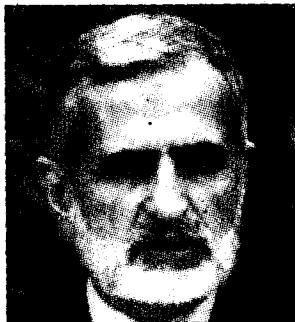
Washington is also of the view that a resolution by the time of the Iraq donors' meet in Madrid on October 24 will only strengthen the international community's commitment for the reconstruction of Iraq.

The U.S. is also looking at a new resolution to pave the way for countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Turkey to send troops as a part of a multinational force for the stabilisation of Iraq.

The Bush administration seems to be resigned to the fact that New Delhi will not be sending troops; but it has not closed the books on others such as Pakistan and Turkey.

The multinational force will be under the command of an American General but will report to the Security Council once every six months or sooner.

Iran stays firm on N-project



Mr Kamal Kharrazi: We cannot let others deny our rights.

Press Trust of India

DUBAI, Sept. 28. — Unfazed by the growing international pressure, Iran today said it will not compromise on its nuclear programme but offered greater transparency.

"Abandoning nuclear activities or enrichment is not something that Iran is ready to compromise on," foreign ministry spokesman Mr Hamid Reza Asefi was quoted as saying ahead of a visit this Thursday by representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency to discuss the legal and technical issues concerning non-proliferation treaty. Iran and the IAEA are at loggerheads over signing the additional protocol to the treaty.

"We don't have any thing to hide, because we do not have a programme for producing nuclear weapons. Therefore, we are ready to be quite transparent. But, we cannot let others deny our rights,"

foreign minister Mr Kamal Kharrazi told the *Washington Post*.

Mr Kharrazi said the USA, for its part, would have to make it clear that signing the additional protocol would end the debate over Iran's nuclear programme.

But the IAEA director-general Md ElBaradei yesterday told CNN: "They (Iran) say their programme is for peaceful purpose... If they really have nothing to hide, then it's up to them to open all their facilities and all their books."

Iran, a signatory state to NPT, needs to produce 8,000 megawatts electricity from nuclear energy by setting up several power plants until 2020, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said.

Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation set up uranium enrichment plant in Natanz to produce fuel for Bushehr power plant built with Russian help. Self-sufficiency in producing fuel will make Iran independent of Russia for supply.

Meanwhile, Israel said it would weigh its options if the international community failed to check Iran's nuclear programme. "The fact that a country like Iran, an enemy of Israel, has equipped itself with nonconventional weapons is worrisome," Israeli chief of staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon said.

THE STATESMAN

29 SEP 2003

UN staff set to leave Iraq



Colin Powell

Baghdad: United Nations staff prepared on Friday to pull out of Baghdad in the wake of new deadly attacks, as secretary of state Colin Powell said Washington aims to have a new Iraqi constitution in place within six months and a new government some time next year.

And as Iraq prepared to bury the first member of the US-installed Governing Council to be assassinated, swelling violence in the country claimed the lives of more Iraqi civilians and US soldiers. The US military said a soldier from the 1-73rd Airborne Brigade was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade fired at a military convoy late Thursday near Kirkuk, 255 km north of the capital.

Another soldier from the 4th Infantry Division died and one was wounded in a fire on Thursday in an abandoned building near Tikrit, 175 km north of Baghdad. It was not known whether the fire was caused by hostile action. The latest deaths pushed to 83 the number of US troops killed in action since May 1, when President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat operations after the capture of Baghdad.

Eight Iraqi civilians were also killed on Thursday and 18 wounded when a mortar bomb fell on the A-

Burtuqala market square in Baqubah, northeast of the capital, the US military said. And in Baghdad, a mortar that targeted a US military position in Baghdad wounded at least 10 Iraqis, Iraqi police said.

Mr Powell, whose country has drawn further fire from leading war opponents for failing to set a timetable for transferring power in Iraq, said Washington intended to set a six-month deadline for an Iraqi constitution with a view to elections in 2004. "We would like to put a deadline on them," Mr Powell told "The New York Times." "They've got six months. It'll be a difficult deadline to meet, but we've got to get them going."

He raised the possibility that the Iraqis themselves could soon set a timetable, adding that the US government has asked Iraqi leaders to estimate how long it would take them to write a constitution and conduct elections. Mr Powell said the constitution would spell out whether Iraq should be governed by a presidential or parliamentary system and clear the way for elections and the installation of a new government in 2004. Not until then, Mr Powell stressed, would the US transfer authority from the US-led occupation force to Iraq itself. Mr Powell's comments followed US contacts this week with fellow UN Security Council members on a US-sponsored draft resolution to muster international help to stabilise and rebuild Iraq. AFF

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 SEP 2003

27 SEP 2003

2 die in car bomb blast outside UN office in Iraq

Baghdad: A suicide car bomber killed an Iraqi policeman and himself at a road checkpoint outside UN headquarters in Baghdad on Monday as the United Nations debates expanding its role in Iraq. Nineteen people, including two Iraqi UN workers, were injured, a UN official said.

The detached arm of a blast victim lay more than 100 metres from the explosion. The hood of the car carrying the bomb was blown 200 metres away. The blast occurred at the entrance to a parking lot next to the UN compound at the Canal Hotel, a UN employee said.

The blast occurred about 150-200 metres from hotel, scene of a devastating car bombing last month that killed 23 people, including the UN's top envoy in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello. A US military spokesman at the scene said the bomber was targeting the UN compound but decided to detonate the bomb early when he was stopped by Iraqi police.

"I reiterate that he was not through a checkpoint, and he was not near the UN compound. That means security

is working," said Capt Sean Kirley, of the US 2nd Armoured Cavalry Regiment. A UN official said the bomber wore an explosives belt in addition to the 25 kg bomb in

exploded, killing him and the driver. When I arrived, there was fire and smoke, even the guard's body was ablaze," he said.

Kirley said the Iraq police had a warning of the attack shortly before it happened. He would not elaborate. Authorities identified the slain policeman as 23-year-old Salam Mohammed. The UN official said 19 people were injured and six people were unaccounted for. Kirley said he didn't know whether any US troops were near the scene at the time, but none was wounded. He said

there was no damage to UN buildings and that police had a few minutes warning of a possible attack. AP



US soldiers secure the area of a suicide car bombing near the UN headquarters in Baghdad on Monday.

the car. "This incident today once again underlines that Iraq remains a war zone and a high risk environment, particularly for those working to improve the lives of the Iraqi people," Kevin Kennedy, the top UN official in Baghdad, said in a statement.

Master Sgt. Hassan al-Saadi, among the first on the scene after the explosion, said he was told by injured policemen that a gray 1995 Opel with Baghdad license plates approached the entrance to the parking. "A guard went to search the car, opened the trunk and the car

Oil kept off US Iraq reforms

*W. Abu
D. Owen*

Dubai, Sept. 21 (Reuters): US-controlled Iraq today unveiled sweeping reforms allowing foreign investors into all sectors except oil, ending 30 years of state economic control.

Iraqi finance minister Kamel al-Keylani today said the reforms would "significantly advance efforts to build a free and open market economy in Iraq", spur economic growth and speed Iraq's re-entry into the international community.

The list of reforms for liberalising foreign investment, the banking sector and taxes and tariffs read like a recipe devised by Washington for a capitalist Iraq. "Iraq needs jobs, it needs to have growth," a senior US official involved in Iraq's reconstruction said. "This isn't just a proposal — this is the law, this is done. This was all signed yesterday," the US official said.

Keylani said the reforms would be implemented soon.

The surprisingly broad measures, which end an era of economic domination under Saddam Hussein and the socialist Baath Party, were aimed at improving global opinion before a donors' conference in Madrid next month.

Washington's invasion of Iraq in the face of worldwide opposition raised hackles in Europe and concern in Iraq and the Arab world that it sought control of Iraq's oil and resources.

However, the reforms include 100 per cent foreign ownership in all sectors except natural resources, excluding current outside participation in Iraq's coveted oil reserves, the second-largest behind those of Saudi Arabia.

"The fact that they ban investment in oil resources is good because it sends the message that America was not only after Iraq's oil," an Arab finance minister, who declined to be identified, said of the steps.

Keylani and a big delegation of Iraqi and Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) officials are in Dubai to discuss an assessment of Iraq's needs to be presented to donors in Madrid.

Paul Bremer, US-appointed administrator of Iraq, was not present because he was in Washington, a CPA official said. His absence surprised some delegates who had expected him to outline US policy to possible donor nations.

Joe Saba, World Bank country director for Iraq, called the steps "significant".

Iraq's reconstruction has been hampered by lawlessness five months after Saddam's fall

and its people are struggling to cope with daily life.

Saba said Iraq's US-backed Governing Council had supported the measures, an endorsement the CPA has said is essential to attract foreign investors.

A senior Arab official said: "If (the package) is legal and it stands, then it would be excellent but the proof is in the pudding if investors trust it enough to come."

The US official noted the open-ended foreign investment proposals did not require any screening process — something he said the Iraqis had requested — which would make investment there more alluring to foreigners. "There is no screening committee. There is no way for a

3 soldiers killed

Baghdad, Sept. 21 (Reuters): Attackers killed two American soldiers and wounded 13 in a mortar attack while a third died from a roadside bomb blast in the latest strikes against US forces in Iraq, military officials said today.

Under the cover of darkness, guerrillas fired two mortar bombs last evening at the Abu Ghraib prison west of Baghdad which is guarded and run by the US army.

"There were two soldiers killed and 13 wounded," a military spokeswoman said, adding that the dead were military police.

She said no detainees were injured in the attack.

sort of niggling process to grab hold of your ankle and chew on it," he said.

Foreign investors cannot own real estate but can lease property for 40 years under the new rules.

"You can make money in a country like Iraq," the US official said. "You don't have to have everything be perfect to make money."

The reforms also include a free transfer of foreign exchange earnings for investors, full central bank independence and relatively free entry for foreign banks into Iraq.

New bank rules were signed in Iraq yesterday, the US official said. Six foreign banks will get "fast-track" entry into Iraq and full ownership of local banks within five years. "We are going to have a separate and early process to select two of those banks," he said.

Europe trio tries to mend Iraq rift

Berlin, Sept. 20 (Reuters): Europe's three biggest powers tried to mend their rift over Iraq today but French President Jacques Chirac said differences with Britain remained.

"Our views are not quite convergent," Chirac said after a Berlin summit with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Chirac and Schroeder, fierce opponents of the US-led war that toppled Saddam Hussein, now want a much more influential role for the UN and a faster transition to democracy in Iraq. "It's important to give the UN a bigger role," Schroeder said. "On the technicalities and timetable, we are still not fully agreed," Chirac added.

He restated France's position that Iraq, now under US administration, must regain sovereignty within months. US secretary of state Colin Powell has ridiculed the notion that Washington could hand back power overnight. Chirac was far less upbeat than Blair, who stressed the common ground between the three leaders.

"We all want to see a stable Iraq. We all want to see Iraq make a transition to democratic government as swiftly as possible. We all want to see, and know



Governing council member Akila al-Hashemi was wounded in an attack in Baghdad by unidentified gunmen. (AFP)

there must be, a key role for the UN," Blair said. "I think whatever the different positions on the conflict, the entire world has an interest in seeing those things happen. For myself, I am sure that whatever differences there are, they can be resolved, and I am sure they will be."

The brief summit offered an opportunity for all sides to mend relations badly damaged by Blair's unswerving support for

the US-led invasion of Iraq in March. But the political differences were reflected in the body language: Schroeder's polite welcoming handshake with Blair was conspicuously cooler than his jovial backslapping with Chirac. The United States is now seeking a new UN Security Council resolution to help share out the huge financial and security burden of rebuilding post-war Iraq.

It badly needs such help as its 130,000 troops in Iraq suffer almost daily casualties from guerrilla attacks. President George W. Bush last week sent Congress an \$87 billion plan to fund military operations and reconstruction efforts.

Bengal tiger shot dead

A US soldier shot dead a rare Bengal tiger at Baghdad zoo after the animal injured another soldier who was trying to feed it through the cage bars, the zoo's manager said today. Adil Salman Mousa said a group of US soldiers were having a party in the zoo on Thursday night after it had closed.

"Someone was trying to feed the tigers," he said. "The tiger bit his finger off and clawed his arm. So his colleague took a gun and shot the tiger."

Torture troops lose Iraq's heart

Tikrit, September 16

US TROOPS lost the hearts and minds of some Iraqis on Tuesday in aggressive pre-dawn house raids in the hometown of Saddam Hussein, blowing open gates, kicking down doors and shoving faces in the dirt.

Ten-year-old Ahmed, herded with the rest of his family into his garden, shook visibly as he watched soldiers interrogate one man, whose head slammed onto the ground with a thud.

"I will become an Iraqi fighter and I will kill Americans," the boy said. He pointed at troops who charged into his home with rifles, sledgehammers and bolt-cutters hunting for anti-American guerrillas. "They are the enemy," he said.

An old, barefoot man was led from his house over shards of glass from a broken picture frame knocked off the wall.

A balding man with a gray beard and dark tunic sat with his hands cuffed behind his back. "Why did you smash the gate down?" he asked the soldiers pointing their weapons at his chest. "I would have let you in."

The US military raids dozens of homes every day in Iraq, trying to stem the flood of mine, grenade and mortar attacks against them by rounding up suspected assailants.

Senior commanders say the

Westerners held for guerrilla attack

US FORCES are holding six people who claim to be Americans and two who say they are British for alleged attacks against coalition troops in Iraq, an American General said on Tuesday. It was the first time the military reported holding Westerners in the attacks.

US Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said he did not have information on these detainees, but that many of those picked up in Iraq have multiple identifications and "it takes a little time to sort these things out".

AP, Abu Ghraib (Iraq)

strategy has helped wrest the initiative from the guerrillas.

But they acknowledge that when innocent Iraqis are caught up in the raids, it deepens distrust of the occupiers and can undermine the goodwill the soldiers generated by projects such as restoring electricity.

While the US said it invaded Iraq to free its people, critics say the war has backfired, inflaming Arab anger at the West and creating fertile ground for recruiting anti-US fighters.

Reuters

Cooperation with IAEA is under review, says Iran ⁵⁹

Teheran: Iran's foreign ministry said on Sunday Teheran was debating whether to continue cooperation with the United Nations' nuclear watchdog which last week gave Iran seven weeks to prove it had no secret atomic weapons programme.

Iran insists it has no nuclear arms ambitions and accuses Washington of seeking a pretext to invade the Islamic Republic as it had its neighbours Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The relevant authorities are discussing it and our decision will be made public in future. We haven't made a concrete decision on how to continue cooperation with the IAEA," an official spokesman said.

The IAEA has accused Teheran of failing to come clean about its nuclear programme. Iran says its nuclear facilities are solely geared to generating electricity. A resolution passed by the IAEA's governing board on Friday called on Iran to clear up lingering doubts by October 31 and suspend all uranium enrichment activities for the time being. The resolution implied that should the IAEA still have concerns about Iran's nuclear activities in November, it could declare Teheran in breach of international obligations and report it to the UN Security Council for possible economic sanctions. Reuters

US 'friendly fire' kills 10 Iraqi securitymen

Fallujah: Ten Iraqi security personnel and a Jordanian guard were killed by US "friendly fire" here early Friday as this flashpoint Sunni region erupted in a frenzy of violence, according to officials and witnesses.

Two American soldiers were killed and 11 wounded in other attacks on Friday in the region west of Baghdad where two Iraqis also died, and a third was hurt after his car failed to stop at a US checkpoint late Thursday.

While violence flared again in and near Fallujah, a move by US forces to crack down on unauthorised armed patrols by Iraqi militia in the central Shiite holy city of Najaf appeared to pass its first major test at the weekly prayers.

No armed militia were seen on the streets of Najaf, but only a few badged security guards, some police and Polish troops, while negotiations continued with an anti-US

militant bent on keeping his forces' weapons.

The "friendly fire" shooting in Fallujah shortly after midnight on Thursday was one of the most serious incidents in the city.

Angry residents gathered outside the governor's office and police headquarters to protest the deaths, which came two days after an Iraqi policeman was killed and another wounded when US troops opened fire in response to a bomb attack.

US military spokespersons would confirm only that one soldier and five "neutrals" had been wounded in the latest shooting in the city that has seen persistent clashes since US-led forces overthrew Mr Saddam Hussein in April.

But Fallujah police chief Qahtan Adnan Hamad said 10 members of the locally created protection force were killed and five Iraqi policemen wounded by US fire. AFP

US rejects European trio's deal on Iraq

United Nations, Sept. 11 (Reuters): France, Germany and Russia have offered the US a deal on Iraq: approving American military leadership but downgrading US civilian control in favour of Iraqis and the UN.

The three nations submitted amendments, circulated yesterday, to a US-drafted Security Council resolution shortly before a weekend foreign ministers meeting in Geneva to see if a compromise can be reached.

However, US secretary of state Colin Powell immediately ridiculed the idea of giving up power quickly during an interview with the Arabic television channel al-Jazeera.

"Suggestions that ... all we have to do is get up tomorrow morning and find an Iraqi who is passing by and give him the government (and) say: 'You're now in charge and ambassador (Paul) Bremer and the American army are leaving,' that's not an acceptable solution," Powell said.

The Bush administration has proposed transforming the occupying armies into a UN-authorized multinational force, with an expanded command centre under US leadership.

Washington's aim is to get troops involved from nations including India, Pakistan, Turkey and Bangladesh, who say they need a UN mandate to participate.



Sergeant Rhonda Gwynn prays during a memorial service at a US army base in Tikrit. (Reuters)

France and Germany made no objection to the force but they want the US and Britain to accelerate the end of the occupation and give Iraqis more authority over civilian life, including oil resources. The Franco-German document, issued separately from milder Russian amendments, calls for the UN endorsement of Iraq's governing council and cabinet as a "trustee of Iraqi sovereignty" until an elected government is established.

It would grant the UN a major

role in advising the council on a timetable, helping draft a constitution leading to elections and initiating a dialogue in the region. The US believes the Iraqi governing council has to determine a timetable leading to elections, in coordination with occupying authorities and the UN.

Russia too approved US military control but says turning over civilian power to Iraqis should happen gradually. Moscow asked Annan to provide a specific timetable for drafting a constitution and holding elections in cooperation with the Iraqi council and in consultation with the occupying powers.

To speed up the process, Annan invited the five permanent members, with veto power, in the 15-nation Security Council to Geneva for talks. The five are Powell and foreign ministers Jack Straw of Britain, Igor Ivanov of Russia, Dominique de Villepin of France and Li Zhaoxing of China.

Germany, which has coordinated its policies with France on Iraq, is not a permanent member and was elected to the council for a two-year term. The US and Britain want a vote before President George W. Bush addresses the UN General Assembly on September 23, but several Security Council members predict negotiations will take longer than that.

Iraqis to get interim govt within days

Baghdad, July 11

REPRESENTATIVES OF the major political, ethnic and religious groups of Iraq will declare the first post-war interim government in Iraq this weekend, Western and Iraqi officials said on Thursday.

After eight weeks of negotiations with the American and British occupation powers, a "governing council" of between 21 and 25 members will be granted extensive executive powers. The new body of Kurds, Shias, Sunnis, Christians and Turkmen will share responsibility for running the country under a UN resolution that will continue to vest Washington and London with ultimate authority until a sovereign government is elected and a new Constitution ratified, the officials said.

There is no clear timetable for a transition to an elected government.

Iraqi political figures who have been involved in negotiations said that the process was speeded by the deteriorating security situation in Iraq and mounting American casualties from daily attacks on allied forces. That had created a sense of urgency within the Bush administration to create a credible Iraqi governing body that could help counter the negative image of foreign occupation that is being exploited by the remnants of Saddam Hussein's forces. L. Paul Bremer, the top US administrator in Iraq, said the council would appoint and supervise a council of ministers that would run the government, send diplomats abroad, establish a new currency, set fiscal and budget policy and, perhaps, take a prominent role in national security.

Troops under fire

Two Iraqis were wounded as attackers fired rocket-propelled



REUTERS

A US soldier watches the road to Baghdad's airport on Friday.

grenades at US troops in Baghdad, and a US base came under its ninth mortar attack in 10 days on Friday.

In the United States and in Britain, its closest military ally in the Iraq war, controversy intensified over the pre-war arguments made by the two governments to their peoples to justify attacking Baghdad.

Touring Africa, President George Bush pointed the finger at the CIA over a false accusation made in the runup to the war that Iraq had tried to buy African uranium.

Troops in Falluja pulled out of one police station and the mayor's office but remained in the town, officers and witnesses said. US soldiers in armoured vehicles patrolled the town centre on Friday morning. A religious leader at one of Falluja's 46 mosques urged people to give US forces six months to finish their mission in the town.

Agencies

Russia rejects US draft on Iraq

Tikrit (Iraq): Defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited American forces in Saddam Hussein's hometown on Friday after France and Germany spurned a US effort to persuade more countries to send troops to Iraq.

The gloomy mood of some soldiers in Tikrit revealed the pressure behind Washington's appeal for more non-American troops in Iraq, where US-led forces have been struggling against a wave of shooting and bomb attacks. "If I got to talk to Rumsfeld I'd tell him to give us a return date," said 40-year-old Sergeant Green, who asked a not to be identified by her first name.

"We've been here six months and the rumour is we'll be here until at least March. This is totally, totally un-called-for."

Mr Rumsfeld has urged allies to send an extra 15,000 troops, but opposition to a draft UN resolution put forward by Washington has been led by the most vociferous opponents of the US-led invasion which toppled Saddam Hussein in April. Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov on Friday joined the leaders of France and Germany in rejecting the draft, saying it "still needs further, very serious work."

Mr Rumsfeld spent two hours with troops at their base at one of Saddam's palaces in Tikrit, north of Baghdad, where this week US soldiers were in a fire-fight with Iraqi guerrillas. He later flew to the northern city of Mosul.

French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard

Schroeder said on Thursday that Washington's draft resolution did not cede power quickly enough to Iraqis or to the United Nations. The proposal would authorise a multinational force to contribute to "the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq."

The US would retain overall military command. It invites Iraq's US-backed Governing Council to provide, in cooperation with the US-led coalition and a UN representative "a timetable and programme for the drafting of a new constitution and...the holding of democratic elections." The draft is a policy reversal for the

Draft hits a snag



- 'Draft does not transfer power quickly enough to Iraq or UN'
- Gunmen spray mosque in Baghdad with bullets during prayers

Bush administration, which had resisted UN involvement after the Security Council's refusal to approve the war. Sixty-seven US and 11 British soldiers have been killed in attacks in Iraq since major combat was declared over on May 1. But after briefings from US civilian and military chiefs on Thursday, Mr Rumsfeld said there had been "measurable progress" in security since the end of the war.

In Baghdad on Friday gunmen sprayed a Sunni Muslim mosque with bullets during dawn prayers, wounding three worshippers. Locals said the attack, in a mainly Shiite area, was intended to foment conflict between Iraq's two Muslim communities. Reuters

Germany, France reject US draft

Associated Press

DRESDEN, Sept. 4. — The leaders of Germany and France said today that a US draft resolution seeking troops and money from all nations to rebuild post-war Iraq does not give the United Nations a large enough role in post-war Iraq and falls far short of the goal of turning over political responsibility to the Iraqi people.

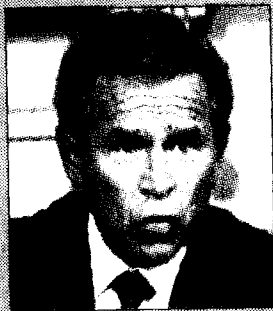
German Chancellor Mr Gerhard Schroeder and French President Mr Jacques Chirac, both ardent opponents of the war in Iraq, said they would coordinate their positions on the US draft resolution, circulated yesterday, and hoped that America would be open to changes. France holds veto power in the UN Security Council.

Both nations are particularly adamant that America cede control of the political process in Iraq. Under the draft, Washington would not give up political or military control.

"We are naturally ready to study it in the most positive manner. But we are quite far removed from what we believe is the priority objective, which is the transfer of political responsibility to an Iraqi government as quickly as possible," Mr Chirac said.

Mr Schroeder said the draft resolution had brought "movement" into

No league of nations just yet



Mr George Bush,
Mr Gerhard Schroeder,
and Mr Jacques Chirac

the diplomacy. But "I agree with the president when he says: Not dynamic enough, not sufficient", he said. The two leaders

discussed Iraq over lunch after touring the Old Masters gallery at Dresden's 18th-century Zwinger palace — reopened after being partly swamped by floods last year.

Russia sent its first signal today that it was edging closer to Washington in efforts to rebuild Iraq, adds a report from Moscow. Defence minister Mr Sergei Ivanov reportedly said Moscow may send peacekeepers to Iraq as part of an international force.

"It all depends on a specific resolution. I wouldn't exclude it outright," Mr Ivanov told *Interfax* when asked if Moscow can contribute peacekeepers. Reaching out to the international community to help restore security in Iraq, the Bush administration yesterday offered the UN a bigger role in Iraq's security, political transition and reconstruction. But whether it is big enough to satisfy members of the UN Security Council remains to be seen.

Mr Colin Powell, who outlined the US proposal at a news conference, however, made it clear that "the United States will continue to play a dominant role" both politically and militarily. An American commander will take charge of the multinational force and US civilian administrator L Paul Bremer will keep the top political post, he said.

5 SEP 2003

Wary Iran recalls UK envoy

F.A. 419

Tehran, Sept. 3 (Reuters): Iran's ambassador to London has returned to Tehran for consultations but ties have not been downgraded, British and Iranian officials said today, amid a dispute over Britain's arrest of an Iranian diplomat.

Iran has said the case of Hadi Soleimanpour, a former Iranian ambassador arrested in Britain in connection with the 1994 bombing of a Jewish centre, was politically motivated. Britain denies the charge, saying its courts are independent.

Adding to tensions, gunshots apparently fired from a passing motorbike hit the British embassy in Tehran today, causing no injuries but prompting the mission to shut temporarily. Iran said it was investigating the "irresponsible act".

Tehran not keen on downgrading strained ties with Britain

Analysts have said Iran may be wary of downgrading ties with Britain in case it prompts a response from other European Union members when Iran is facing mounting international pressure for tougher inspections of its nuclear programme.

European Union diplomats in Tehran said they were seeking to defuse tensions in contacts with Iranian officials. "We understand the Iranian ambassador has returned to Tehran, but this is not a downgrading of relations," a British foreign office spokesman said in London. Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza

wounded some 200. Soleimanpour, who was Iran's ambassador to Argentina at the time of the bombing and who is in custody at Argentina's request, has protested his innocence.

He was denied bail for the second time on Friday by a British court. The Iranian government and his parents had offered a combined guarantee of £700,000 that he would not flee the country. Iran has said the case has no legal basis and called for Soleimanpour's immediate release. It has promised "strong action" and warned Britain the issue would harm bilateral ties.

Hardline Iranian newspapers have called for Britain's ambassador to Tehran to be expelled. Iran has already cut economic and cultural ties with Argentina.

H. 419

Pressure on Iran over n-issue

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, SEPT. 1. Pressure on Iran to close its suspected nuclear weapons programme is mounting with the European Union and Japan threatening to use their considerable economic leverage against Teheran.

The E.U. Foreign Minister, Javier Solana, who was in Iran recently, gave a blunt message that Teheran's trade relations with the grouping would suffer, unless it unconditionally opened up all its suspected nuclear weapon manufacturing facilities to international inspections.

Specifically, the E.U. wants Iran to allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the global nuclear umpire, to inspect its facilities unannounced. This can be achieved if Iran, a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, signs an additional protocol to the treaty. Demands on Iran to sign the additional protocol have also come from pow-

erful individual E.U. members.

The German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, has appealed to Iran to cooperate with the U.N. atomic energy authorities by giving a full account of its nuclear programme.

France also urged Iran to sign the additional protocol to allay apprehensions about its nuclear programme.

While Iran has stated that it would not yield to international pressure over its nuclear programme, which it insists is not weapon-oriented, analysts said Teheran would find it hard to brush aside the mounting pressure from the E.U.

With the U.S. snapping ties with Iran, the E.U. has emerged as Iran's biggest trading partner. E.U. countries are also major investors in Iran's crucial oil sector.

Japan also appears to have intensified pressure on Iran. Japan, which at one time was moving ahead to invest in Iran's giant on-shore Azadegan oil field, now appears to be back-

tracking. In fact, Iran's Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi, who visited Japan recently, was quoted by the Kyodo News Agency as telling the Japanese Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry, that Tokyo should invest in the Azadegan oil field for ensuring a stable energy supply.

Iran finds the development of the oil field crucial for its future economic well-being. Coinciding with the demands by major industrialised countries, Iran has found itself directly in the IAEA's firing line.

In an interview to the BBC, the IAEA chief, Mohammad ElBaradei, said Iran should have been more transparent about its nuclear programme. Asked if he believed Iran was running a secret weapons programme, Mr. ElBaradei said: "It might be, it might not be." In preparing to engage the IAEA, Iran has to cross a major hurdle on Sept. 8 when the 35-member IAEA board of governors convenes to consider its case.

THE HINDU

2 SEP 2003

Baghdad pours out for Hakim funeral

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, AUGUST 31

MORE than 300,000 outraged mourners began a funeral march on Sunday in Baghdad for a cherished Shiite Muslim leader who was killed in a car bombing in Najaf that killed at least 85 people. Their journey is expected to last two days as they walk more than 112 miles from Baghdad to Najaf.

The faithful beat their chests and called for vengeance as they slowly followed a flatbed truck carrying a symbolic coffin for Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer Al-Hakim, a moderate cleric and opponent of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein. Authorities said they could only find Ayatollah Hakim's hand, with a watch, a wedding band and a pen. "Our revenge will be severe on the killers," read one of the banners. Red and white roses were laid on the coffin and a large portrait was placed at its front.

The Iraqi police handling the investigation into Friday's bombing say they have arrested 19 men — many of them foreigners and all with admitted links to Al Qaeda — in connection with the explosion. *The Daily Times* reported the arrested people include two Pakistanis.

However, many Shiites blame the cleric's death on Hussein loyalists and the US-led coalition, which, they say, has failed to provide adequate security. "Saddam and Bush will not humiliate us," read another banner.

The procession began at the Al Kadhimiyyah Shrine, one of Baghdad's most sacred Shiite sites, and is expected to grow as it moves southward, stopping at holy sites in Karbala before arriving at the blast site, Najaf's Imam Ali Shrine, for the funeral on Tuesday. Police detained two Iraqis and two Saudis shortly after the attack and they provided information leading to arrest of 15 other suspects, said the official.

They include two Kuwaitis and six Palestinians with Jordanian passports. The rest are Iraqis and Saudis, the Najaf official said.

Initial information shows the foreigners entered Iraq from Kuwait, Syria and Jordan, the official said, adding that they belong to the Wahabi sect of Sunni Islam. "They are all connected to Al Qaeda," the official said.

Hakim had returned in May from exile in Iran. He had urged unity among factions. Meanwhile, a Shiite cleric suspended his membership in the US-chosen Iraqi interim Governing Council, citing a lack of security.



Al-Hakim's funeral in Baghdad on Sunday. Reuters

Slain cleric slammed US policy: Daily

REUTERS
CAIRO, AUGUST 31

SPEAKING a day before he was killed by a car bomb in Iraq last week, an Iraqi Shiite Muslim cleric criticised US forces for failing to prevent another bombing in the holy city of Najaf, an Egyptian paper reported.

In an interview published in Egypt's semi-official *Al-Ahram* newspaper on Sunday, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer Al-Hakim said Iraq's US-led administration had failed to heed warnings of an attack on Ayatollah Mohammed Saeed Al-Hakim, another Shiite cleric, who was hurt in a bomb attack on August 24.

"They (the Americans) carry a large part of the responsibility because of their shortcomings in the realm of security and in protecting the holy places," Hakim said, blaming supporters of ousted Iraqi president Saddam Hussein for the attack.

Hakim said: "There are circles working to create an inter-Shiite conflict... These type of forces are trying to hurl the Shiites into conflict."

'US, Iraqis discuss joint militia'

REUTERS
NEW YORK, AUGUST 31

US and Iraqi officials said on Saturday they were discussing forming a large Iraqi paramilitary force to help stabilise security in Iraq, *The New York Times* reported in Sunday editions. Speaking a day after a deadly car bombing in the holy city of Najaf that killed at least 95 people, the officials said such a force could consist of thousands of Iraqis already screened by Iraq's political parties for any affiliations with Saddam Hussein's government, the *Times* reported. Some Iraqi officials said the militia could take control of Iraqi cities from US forces, and that a force of several thousand men, most with experience, could be ready in just over a month's time. Mukhtar Shokhat, a prominent exile who took part in discussions on Saturday, said that "the situation

has changed, and there is a new receptiveness to the idea".

"Efforts to provide security in this country should be unified and they should be recognised as Iraqi security forces, and not belonging to individual groups or parties," said Charles Heatley, a spokesman for the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Several Iraqi leaders had said they had lost confidence in the ability of US troops to protect them.

Detained men reveal more plots to kill leaders

NAJAF (IRAQ), AUG. 30. Iraqi police have arrested four men — including two Saudis — in connection with the bombing of Iraq's most holy Shiite Muslim shrine, and all the four have connections with the Al-Qaeda terror network, sources said on Saturday.

The Qatar-based *Al-Jazeera* television channel reported that up to 19 suspects had been detained in connection with the blast. The toll in the bombing rose to 107 on Saturday.

It quoted Iraqi police sources in Najaf as saying that the suspects were non-Iraqi Arabs from different countries, without giving specific details.

The four men — two Iraqis and two Saudis — were caught shortly after the car bombing that also killed one of the most important Shia clerics in Iraq. The dead cleric, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, had been cooperating with the American occupation force, a police official said.

On interrogation, the arrested persons told of other plots to kill political and religious leaders and to damage vital installations such as oil refineries, power generation plants, water supply and oil pipelines.

The police official, who refused to be named, said the bomb at the Imam Ali shrine — the burial place of the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad — was made from the same type of materials used in the Aug. 19 bombing at the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad, in which at least 23 persons died, and the Jordanian embassy attack on Aug. 7 which claimed 19 lives.

The FBI said the bomb, in all cases, was constructed from the ordnance left over from the regime of Saddam Hussein, with much of it produced in the former Soviet Union.

The four men arrived in Najaf three days before the Friday bombing and were staying with a friend, who did not know their intentions, the official said.

A shadowy group that takes its name from the alias of Mohammed Atef, Osama's top

deputy, who was killed in a U.S. air strike in Afghanistan in November 2001, claimed responsibility for the U.N. bombing.

Not long after the U.N. bombing, the Abu Hafs el-Masri Brigades — one of three groups to claim responsibility — made its claim on a web site, but U.S. officials said they could not authenticate it and it remained unclear if the group exists or has any link to the Al-Qaeda terror network.

American officials believe militants from Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran are infiltrating Iraq to attack Western interests. The Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Nayef, dismissed as 'baseless' allegations that Saudis infiltrated to Iraq to join the fight against coalition forces.

"These allegations are totally baseless and we know nothing about any Saudi individual entering Iraq through our borders," he was quoted as saying in an interview with the London-based *Al-Hayat* published on Saturday.

According to the paper, Prince Nayef requested the extradition of anyone who has been proved to be a Saudi national that infiltrated to Iraq, to Saudi authorities.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, thousands of angry mourners called for vengeance as they gathered outside the Imam Ali shrine.

"Our leader al-Hakim is gone. We want the blood of the killers of al-Hakim," a crowd of 4,000 men beating their chests chanted in unison in Najaf.

No Iraqi police or U.S. soldiers were seen in the city centre on Saturday morning.

In Baghdad, a member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution said the bombing would not deter the organisation from cooperating with the Americans.

"We will continue in our dealing with the Americans, but the Americans should now be more aware of the fact that the Iraqis only are capable of preserving the security in the country," Ali al-Ghadban, a member of the SCIRI politburo, said. — AP

Hakim's killing may alter Iraqi equations

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, AUG. 30 The car bombing in Najaf, in which a leading Shia cleric along with 84 other people were killed on Friday is expected to have widespread repercussions inside Iraq and beyond. The explosion, which killed Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir Al Hakim, took place outside the Imam Ali mosque, where worshippers had gathered for Friday prayers. The Imam Ali mosque is one of the holiest Shia shrines in the world, where Prophet Mohammad's son-in-law, Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib lies buried.

The incident has therefore sent shock waves across the Islamic world, and has drawn instant condemnation across the globe.

The blast in Najaf is likely to have a significant bearing on the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq. Whoever might be responsible for Friday's carnage, it is likely to intensify the pressure on U.S. forces to withdraw from Iraq. While loyalists of the former Iraqi President are under the scanner as possible suspects, the incident has brought the U.S. occupation in Iraq into sharper focus.

Mohsen Hakim, the nephew of the late Ayatollah said soon after Friday's attack that pro-Saddam loyalists were "prime suspects" for the blast, but added that, "the responsibility to provide security in Iraq

rests with the occupying forces. Unfortunately, we've seen no progress in establishing security in Iraq." Shia Imam Moqtada Sadr, an influential cleric in Najaf, soon after the attack described the U.S. as the foremost enemy in post-war Iraq.

"The Americans are not defending the people and they are not letting us bring security. That's why they are our first enemy." Among the responses emerging from the region, the reaction from Iran spells bad news for the U.S. presence in Iraq.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei pinned ultimate responsibility for the Najaf killings on the U.S. occupation. "The Islamic Republic condemns this blind action and places direct responsibility on the occupation forces that, under international law, are responsible for the maintenance of security in Iraq", he said. Iran's disposition towards the incident is particularly important because its word carries significant weight both inside Iraq and across the Shia horizon in general.

The holy city of Qom in Iran is a major international seat of Shia learning and Tehran's linkages with Shias across the globe are well known. In fact, the widely respected late Ayatollah Baqir al-Hakim had himself spent nearly 20 years in Iran to escape persecution in Iraq, and had only returned to Najaf from exile after the exit of the Sad-

dam Hussein regime from Baghdad.

The incident on Friday also threatens to drive a sectarian wedge between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq, as the core leaders as well as loyalists of Mr. Hussein's regime are widely perceived to be drawn from the Sunni triangle in the centre of Iraq.

Consequently, the perception that the former regime's Sunni loyalists could mastermind Friday's attack targeting Shia worshippers can be explosive and potentially destabilising.

Not surprisingly, some prominent Shia leaders in the region have shown activism to avert such a possibility.

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the Lebanon based Hezbollah—a Shia militant group close to Iran, observed after the tragedy on Friday that, "the unity of the Iraqi people and its determination to save its oppressed and occupying country will disappoint the hopes of the killers, the criminals and the traitors."

Ayatollah Khamenei also exhorted the Iraqi people to "unite under the banner of Islam" and, "protect themselves from the plans of Zionists (Israelis) and oppressors." The assassination of Ayatollah Hakim has also brought the possibility of a power struggle in Najaf into prominence. There have been reports in the past of tensions existing within Shia leadership groups.

3 1 AUG 2003

75 killed in blast outside Iraqi mosque

NAJAF, IRAQ, AUG. 29. A massive car bomb blast at Iraq's holiest Shia mosque on Friday killed over 75 people, including one of the country's most important Muslim clerics, and left about 140 injured.

The bomb went off outside the Imam Ali mosque as thousands were pouring out after noon prayers. Hours after the blast there was still pandemonium as people screamed in the streets in grief and anger, and searched through the rubble for more victims.

A group of men and women were pressing their hands and cheeks against the doors of the shrine, which had been closed after the blast.

Among the 75 killed was Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim (in picture), who had just delivered a sermon calling for Iraqi unity and seeking



Arab help to rebuild the country, witnesses told The Associated Press.

Some mosaic tiles were blown off the shrine and a crater about three and a half wide

was blasted out of the street at the front of the mosque. Cars near the blast were twisted hunks of metal. Nearby shops were piles of smoldering rubble.

"I saw Al-Hakim walk out of the shrine after his sermon and moments later there was a massive explosion. There were many dead bodies," said Abdul Amir Jassem, a 40-year-old merchant who was in the mosque. "He was praying for Iraqi unity."

"Even the Americans didn't bomb us like this," screamed one woman through her tears.

About 1,000 Al-Hakim followers demonstrated in front of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution headquarters in Sadr City. Some sat weeping on the ground; others shouted for revenge. "We will not forget our Ayatollah Baqir al-Hakim,"

they chanted. One protester fired a pistol in the air and urged the crowd to search for the Saddam supporters and foreign fighters that he claimed

INSIDE

Saddam supporters behind attack: Page 13

The blast and its aftermath: a photo feature on Page 18

were responsible for the carnage in Najaf.

Al-Hakim was the spiritual and top leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and had divided his time since the end of the war between Tehran and Najaf, the holiest Shia Muslim city in Iraq.

The leader of the Iraqi National Congress and Governing Council Member, Ahmad Cha-

labi, blamed the attack on the same group that carried out the August 19 suicide truck bombing at the U.N. headquarters in Iraq that killed at least 23 people and injured more than 100. However, he offered no evidence to support his claim.

The Najaf attack comes less than a week after a bomb exploded outside the house another of Iraq's leading Shia clerics, killing three guards and injuring 10 others, including family members.

The cleric suffered only minor injuries.

A gas cylinder was placed outside the home of Mohammed Saeed al-Hakim in Najaf.

It exploded just after noon prayers on August 24. Mohammed Saeed al-Hakim is related to the ayatollah who was killed today's attack. — AP

AP PHOTO

30 AUG 2003

PA freezes funds of Islamic charity

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Aug. 28. — The Palestinian Authority has frozen 39 bank accounts of nine Islamic charities in what appeared to be part of a US-sought crackdown on Palestinian militants.

The order to shut down the bank accounts was issued by the Palestinian Monetary Authority on Sunday, and came to light today, when hundreds of Palestinians relying on welfare payments from charities tried to pick up their monthly support checks at banks in Gaza City. They were told by banks they would not receive the money because the accounts have been frozen.

Officials in the Palestinian Monetary Authority declined comment.

Mr Dore Gold, an Israeli government spokesman, welcomed the freezing of funds. "There have been charities that Israel has suspected of being front organisations for Hamas," he said. "Anything that serves this need

(of stopping the flow of money) is a positive development."

The Palestinian Authority has been under US pressure to take action against militants, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, after they formally abandoned a unilateral truce last week.

Despite US prodding, the Palestinian government has been reluctant to arrest the militants and seize their weapons, because of concern about triggering unrest and because of wrangling between Mr Yasser Arafat and his Prime Minister, Mr Mahmud Abbas, over control of the security forces.

Israel, Hamas reject Arafat's truce plea

Israel today dismissed an appeal by Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat for hardline groups to sign up again to a truce which they broke off last week, AFP adds from Jerusalem.

"The appeal by Mr Arafat is totally irrelevant. What he says has no interest for us as during the so-called ceasefire he was

pushing the terrorist organisations to carry out attacks against Israel," an Israeli government spokesman said. "He is not a partner for peace. He wants to weaken (Palestinian Prime Minister) Mr Mahmud Abbas and harm Md Dahlan (Palestinian security minister)."

In Gaza, Hamas also rejected the appeal by Mr Arafat to renew the truce.

"Hamas rejects the appeal as the Zionist occupation has torpedoed the truce with their assassinations of women, children and Palestinian political leaders," Hamas political leader Mr Abdelaziz Rantissi said.

Yesterday Mr Arafat had said a renewal of the truce would "give a chance to all peaceful international efforts for the implementation of the road-map", in reference to a US-backed peace plan.

The radical Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements called off a seven-week-old truce last week after the assassination of Hamas co-founder Ismail Abu Shanaf in an Israeli air strike.

THE STATESMAN

29 AUG 2003

IRAQ / THREE GUARDS KILLED

① *W. Azim* **Shia leader** *H10-4*
hurt in blast *25/8*

BAGHDAD, AUG. 24. Terrorists detonated a bomb outside the house of one of the most important Muslim Shia clerics in Iraq on Sunday, killing three guards and injuring 10 others, including family members.

The bomb, a gas cylinder wired to explode, was placed along the outside wall of the home of Mohammed Saeed al-Hakim, who suffered scratches on his neck, according to Abdel-Aziz al-Hakim, a member of Iraq's U.S.-picked Governing Council and leader of what was the armed wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq — headquartered in Iran before the war.

The bomb exploded after the noon prayers in the holy city of Najaf.

Iraqi newspapers had reported last week that Ayatollah Al-Hakim had received threats to his life.

He had also been among a group of three top Shia leaders who were threatened with death by a rival Shia cleric shortly after Saddam Hussein was toppled on April 9.

"Obviously, terrorist groups who belong to the former regime are behind this incident," Mr. Hakim said.

He said Najaf residents rushed to the ayatollah's house after the explosion, which shattered windows and damaged a wall.

Meanwhile, Iraqis with ties to Mr. Hussein's once-feared Mukhabarat intelligence agency

said U.S. coalition authorities began a quiet recruitment of former agents to work with American intelligence officials in Iraq.

The Iraqis, who refused to be named, said the former agents would work with Americans inside Mr. Hussein's former presidential palace where the American-led coalition has its headquarters.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military on Sunday said two of its soldiers died in non-combat incidents.

A soldier from the 3rd Armoured Cavalry Regiment in Baghdad was killed in a friendly fire incident on Saturday, while a second soldier from the same regiment drowned in the Euphrates river, west of Ramadi, also on Saturday.

At the battered Canal Hotel compound, the United Nations Baghdad headquarters, U.N. workers who had not left Iraq after Tuesday's attack, resumed work in a cluster of tents set up in the compound.

General captured

The U.S. army's 4th Infantry Division on Sunday captured a former Iraqi General who served under Mr. Hussein, during a raid north of Baghdad in the past 24 hours.

The army described the General as "a high-valued target ... suspected of helping former regime loyalists help carry out attacks on coalition forces". — AFP

THE FINISH

25 AUG 2003

Bremer concedes setbacks on civic front

WADANI
9/27/02

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BAGHDAD, AUG. 23. Three British soldiers were killed on Saturday during a guerilla attack in the southern Iraqi port city of Basra and one was seriously wounded.

To the north, American forces reported killing two Iraqi Turkomen who opened fire when the U.S. soldiers arrived to put down an ethnic clash in the city of Tuz Kharmato.

Also on Saturday, the American administrator for Iraq said that acts of terrorism and sabotage were only hurting the Iraqi people and would not slow the U.S.-led effort to rebuild the country, shattered by years of war and 13 years of U.N. sanctions.

L. Paul Bremer also spoke of reports that he and the Governing Council he established as an interim government were increasingly at odds.

He said there was concern over the coalition's inability to fully restore electricity service.

"They share our frustration with not being able to restore essential services to pre-war levels," Mr. Bremer said, noting the coalition had set an end-of-September goal for getting the lights back on permanently.

Mr. Bremer also said he had encouraged the 25-member Governing Council to reach out to the Iraqi people to join in the reconstruction and security of Iraq.

"We have never hidden the fact that we have security problems in Iraq," he told a news conference.

In Baghdad, meanwhile, some U.N. staff returned to work in tents set up at the battered Canal Hotel compound. Investigators and soldiers

searched piles of debris there for human remains and clues in the deadly suicide truck bombing on Tuesday that killed at least 23 people, including the top U.N. envoy, Sergio Vieira de Mello.

The British military said a two-vehicle convoy was attacked by a group of gunmen in a pickup truck as the soldiers were travelling through the centre of Basra on a routine patrol at 8:30 a.m.

As of Saturday, 273 U.S. soldiers have died since the beginning of the military operations in Iraq, according to the military.

The British government has reported 48 deaths. Denmark's military has reported one death.

On or since May 1, when the U.S. President, George W. Bush, declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 135 U.S. soldiers have died in Iraq, according to the latest military figures. Counting only combat deaths, 65 Americans and 11 Britons have died since the Bush declaration.

In Tuz Kharmato, 180 km north of Baghdad, U.S. soldiers killed the two Turkomen tribesmen and wounded two others after the Americans were fired on when they arrived to put down the outbreak of ethnic fighting on Friday, said a U.S. military spokeswoman. She said it was the first outbreak of ethnic conflict in the region since May.

There were unconfirmed reports that deadly clashes between the Turkomen and Kurds erupted after minority Kurds allegedly destroyed a newly reopened Turkomen Islamic shrine. — AP

IRAQ BLAST SUSPICION FALLS ON GUARDS

UN to evacuate expatriates

Amman Press Press

AMMAN, Aug. 22. — The UN expects to have withdrawn as much as half of its expatriate staff from Iraq by the weekend as the evacuation of employees following this week's truck bombing of its Baghdad headquarters proceeds in earnest.

"We are reducing drastically at the moment," UN Coordinator in Jordan Ms Christine McNab told an Amman press conference, adding that "30 to 50 per cent" of foreign staff were expected to be out of Baghdad by the weekend.

Ms McNab stressed that the world body had no intention of abandoning Iraq and even had a "small number of key staff ... flying into Iraq to support the heads of offices in Baghdad".

"We are not withdrawing from Baghdad. We will keep a core team there. They will be doing humanitarian and reconstruction work and they will also continue their work to help build up the new administration of Iraq." She said a top priority remained the evacuation of casualties from Tuesday's bombing.

In another development, US investigators looking

Blair to face Hutton on Thursday

LONDON, Aug. 22. — Mr Tony Blair is scheduled to give evidence next Thursday to Lord Hutton's inquiry into the death of David Kelly. A day earlier, defence secretary Mr Geoff Hoon will give evidence.

On Thursday, the Prime Minister will be followed by Mr Gavyn Davies, the BBC chairman, and Mr Tom Mangold, a journalist friend of Kelly. Members of Kelly's family will appear the following Monday and on Tuesday, (2 September). — PTI

into the suicide bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad were focusing on the possibility that the attackers were assisted by Iraqi security guards who worked there, a senior American official was today quoted as saying.

In a report from Baghdad, the *New York Times* quoted the official as saying all of the guards at the compound were agents of the Iraqi secret service.

The UN continued to

employ them after the war was over, the official said, adding when investigators began questioning the guards, two of them asserted that they were entitled to "diplomatic immunity" and refused to cooperate.

In another development, two US soldiers were killed in separate incidents in Iraq, one in Baghdad and the other near Hilla, south of the capital, a military spokeswoman said today.

Late today, the body of top UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello was flown out of Baghdad today as the debate intensified over responsibility for a security breach that led to the bombing that claimed his life and at least 23 others.

A Brazilian airforce jet carrying Vieira de Mello's body took off from Baghdad airport bound for Geneva. Mourners, including US civil administrator for Iraq Mr Paul Bremer and members of the US-appointed Iraqi governing council, had earlier paid their last respects to the diplomat.

"We will not be deterred by any act of terrorism. The rebuilding of Iraq by Iraqi people will go on. It's not going to be stopped by this act or any such act," Mr Bremer told the mourners.

23 AUG 2003

THE STATESMAN

Saddam's Chemical Ali captured ^{22/8}

Tampa (Florida), Aug. 21 (Reuters): Ali Hassan al-Majid, a feared cousin of Saddam Hussein nicknamed "Chemical Ali" for his use of poison gas in attacks, has been captured by US forces in Iraq, the US military said today.

"We do have him and he was captured alive," US central command spokesman Lt Ryan Fitzgerald said. Fitzgerald said no details were available on the arrest, where it took place, or whether Majid was injured.

Majid was number five on a US list of the 55 most-wanted Iraqis and the "king of spades" in a US army deck of cards depicting fugitive members of Saddam's government.

Majid's detention comes after the arrest this week of former Iraqi vice-president Taha Yassin Ramadan in Mosul, the northern Iraqi city where Saddam's two sons were killed last month by US troops.

"Coalition forces will continue to work at apprehending former members of Saddam Hussein's regime," said US central command.

US and British officials targeted Majid in early April in a bomb attack in Basra. British military officials said at the time they believed they had recovered his body.

But a nurse in Baghdad days later said he was in a hospital there joking with staff before making his escape.

Fitzgerald said Majid's house was attacked in Basra in early April on the belief he was there.

"Obviously he was not there and if he was, he survived the attack," said Fitzgerald.

Majid was a ruthless member of Saddam's clan who played a leading role in the violent suppression of Iraq's Kurdish and Shia rebels and the seven-month occupation of Kuwait that began in 1990. He was best known for leading the "Anfal" (spoils of war) campaign against Kurdish rebels who took advantage of Iraq's 1980-88 war with Iran to step up their long campaign for autonomy in their northern heartlands.

Halabja gassing

Human rights groups say Majid's scorched earth policy led to the murder or disappearance of some 100,000 Kurds and the forced removal of many more. Hundreds of Kurdish villages and communities were destroyed. In a single attack, some 5,000 men, women and children were killed in Halabja in March 1988, when government forces bombed and shelled the town with gas.

US forces also said today they had arrested a senior Iraqi guerrilla commander after stopping him at a checkpoint near the restive town of Baquba, north-east of Baghdad.

Gen. Rashid Mohammad, a commander of the Fedayeen guerrilla force that had a key role during Saddam Hussein's rule and has been blamed for many attacks on US troops, was seized yesterday, Lt Col William Adamson said from Iraq.

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DEVASTATING STRIKE IN BAGHDAD

THE SUICIDE ATTACK on the headquarters of the United Nations in Baghdad is a big blow to the attempts of the United States to induct the U.N. in some kind of legitimising role for the occupation. No terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the attack that tragically killed at least 24 people, including the Secretary-General's special representative, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and injured more than 100 by ramming an explosive-laden truck into the building from which the U.N. functioned. The complex modalities of the attack appear to rule out the possibility that it was the handiwork of a lone marauder who had a real or imagined grievance with the U.N. Suspicion centres on two possible sources of inspiration: the remnants of the toppled Ba'ath party regime and fundamentalist groups that have flocked into Iraq. A U.N. facility, which was not seriously guarded by troops or armour, was a more vulnerable target than the heavily armed elements of the occupying forces. The Ba'ath regime worked with the U.N. till the end and it is unlikely that those who now lead the party have forgotten the utility of that relationship. If an extremist group inspired by religion scripted the suicide bomb attack, then the challenge posed by fundamentalist terrorism is even greater than has been suggested thus far.

Although the U.N. is far from perfect, either in its efficacy or impartiality, it does retain the role of an arbitrator of last resort on the international stage. Even the Al-Qaeda has thus far refrained from targeting the U.N. By accord- ing a measure of protection to a soft target until now, the forces of global terror seemed to leave open the possibility that they could pull back from the brink. With this attack in Baghdad, the bombers have conveyed the message that they will wage war against the most powerful ad-

versaries, come what may, until their millennial dreams are realised. While adequate protection must be extended to the U.N. and other supposedly non-partisan multilateral institutions so that they can perform their humanitarian and — eventually — reconstruction tasks, these institutions must also realise that there are high risks involved in having any kind of truck with international lawlessness and gross violations of national independence and sovereignty of the kind that have taken place in Iraq.

Even as the international community persists with its campaign against global terror, it must not gloss over the character and ground realities of the situation in Iraq. The Bush administration, which finds itself in a quagmire, is only too eager to blur the distinction between Iraqi nationalists and transnational terrorists, with George Bush simultaneously blaming "terrorists and the remnants of the brutal regime." Washington tried to enlist support for its invasion of Iraq by portraying the enterprise as part of a new campaign against global terror. The attack in Baghdad provides the U.S. with another opportunity to re-fabricate the connection and woo allies on this basis. India, like other countries pressured to contribute troops in support of the occupation, must not fall into the trap. It is unjust as well as dangerous to participate, even under some kind of U.N. umbrella, in any kind of 'peace-keeping' role in occupied Iraq. The Iraqi people have every right to resist the military occupation and neo-colonialist exploitation of their country. They have not forfeited this right because some fundamentalist groups see opportunities to strike in a volatile situation. Terrorism is not nationalism but, as the Baghdad attack has demonstrated, fundamentalism thrives where national honour and feelings are trampled on.

THE HINDU

21 AUG 2003

UN vows to stay on in Iraq

Baghdad, August 20

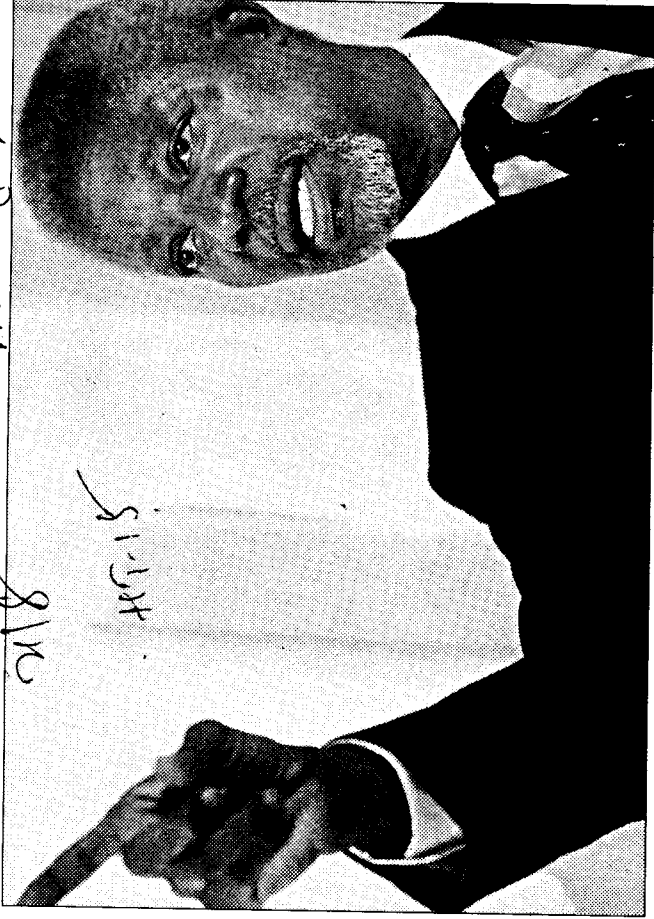
FBI AGENTS led the search for clues in the rubble of a bombed UN compound in Baghdad on Wednesday while UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the attack would not drive the world body out of the country.

UN workers were told to stay at home after a cement truck packed with explosives blew up outside the offices of the top UN envoy in Iraq on Tuesday. The attack killed the envoy, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and 19 others, and wounded at least 100 people.

L. Paul Bremer, the top civilian administrator in Iraq, on Wednesday said it has not been determined yet if it was a suicide attack and that he does not believe the bombing is connected to acts of sabotage on an oil pipeline and on Baghdad's water supply.

"My own view, these are probably not yet connected," Bremer told ABC's *Good Morning America*. "They appear to be the acts of at least disciplined people. Whether they're centrally coordinated has not yet been shown."

But Bremer said the US believes that over 100 foreign terrorists are in Iraq. Some used passports and travel



AFP
GRIT: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at a news conference in Stockholm on Wednesday.

documents from Syria, Sudan and Yemen, he said.

Annan said he was to meet the Security Council later in the day to discuss security arrangements for UN workers in Iraq.

"We will persevere. We will continue. It is essential work," Annan said at a news conference in Stockholm, Sweden, where he stopped briefly before head-

ing to UN headquarters in New York. "We will not be intimidated."

Annan said the United Nations plans to re-evaluate its security measures.

In Britain, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said he had spoken to Secretary of State Colin Powell about giving the UN a bigger role following the attack.

After an all-night effort

mourning for those who died, council member Ahmed Chalabi told reporters. The council also promised to dedicate a monument to Vieira de Mello, he added.

Council members said they believed the bombing was the work of Saddam Hussein's loyalists with the help of militants from outside Iraq.

"There are so many people who are still missing," said Veronique Taveau, a spokeswoman for the UN humanitarian coordinator.

Fifteen bodies in white bags were counted by a UN worker at the hotel. Hospital sources said five others had also died.

A Spanish naval captain died on Wednesday of injuries sustained in Tuesday's blast, diplomats said.

Captain Manuel Martin Oar had initially been reported to have suffered arm injuries but foreign ministry sources said he also received head injuries and died from cerebral trauma in Baghdad on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, guerrillas ambushed US troops in Tikrit, killing a contractor and injuring two soldiers, Major Bryan Luke said. Assault rifles were fired at a three-vehicle convoy near a market, he said.

Agencies

WB, IMF to move out; UN undeterred



Suspicion points to Saddam loyalists

The Times, London

LONDON, Aug. 20. — Militant Islamic groups and loyalists of Mr Saddam Hussein last night headed the list of suspects who may have been responsible for the devastating attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

Even as survivors were being pulled from the rubble, US investigators were piecing together witness accounts of the bombing and searching for forensic evidence in the remains of the Canal Hotel.

While the UN may be regarded the world over as a symbol of peace and neutrality, in Iraq it has a far more controversial image. For much of the past decade the UN supervised the sanctions regime against Iraq and organised the search for Mr Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction.

And the choice of the organisation's headquarters for the bombing yesterday was probably more a practical decision. By the standards of most foreign institutions operating in Baghdad, the UN building was poorly defended and, by its nature, had to be open to visiting Iraqis.

A man holds his daughter outside the Ibn al-Kaff hospital in Baghdad on Wednesday. The girl was injured in Tuesday's explosion at the UN headquarters in the Iraqi capital. (Right) Mr Kofi Annan tells reporters in Stockholm on Wednesday that the UN planned to carry on its work in Iraq despite the attack. — AFP

AFP & PTI

UNHQ/STOCKHOLM/BAGHDAD, Aug. 20. — The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund today informed the US Treasury Department that they were pulling their staff out of Iraq, but the UN remained firm that it would stay and continue work in the country.

"It's disappointing considering that all international organisations should be strengthening their resolve to fight terror after this bombing," a US official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The IMF and the World

Bank are key players in efforts by the US-led coalition now running Iraq to rebuild the country's devastated economy. Both institutions are expected to provide billions of dollars in loans to help restart the country's banking system and get the economy functioning again, and had sent assessment teams to Iraq to start the process.

The UN, however, will continue its work in Iraq, despite the devastating attack at the world body's headquarters in Baghdad, UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan said today.

Speaking to reporters at Stockholm airport shortly before he was due to

board a flight to New York, the UN chief said: "We will carry on our man-

India expresses shock

NEW DELHI, Aug. 20. — India today condemned as "outrageous" the "reprehensible act of terrorism" that killed the UN's special representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and 23 others.

In a letter to Mr Kofi Annan, foreign minister Mr Yashwant Sinha said: "No words can be strong enough in condemning the reprehensible act of terrorism that took away the lives of several dedicated UN personnel... India joins nations in reiterating that such mindless acts cannot undermine the determination of the international community to further intensify efforts through the UN to help the people of Iraq." — SNS

date that has been given to us by the Security Council," he said. Mr Annan said the Security Council

would meet later today to there could be no question of pulling out of Iraq. "We

will not be deterred or distracted by this senseless act of terrorism," he said.

The UN chief said it was

difficult to prevent such an attack, but added that the responsibility for security lay with the coalition powers. "The occupying power is responsible for law and order and the security of the country," he said. "But when you have this kind of terrorist attack you never know where it is going to come from."

In Baghdad, an official said the UN has decided not to remove its staff from Baghdad and will evacuate to Jordan only those wounded or in a state of shock. The official said most UN staff eligible for holidays have waived their rights to take time off after Tuesday's devastating explosion

at the Canal Hotel.

A total of 16 bodies have been recovered from the bombed-out headquarters in Baghdad, but more are believed to remain buried in the rubble, a UN official said today.

Of those recovered, only seven have been positively identified, Mr Fred Eckhard, Mr Annan's spokesman, told reporters in New York.

"There are people missing. We don't know how many," Mr Eckhard said, adding that UN officials were still developing a list of every UN staff member believed to have been in Baghdad when the bombing occurred.

THE STATESMAN

21 AUG 2003

Saddam's deputy captured

BAGHDAD, AUG. 19. Taha Yassin Ramadan, Saddam Hussein's former Vice President, has been captured by U.S. Kurdish allies in northern Iraq, U.S. and Kurdish officials said on Tuesday.

"He was detained in Mosul as a result of cooperation between the political parties and residents," Adel Murad of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan told Reuters in Baghdad.

In Washington, a Pentagon spokeswoman confirmed that Mr. Ramadan had been captured and handed over to the U.S.-led forces, who invaded Iraq in March and toppled Mr. Hussein. The PUK is one of two main Kurdish parties in northern Iraq which fought alongside the U.S. forces in the war in Iraq.

Mr. Ramadan was No. 20 and the 10 of diamonds in a deck of cards issued to the U.S. troops hunting the 55 most wanted members of Mr. Hussein's administration.

"He was captured by the PUK in Mosul last night and he is being transferred to Sulaimaniya. We are waiting for more details," said the London-based PUK spokesman, Farko Mahmoud. Mr. Ramadan, who is in his 60s and originally from the Mosul region, was one of the most hawkish members of Mr. Hussein's inner circle and one of the only surviving plotters of the 1968 coup that brought the Ba'ath Party to power.

His capture will fuel speculation that U.S. forces may be closing in on Mr. Hussein him-



The former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein (right), and his deputy, Taha Yassin Ramadan, in this 1996 file photo: AP

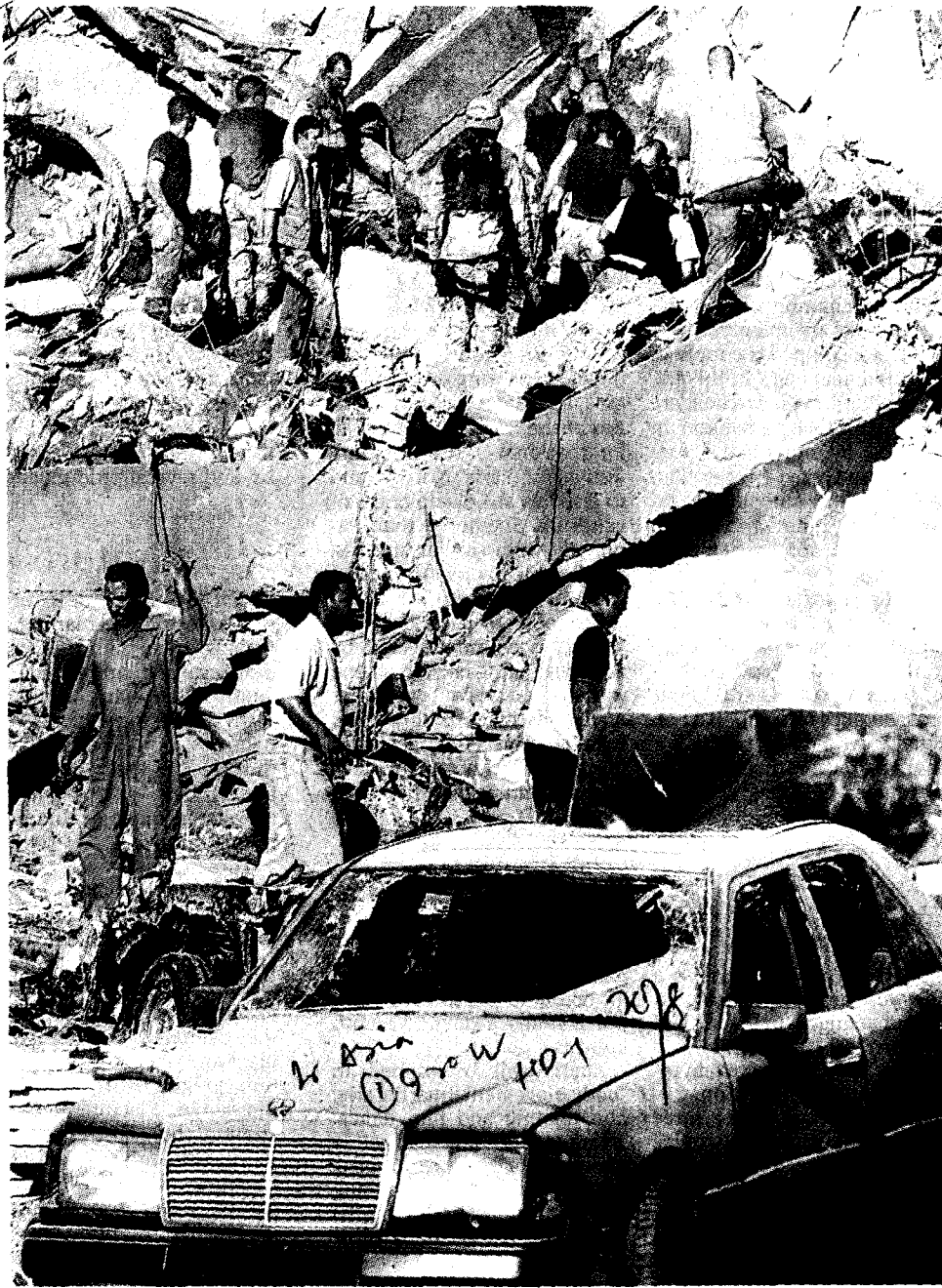
self. The former President's sons Uday and Qusay were cornered in Mosul last month and killed by U.S. troops after they were betrayed by an Iraqi informer. Mosul, with its rich mixture of Kurds and Arabs, Muslims and Christians, is north of Mr. Hussein's Sunni Muslim heartlands around his hometown of Tikrit, where much of the search for his inner circle has been focused. Mr. Ramadan is alleged to have been

involved in crimes against humanity for his role in suppressing Kurdish rebellion in the north in the 1980s and against the Shia revolt in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. He told Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister to "go to hell" during the U.S. invasion when the Minister said Mr. Hussein should step down. "You loser," he said of Prince Saud al-Faisal at a Baghdad news conference. "You are a minion and a lackey."— Reuters

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

20 AUG 2003



American soldiers and rescue workers look for casualties at the U.N. headquarters at Baghdad's Canal Hotel after a huge explosion rocked the building on Tuesday. — AFP

20 killed in blast at U.N. office in Baghdad

BAGHDAD, AUG. 19. A suicide attacker today set off a truck bomb outside a hotel housing the U.N. headquarters here. At least 20 Iraqis and U.N. workers, including the chief U.N. official in Iraq, were killed, and 100 wounded.

Sergio Vieira de Mello, a 55-year-old veteran Brazilian diplomat, was in his office when the explosion ripped through the building at about 4.30 p.m. and was trapped in the rubble.

According to two witnesses, a cement truck exploded at a concrete wall outside the hotel, but there were conflicting reports about whether the truck was parked or was trying to drive through the security barrier.

The blast came 12 days after a car bomb attack on the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad killed 11 persons. It was thought to be the first such terrorist-style bombing in the Iraqi capital since Saddam Hussein's fall.

Dia'a Rashwan, an expert on radical Islam at Egypt's Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, said the attack fits "the ideology of the Al-Qaeda. They consider the U.N. one of the international actors who helped the Americans to occupy Palestine and, later, Iraq."

The blast came hours after the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq announced that Taha Yassin Ramadan, a former Iraqi vice-president known as "Saddam's knuckles" for his ruthlessness, was turned over to U.S. forces in the northern city of Mosul.

Mr. Vieira de Mello's death was announced by the U.N. spokesman, Fred Eckhard, in New

York. All the national flags that ring the U.N. headquarters' entrance in New York were removed from their poles. The blue and white U.N. flag was lowered to half-staff.

U.N. staffers gathered in corridors and around television sets as they mourned the loss of the man Mr. Eckhard called "a rising star."

"That will have a serious impact on our work in Iraq, as well as forcing us to reassess the security risk of working in Iraq. Against that, of course, we have the very strong determination by the Security Council not to be deterred by this attack," Mr. Eckhard said.

L. Paul Bremer, the top U.S. official in Iraq, walked through the scene of the destruction as workers, covered with blood, were manually digging through the rubble trying to find people. There was a 50-foot-wide hole in the ground. After receiving a briefing on the destruction, a part of the building collapsed near him. People cried: "Watch out. Watch out."

An Associated Press reporter counted 40 wounded people lying on the front garden and receiving first aid. Some were loaded into a helicopter while others were led away by soldiers. Bernard Kerik, the former New York City police commissioner who is rebuilding the Iraqi police force, told reporters that evidence suggested the attack was a suicide bombing. Asked if the Al-Qaeda was behind the attack, he said, "It's much too early to say that. We don't have that kind of evidence yet." — AP

Bush reaction: Page 14

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Iran will never give up its N-plan: Khamenei

Mr. Amin
Teheran: Iran's supreme leader has said his country will never give up its nuclear technology under pressure from the United States and others, who are urging Teheran to agree to more stringent inspections of its programmes.

11-11 2003
Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told a gathering of Iranian ambassadors late on Monday that "the position of the United States and certain western countries, which require Iran to give up nuclear technology is unsuitable, unjust and oppressive, and the Islamic Republic of Iran will never accept these requests." "The conditions in which the United States deals with the rest of the world as a creditor, always asking for more, make any weakness and surrender the greatest strategic error," the state news agency IRNA reported him as saying.

"Iranian nuclear science is indigenous and peaceful, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on religious principles, will never use weapons of mass destruction," Mr Khamenei added.

On Monday, Teheran said it was still discussing with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) whether to allow snap UN inspections of its nuclear sites. AFP

U.S. soldiers kill cameraman 'by mistake'

BAGHDAD, AUG. 18. A Reuters cameraman, Mazen Dana (41), was shot and killed by U.S. soldiers on Sunday while videotaping near a U.S.-run prison on the outskirts of Baghdad.

The U.S. Army said its soldiers mistook his camera for a rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

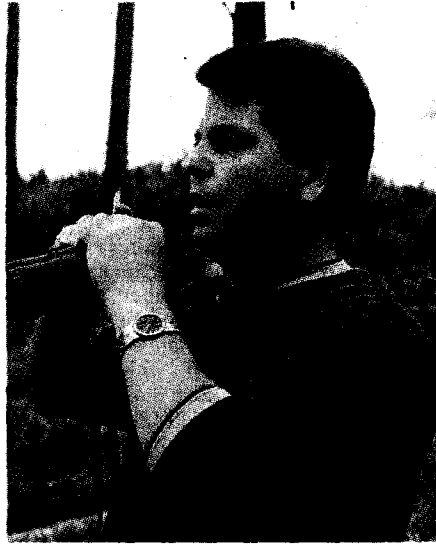
Fellow journalists accused the U.S. troops of negligence, saying it was clear the victim was a newsman when soldiers on two tanks opened fire.

The film Mr. Dana shot showed a tank driving toward him. Six shots were heard, and the camera appeared to tilt forward and drop to the ground after the first shot.

Mr. Dana was working outside the Abu Ghraib prison after a mortar attack there on Sunday in which six prisoners were killed and about 60 wounded. Witnesses said Mr. Dana was dressed in civilian clothes.

"We were all there, for at least half an hour. They knew we were journalists. After they shot Mr. Mazon, they aimed their guns at us. I don't think it was accident. They are very tense. They are crazy," said Stephan Breitner of France 2 television.

"They are young soldiers and they don't



Reuters television cameraman Mazen Dana who was shot dead by U.S. soldiers in Iraq on Monday.

understand what is happening," he said. Mr. Dana's driver, Munzer Abbas, said

Mr. Dana had got out of the car when he saw the tanks approaching. "We saw a tank, 50 metres away. I heard six shots and Mr. Mazon fell to the ground.

One of the soldiers started shouting at us, but when he knew we were journalists, he softened.

One of the soldiers told us they thought Mr. Mazon was carrying a rocket-propelled grenade," said Mr. Abbas.

"Mr. Mazon was one of Reuters' finest cameramen and we are devastated by his loss. He was a brave and an award winning journalist who had worked in many of the world's hotspots," said Stephen Jukes, Reuters' global head of news, in a statement.

A U.S. military official said on condition of anonymity that American soldiers saw Mr. Dana from a distance and mistook him for an Iraqi guerilla, so they opened fire. When the soldiers came closer, they realised him was a journalist, the official said.

"This is clearly another tragic incident, it is extremely regrettable," said the Central Command.

Mr. Dana's death brings to 13 the number of journalists who were killed in Iraq since the start of the war on March 20. — AP

19-14
19/8

Oil blaze rages on in Iraq

W. Abu
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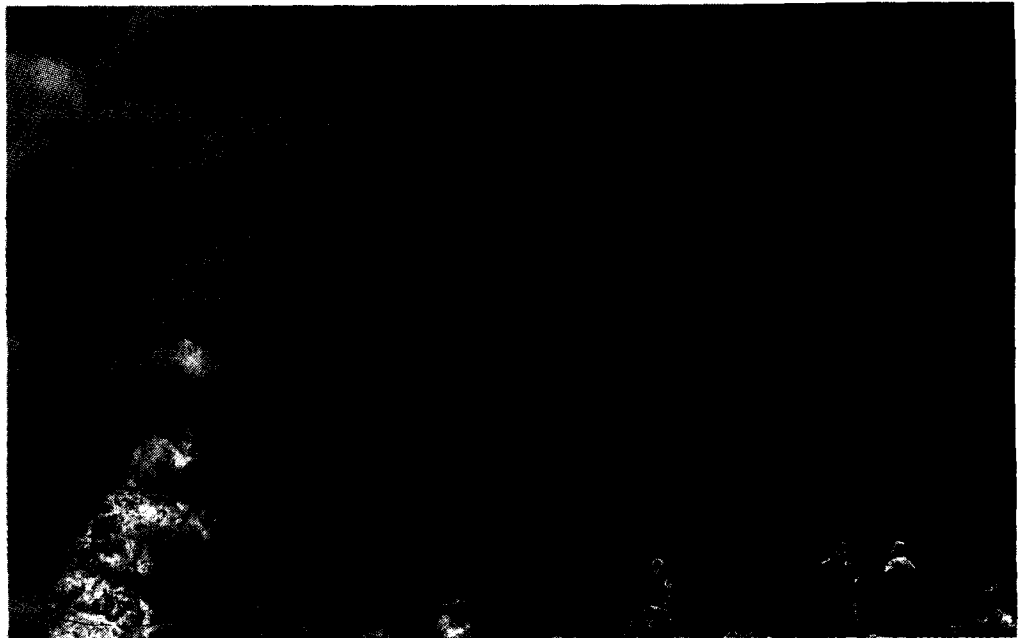
BAGHDAD, AUG. 18. A big fire continued to rage on a critical oil export pipeline 200 km northwest of Baghdad on Monday. The fire raged on a section of Iraq's main northern oil export pipeline into Turkey, the U.S. Army said. Accounts varied over whether the blaze was accidental or an act of sabotage. It would take at least 10 days to repair the damaged pipeline, the U.S. army said.

Iraq has the world's second-largest proven crude reserves, at 112 billion barrels, but its pipelines, pumping stations and oil reservoirs are dilapidated after more than a decade of neglect. Northern Iraq, site of the giant Kirkuk oil fields, accounts for 40 percent of Iraq's oil production.

In the north of Baghdad, many neighbourhoods remained without water on Monday after a bomb blew an enormous hole in a 5-foot diameter water main from reservoirs further north.

Huge fires burned in warehouses in northeast Baghdad where a guard told The Associated Press 50 gunmen had charged past him, looting spare parts from buses and other state vehicles and setting fires in old tires.

Mohammed Jabber said an American Army patrol passed



Firemen inspect a blazing pipeline near the northern Iraqi town of Bejl, some 270 km north of Baghdad, on Monday. — Reuters

the area about 30 minutes later but took no actions.

Wounded

Two soldiers were wounded when guerillas attacked their convoy with rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire about 14 km east of Tikrit, the army said. — AP

AFP reports from Doha:

Twelve Iraqi looters were killed in a blast today at an ammunition dump in Tikrit, Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television channel reported.

Al-Jazeera, quoting residents of the former President, Saddam Hussein's hometown 175 km north of Baghdad, said the

12 had broken into the dump at dawn to loot copper which they would resell.

The dump remained on fire several hours after the explosion and the sector was declared a closed military zone by the U.S. forces, according to the channel's correspondent in Tikrit.

IRAQ / 'PLOT' TO HALT RECOVERY

Problems mount on water, oil fronts

W. Asia
① 10-19

18/8

BAGHDAD, AUG. 17. Taps ran dry in the capital and oil exports to Turkey ground to a halt after explosives tore open a Baghdad water main and two suspicious pipeline blazes sent smoke billowing over northern Iraq on Sunday.

Officials suspected saboteurs bent on slowing the country's already stumbling recovery from decades of neglect by Saddam Hussein and weeks of bombing by the United States. A new group of resistance fighters said they would battle the U.S.-led occupation no matter what it does.

The explosion in northern Baghdad blew a gaping hole in a water main with a 5 1/4-ft diameter early on Sunday, flooding streets and forcing engineers to cut off water to all of Baghdad.

Witnesses said they saw two men on a motorbike leaving a bag of explosives and detonating it minutes later. "It was an act of sabotage," said an engineer with the Baghdad water company. "We've had to stop pumping water to the whole city so we can fix the damage."

Residents, finding their taps dry, rushed to stock up on bottled water. Many stores ran out quickly.

Officials said they would have water restored sooner than that.

"Ordinarily it would take 36 hours to restore the water supply after a break of this sort, but the dedicated work of city employees means that I expect water to be restored by late this evening," said Baghdad's depu-

ty mayor, Faris Abdul Razaq al-Aasam.

Further north, two ferocious blazes raged out of control along the 950-km pipeline that exports Iraq's oil to Turkey. The fires were within kilometers of each other, 200 km northeast of Baghdad.

The first began on Friday, only two days after oil exports to Turkey resumed, and the second happened on Saturday night.

A coalition spokesman said of the first blaze that while it wasn't normal to make any conclusions so soon, "it was clear to us from an early stage that this was indeed an act of sabotage".

L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. civilian administrator, opened the first meeting of a group that will coordinate international donations to Iraqi reconstruction. "The irony is that Iraq is a rich country that is temporarily poor," he said. "An event such as the explosion on the Kirkuk pipeline costs the Iraqi people US\$7 millions a day and hurts the process of reconstruction."

The Danish army reported one of its soldiers died from a gunshot after stopping a truck of Iraqis on Saturday near Basra in southern Iraq.

The U.S. military said someone fired two mortar rounds at the notorious Abu Gharib prison the previous night, killing three Iraqis and wounding 61. He didn't know whether the casualties were guards or prisoners, or who was responsible. — AP

THE HINDO

18 AUG 2003

Wave of sabotage in Iraq, Baghdad prison attacked

18/8
K. S. W. Amin
D. G. W.
Baghdad, August 17

A FRESH wave of sabotage and violence took its toll on Iraq on Sunday as a second blaze hit a crucial oil export pipeline, a water pipeline was blown up and six Iraqis were killed in a mortar attack on a Baghdad prison.

A Danish soldier was also killed as he tried to stop looting on Saturday night.

Iraq's crucial oil export pipeline to Turkey, which saboteurs attacked two days ago, was ablaze again on Sunday following another blast. A North Oil Company official at the scene said it was caused by an explosion on Saturday night. The fire was near the site of Friday's blaze which officials blamed on a bomb. Iraq's governor said on Sunday the country's tottering economy was losing \$7 million a day because of the pipeline attack.

In other violence, six Iraqis were killed and 59 wounded in a mortar bomb attack on a US-guarded prison on the western outskirts of Baghdad on Saturday night. About 500 Iraqi detainees are being held at Abu Ghraib prison, which was one of Saddam Hussein's most notorious jails. It was not clear who was behind the attack.

Saboteurs blew up a water pipeline serving the north of Baghdad on Sunday, flooding streets with a cascade of water. Locals said they had been woken by a loud blast and saw a car speeding from the scene.

1 8 AUG 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

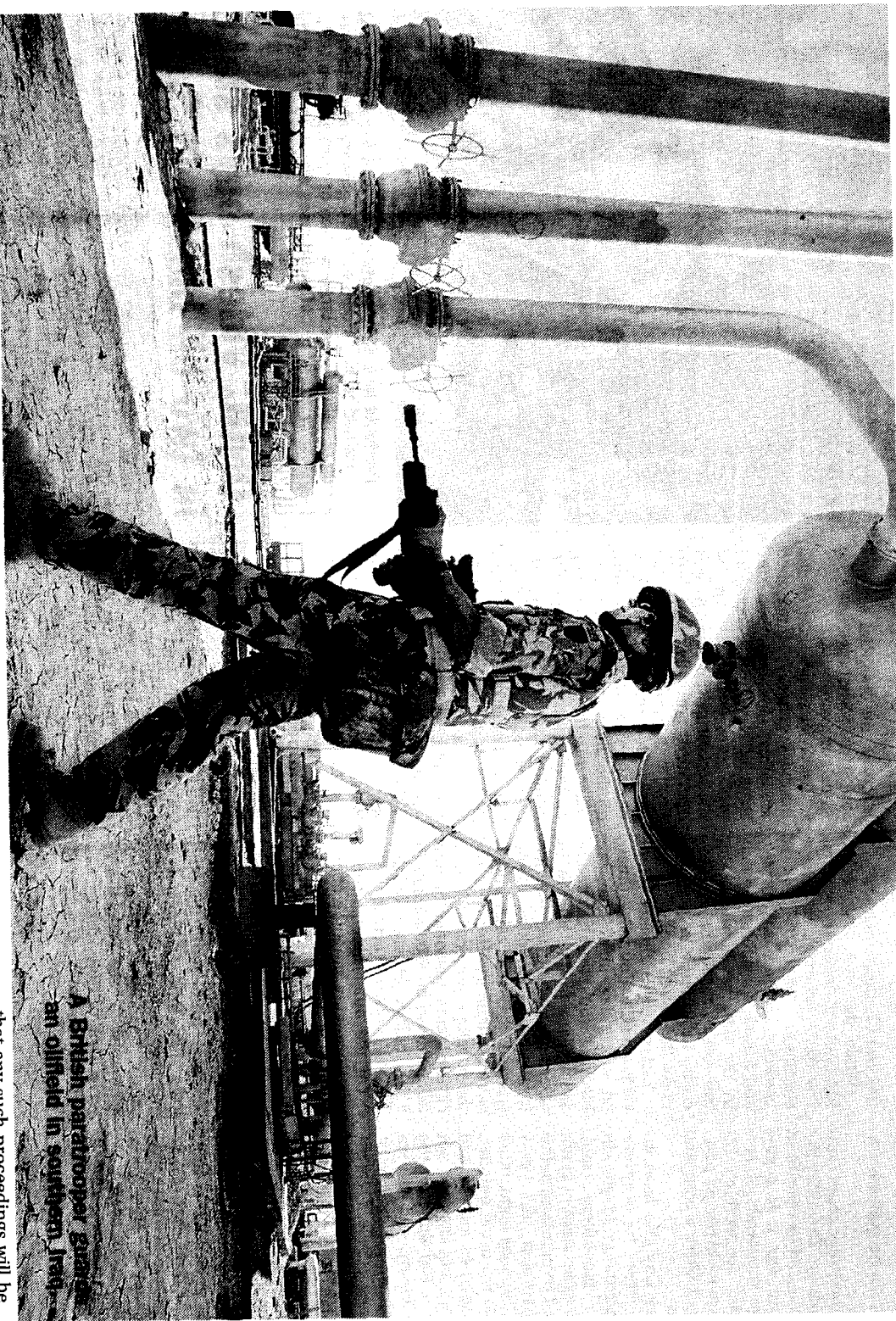
Washington 1/17/08

A bonanza for Big Oil

ON THE eve of the United States-led invasion of Iraq, there was widespread concern that the "oil factor" had played an important part in the calculus of war. The connections between the administration of the U.S., President, George W. Bush, and large corporations — particularly the oil oligarchy or Big Oil — were expected to result in a bonanza for U.S. firms operating in the regime-changed Iraq. American oil companies, shut out of Iraq by the Saddam Hussein regime, were expected to gain favoured access to Iraqi oil contracts. Recent revelations about an Executive Order issued by Mr. Bush nearly three months ago now confirm that these apprehensions were not entirely misplaced. Executive Order 13303, "Protecting the Development Fund for Iraq and Certain Other Property in Which Iraq Has an Interest," signed by Mr. Bush on May 22 provides U.S. oil companies operating in Iraq immunity on a scale that is truly stunning.

Significantly, the Order was passed merely hours after the United Nations Security Council had acquiesced to the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq. Its ostensible purpose was to protect the funds that will be generated by sales of Iraqi oil from attachments, and similar judicial processes, so that the money would be available for the reconstruction of the country. The Iraqi Development Fund, also established by the occupying forces just before the May 22 United Nations Resolution, was envisaged as the main corpus to finance Iraq's "reconstruction."

The Executive Order's protective sweep covers Iraq's petroleum assets, the revenues generated by these assets, and the Fund. Iraq's importance to the global petroleum trade is obvious from the fact that it has the second largest proven reserves of oil in the world — at 112 billion barrels. It is next only to Saudi Arabia. Petroleum experts regard Iraqi crude as being easier to extract, costing just 97 cents a barrel, compared to Russian crude or \$ 4 for oil from the North Sea (international crude oil prices are currently about \$30 a barrel). The quality of Iraqi crude, particularly its low sulphur content, also results in lower refining costs. Using it, therefore, translates into higher profit margins. U.S. oil majors,



A British paratrooper guards an oilfield in southern Iraq.

George W. Bush has passed an Executive Order that effectively provides legal immunity to the oil majors for their actions in Iraq, write V. Sridhar and Kesava Menon.

notably ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, imported significant quantities of Iraqi crude on the eve of the invasion. In December 2002, even as the Pentagon promised to rain 300 cruise missiles a day on Iraq, the U.S. imported one million barrels of Iraqi oil. The imports were undertaken because U.S. petroleum stocks had dwindled to their lowest level in 27 years.

However, after the war started, oil experts feared that the international oil markets would refuse to trade in Iraqi oil because of the lack of clear title. The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483, which was also adopted on May 22, removed the impediments to the trade in oil from occupied Iraq. The Security Council ended the sanctions on Iraq and asked member-states to provide immunity to petroleum, petroleum products, and natural gas originating in Iraq from legal

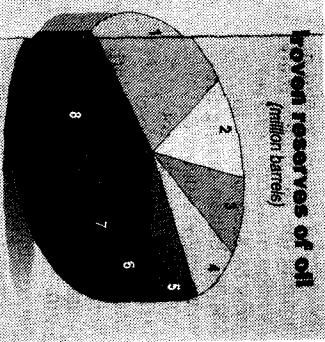
petrochemical chain that resulted in their product. Since petroleum from different sources is blended at the refining stage, a liberal interpretation of the Order could extend its immunities to the whole of the petroleum sector in the U.S.

In prohibiting attachments and other similar decrees being passed against the proceeds from the sale of Iraqi petroleum, the Order ensures that the revenues the oil majors earn from the U.S. market are also protected. But it is not the revenues generated by the sales alone that are so protected. The Order covers "any financial instruments of any nature whatsoever arising from or related to the sale or marketing thereof, and interests therein." This appears to include any investments made, credits leveraged and loans repaid by using these revenues within the scope of the protection.

The Order jeopardises several contracts that the Saddam Hussein regime had entered into with companies from nations that did not participate in the invasion of Iraq. It effectively shuts out the oil companies from countries such as Russia, China, Italy, Malaysia, France, Germany and India that had bagged contracts for developing oilfields in Iraq. For instance, the Oil and Natural Gas Commission won a \$ 500-million contract to develop the Abu Ghairab oilfield. Although the Order does not stop these companies from challenging any annulment of their contracts, any decrees of attachment etc., will not be enforceable within Iraq or the U.S.

Such decrees will be unenforceable in Iraq because the country's judicial system has collapsed. And, they will be unenforceable in the U.S. — where much of the Iraqi crude as well as the proceeds from its sales will be headed — because of the prohibition imposed by the Order.

Mr. Bush provided a rationale for his grant of such wide protection to the oil majors, in the preamble to the Order. In his words, the threat of legal hindrances to trade in Iraqi petroleum "obstructs the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country and development of political, administrative and economic institutions in Iraq." Such a situation was conceived as constituting "an unusual and extraordinary" threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Mr. Bush felt that



Graphic: U.S. Waxman

the situation was so ominous as to warrant a national emergency, which he duly proclaimed in the preamble.

With the entire Government structure in Iraq having collapsed, the Anglo-American occupying forces became the *de facto* ruling power. They gave a formal shape to their new role by setting up a Coalition Provisional Authority (the "Authority") and appointed an administrator to head it in Iraq. The Security Council bowed to the reality and recognised the Authority as the effective power in Iraq by adopting Resolution 1483. Even as the Security Council was considering Resolution 1483, the Authority was setting up the Development Fund for Iraq on the books of the Central Bank of Iraq. Resolution 1483 of the Security Council duly noted the establishment of the Fund and immediately transferred \$ one billion into it. This sum represented the balance remaining in the escrow fund set up for the purposes of the Oil-for-Food Programme, which was terminated with immediate effect. Money due to be deposited in the escrow fund from contracts still operational under the Programme were re-routed to the Fund. Countries that had Iraqi funds in their possession or control were asked to deposit these in the Fund. Most importantly, the Fund was also to take in the money that would be paid by purchasers of Iraqi crude in the future.

All member-states of the U.N. were asked to take necessary legal or administrative measures to ensure that legal processes could not be instituted to attach, or otherwise block, assets that were earmarked for deposit in the Fund.

Besides instructing the member-states to extend legal protection to the Fund, the Security Council also asked them to provide the same immunity to petroleum, petroleum products, and natural gas originating from Iraq.

As the Authority has assumed all the administrative powers in Iraq, it obviously has the wherewithal to assign contracts for the exploitation and export of Iraqi oil. The only camp on the Authority's powers, imposed by the Security Council, is that it has to ensure that international "best market practices" are observed when undertaking oil exports. Since the oil majors' are, neither they nor the Authority are likely to have a problem in complying with this injunction. Thus, the prevailing conditions in Iraq are likely to ensure that Big Oil has access to the petroleum assets of the country. And, Mr. Bush has now also ensured that Big Oil will be

immune from legal action through the entirety of the petroleum cycle — exploration, drilling, production, transportation, refining, marketing and sales. It is possible to envisage the kinds of complaints that can arise from oil operations in Iraq. Companies involved in exploration, drilling, and production could pay low wages or otherwise exploit labour. They might implement security measures that may have serious human rights implications. Iraqi labour could conceivably, bring suits against these companies. Companies tax in maintaining the pipelines or tankers might leak oil into the seas and might face challenge from civil society in Iraq or elsewhere in the world. Fires or other accidents could occur in oil facilities, causing injuries. Complaints could also arise out of wholesale or retail sales.

Suits of another nature can be filed as well. Iraq's foreign debt is estimated to be in the region of \$ 200 billion. The creditors can try to stall the sales of Iraqi oil or to enforce their prior claims on the proceeds of the sales. Those who had signed contracts, which were valid till the conquest of Iraq but which have now become invalid, can institute actions with a similar intent. Victims of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, prisoners taken in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the 1991 Gulf War, and others who have undergone imagined or real suffering can claim damages arising from the Iraqi oil sector. While suits can be filed on any of the above grounds they will all be pointless since any decrees that may be awarded will not be enforceable.

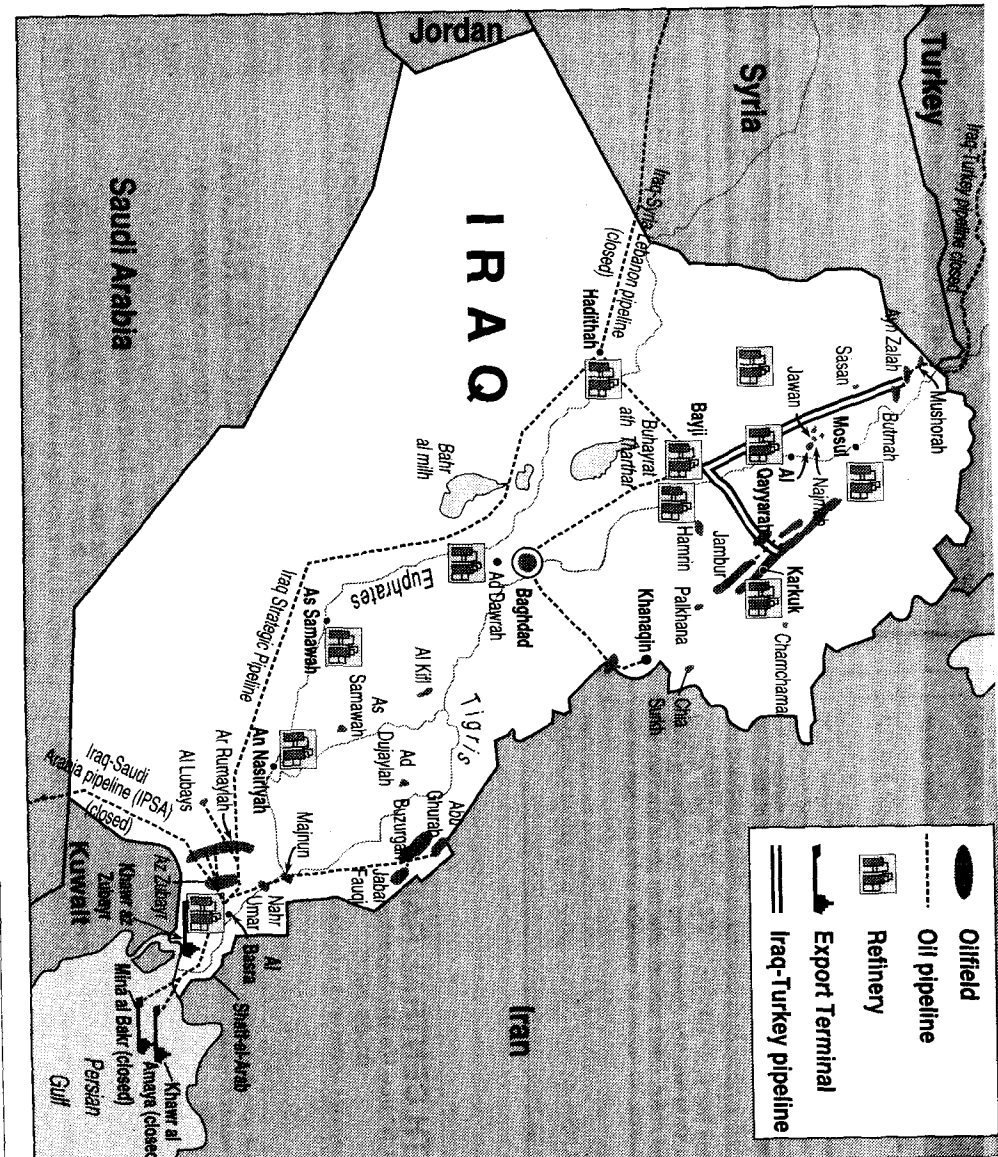
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"consult" the interim Governing Council, whose members have been handpicked by the administrator, Paul Bremer. The significance of the Bush Order appears to lie in the fact that it ensures that money accumulated in the Fund is not depleted by claims of any nature whatsoever. Apparently, this enables the Fund to issue reconstruction contracts on a sustainable basis. Given the fact that U.S. companies have won most of the contracts for reconstruction projects, it is conceivable that the protection of the Fund coincides with the protection of U.S. companies operating or waiting to operate in Iraq.

The Order had missed the attention of the media, both in the U.S. and across the world. However, in recent weeks, several non-governmental organisations have asked the U.S. Congress to look into, and curtail, the wide sweep of the Order. Since the Republican Party controls both Houses of Congress, and since the oil lobby's influence on the legislative wing is almost as strong as its influence over the Executive, it does not appear very likely that the NGOs will obtain relief from Congress. Although the Order is amenable to judicial review, it may be months before the issue is processed through the judiciary. By the time the issue appears for hearing, the oil companies might be able to put forward the reasonable defence that they had acted in good faith when they took advantage of the Order. The costs the companies had incurred could also be taken into consideration by the judiciary as a factor that shapes their decision.

Several public interest organisations and environmental groups, which monitor the energy sector, have criticised the Order and demanded an investigation by Congress. In July, the Sustainable Energy and Economy Network (SEEN), affiliated to the Institute of Policy Studies, a Washington-based "progressive think tank," approached the Government Accountability Project (GAP) for an assessment of the legality of the Order. In its response, GAP observed, "In terms of legal liability, the Executive Order, cancels the concept of corporate accountability and abandons the rule of law." It said that the Order, "short of its legalese, is a licence for corporations to loot Iraq and its citizens."

Israel frees 73 Palestinians

Jerusalem: Israel freed 73 Palestinian detainees on Friday, the second group in less than two weeks, while a meeting between the Israeli and Palestinian security chiefs on an Israeli troop pullback from additional West Bank towns ended inconclusively. Most of those freed had been held on criminal charges or illegal entry into Israel, and Palestinian officials dismissed their release as meaningless.

The Palestinians demand that Israel free many of the more than 7,000 prisoners it is holding, including uprising leaders. The releases came a day after Israeli forces killed Mohammed Sidr, the Islamic Jihad leader in the West Bank city of Hebron, in a firefight, and the group threatened to carry out new attacks on Israelis

as revenge. Israel said Sidr was planning a bombing attack in nearby Jerusalem.

Palestinian security chief Mohammed Dahlan said in a statement that the continued army raids are "serious violations" of the US-backed "road map" peace plan.

A four-hour meeting late on Thursday between Dahlan and Israeli defence minister Shaul Mofaz ended without result. Mr Dahlan asked that Israeli troops hand over four West Bank towns—Jericho, Qalqiliya, Ramallah and either Nablus or Tulkerem—to Palestinian control, his aides said.

Mr Mofaz said he would weigh the request and get back to Mr Dahlan over the weekend.

However, Israel has said it would not go ahead with further pullbacks until the

Palestinian security forces begin dismantling militant groups.

Both the troop withdrawal and the crackdown on the militants are required under the US-backed "road map" peace plan.

A unilateral three-month truce declared by Palestinian militant groups on June 29 has dramatically reduced casualties after 33 months of violence.

However, Hamas and Islamic Jihad say they reserve the right to carry out shootings and bombings in response to army raid during the ceasefire period.

In Washington, the US state department refused to say whether it considered the killing of Sidr a violation of the road map.

A spokesman said the plan's success depends on an end to terrorism. AP

IRAQ SITUATION / GROUP WARNS OF MORE ATTACKS

Protests continue in Basra

BAGHDAD, AUG. 10. Scattered protests over fuel shortages and power cuts erupted in the southern city of Basra for a second day today, and a previously unknown Iraqi guerrilla group through a videotape threatened to turn Iraq into a "graveyard for villain invaders."

The U.S. forces in Baghdad came under renewed attacks that wounded two soldiers. In Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, two 4th Infantry Division soldiers were wounded with an improvised explosive device. One soldier died of heat stroke.

In Basra, a television crew saw a protester fatality shot after an angry crowd surrounded a group of vehicles. It was unclear who was in the cars or who fired the shots.

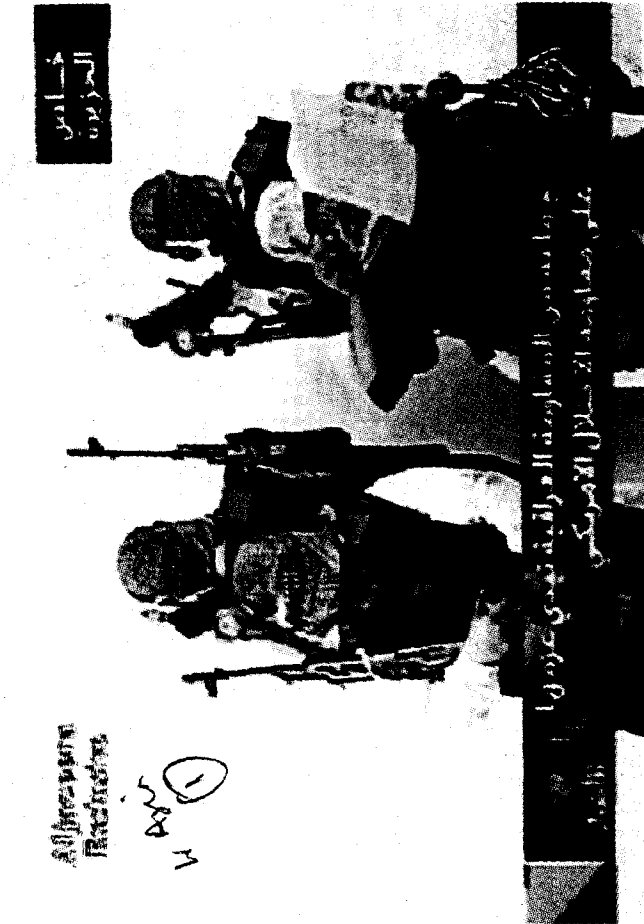
About 1,000 residents burned tyres and hurled rocks and bricks at British soldiers on Saturday, complaining of frequent power cuts and black-market fuel prices, British military sources said.

Some protests were seen on Sunday, but no confirmed reports emerged on casualties. In a separate incident British troops came under attack and returned fire.

Power cuts were the result of sabotage. There were long lines at gas stations, and "tempers flared up." British troops were deployed at major gasoline stations "to ensure people get fuel at right price, not black-market price," sources said.

A previously unknown group calling itself the Iraqi Resistance vowed in a statement aired on Al-Jazeera to continue fighting coalition troops in Iraq and said it had no links to Ba'ath party.

"We swear by God, we will make the whole land of Iraq a graveyard to all those villain invaders," said the statement read by one of four armed men wearing red-



Four armed masked men identifying themselves as Iraqi guerilla insurgents warn of more anti-U.S. resistance operations in Iraq in this video grab taken from al-Jazeera on Sunday. They denied any link with the former President, Saddam Hussein. — AFP

checked Arab headaddresses to mask their faces. Two of the four men held rocket-propelled grenade launchers, two held Kalashnikov automatic rifles.

The U.S. military officials have blamed almost daily attacks on their forces on Mr. Hussein loyalists, Iraqis angered by a foreign occupation and, increasingly, foreign fighters.

In Baghdad, the U.S. military reported on Sunday two rocket-propelled grenade attacks on U.S. forces. There were no casualties in the first attack. In the second attack at the Baghdad University complex, two soldiers and a reporter were wounded, the military said.

Al-Jazeera TV reported one of its cameramen was wounded after the U.S. patrol he was traveling with came under fire at the College of Islamic Sciences. — AP

THE HINDO

1 1 AUG 2003

Militants back in Iraq to plan strikes

Michael R. Gordon
Baghdad, August 10

THE AMERICAN-LED administration in Iraq has received intelligence reports that hundreds of Islamic militants who fled Iraq during the war have returned and are planning to conduct major terrorist attacks.

L. Paul Bremer III, the top civilian administrator in Iraq, said in an interview on Friday night that fighters from Ansar al-Islam, a militant organisation that the US tried to destroy during the war, had escaped to Iran and then slipped back across the border into Iraq. He said hundreds of the militants were now

in Iraq, where they were preparing to attack the occupation forces or administration.

"The intelligence suggests that Ansar al-Islam is planning largescale terrorist attacks here," Bremer said. "So as long as we have, as I think we do, substantial numbers of Ansar terrorists around here I think we have to be pretty alert to the fact that we may see more of this."

The Bush administration has asserted that Ansar has ties to al-Qaida. Officials of the occupying authority, including Bremer, said it was possible that al-Qaida was in Iraq, but they said there was no conclusive proof of that.

Bremer spoke a day after a

car bomb attack ripped through the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, killing 17 people and wounding scores more. It was the deadliest attack against civilians since the American military took control of Baghdad, and it represented a new type of security problem for the American-led occupation. The perpetrators of the attack are still unknown and investigators from the FBI have been sent to investigate the blast. "We have seen here a new technique for Iraq that we have never seen before," Bremer said, referring to the car bomb used in the attack.

Bremer said his first thought was that the attack had been car-

ried out by a foreign militant organisation and not former members of Saddam Hussein's government. That initial assessment was based on the fact that car bombings were a standard technique of such organisations in West Asia but have been virtually unknown in Iraq during the American-led occupation.

But Bremer said intelligence experts had since told him that some elements of Hussein's security apparatus were capable of making car bombs. He said the basic strategy to fend off terrorist attacks was to press for new intelligence and mount raids to pre-empt them.

The New York Times

IRAQ / PROTEST OVER FUEL SHORTAGE TURNS VIOLENT

Residents, British troops clash in Basra

*H. Amin
from
12-12*

BASRA (IRAQ), AUG. 9. Protests broke out in the southern port of Basra today after clashes between residents and British troops controlling Iraq's second largest city left at least four civilians wounded, witnesses said.

People hurled rocks and burned tires all over the city's main streets as long-simmering tensions exploded in the blistering summer heat over the tortoise-like pace of the coalition force's reconstruction efforts.

The protest started minutes after witnesses said a grenade was hurled at a British military truck near a gasoline station, where fed-up Iraqis waited in a long line for fuel, angered by the fact they were queuing up for hours in a country with the world's second largest oil reserves.

The British truck came under attack at 9:15 am local time in front of a gas station where a man hurled a grenade and the vehicle was set on fire, said Ali Hussein, a taxi-driver who had been filling up his car at the time of the attack.

Four British armoured vehicles and three jeeps came to seal off the area, while a crowd lobbed rocks at them.

The soldiers fired in the air to ward off the crowd and then started to shoot rubber bullets, wounding at least four Iraqis, including a child, witnesses said.

The crowd, with some women in headscarves firing off Kalashnikovs in the air, grew to more than 2,000 and shouted in

anger over the gasoline shortage in the city, they added.

The protesters poured down the street toward the British forces' headquarters. No soldiers were seen on the street at one point.

FBI to probe blast

Meanwhile, U.S. troops came under renewed attacks on Saturday that wounded at least four soldiers, and a team of FBI investigators prepared to take control of the probe into the car bombing of the Jordanian embassy.

Soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade on patrol in the northern city of Kirkuk were fired on with a rocket-propelled grenade and small arms early on Saturday, said Lt. Col. Bill McDonald, spokesman for the 4th Infantry Division operating

in the area. Two soldiers were wounded in the explosion and were in stable condition, Lt. Col. McDonald said.

The troops returned fire, he said.

Also on Saturday, soldiers west of Kirkuk opened fire on a car that ran a military check-point, wounding two Iraqis, he said. The victims were evacuated to a Kirkuk hospital in stable condition, he said.

In south-central Baghdad, two soldiers were wounded in a roadside bomb attack on their armoured Humvee vehicle, said Maj. Todd Mercer of the 82nd Airborne Division.

The U.S. military in Baghdad said troops acting on a tip from an Iraqi seized and destroyed 24 rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosives and other weapons. — AFP, AP

Al-Qaeda fugitive is suspect

AMMAN, AUG. 9. The fugitive Jordanian national, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was at the centre of pre-war U.S. efforts to establish a link between Saddam Hussein and the Al-Qaeda, has emerged as chief suspect in the deadly bombing of Jordan's Baghdad embassy.

Two months before Washington went to war in Iraq, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, told the U.N. Security Council that Mr. Hussein was linked to the Al-Qaeda — allegations that hinged on the one-legged Zarqawi, a veteran whose real name is Fadel Nazzal al-Khalayleh, fled to Iraq in 2002 and is accused of working with a Kurdistan-based Islamic militant group, Ansar al-Islam, which Washington says is linked to the Al-Qaeda.

"The style of the attack and the explosives used, point towards Ansar al-Islam and in particular to Zarqawi, who is still on the run in Iraq," a senior Jordanian official said on condition of anonymity. — AFP

SEE FINDU

10 AUG 2003

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878
BAGHDAD BLAST / 11 DEAD, MANY HURT

Terrorist attack, says U.S.

BAGHDAD, AUG. 7. A massive car bomb exploded outside the Jordanian embassy here on Thursday, hurling cars onto nearby rooftops. Morgue officials said at least 11 persons, including two children and one woman were killed and more than 50 were wounded.

Ricardo Sanchez, commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq, said there were eight confirmed deaths and labelled the attack a 'terrorist' bombing. An Iraqi police official, Hakmat Ibrahim Obidi, who was injured, said at least four policemen were among the dead.

The same day, a fierce gun-battle broke out in central Baghdad, with soldiers firing into a two-storey building after their Humvee came under rocket-propelled grenade or roadside bomb attack on the busy shopping street.

Witnesses said two U.S. soldiers were injured in the vehicle, which was totally destroyed by the explosion and fire. At least 20 Humvees and eight Bradley fighting vehicles joined the counter-attack. There was heavy machine gun and automatic rifle fire. Two helicopters hovered above.

One soldier was seen being evacuated from the zone. The U.S. forces stormed the building and emerged about five minutes later carrying their comrade. It was not immediately known if the soldier had been killed or just wounded, nor was it clear if the soldier was one of



A woman receiving treatment following the blast at the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad on Thursday. — Reuters

the two wounded in the attack on the Humvee. Before taking the building, the military allowed about 20 civilians inside to come out.

After the soldiers attacked, the building began burning and was gutted.

The U.S. Central Command announced two soldiers were killed the night before in the Al Rashid section of Baghdad. Their translator was wounded. The military said the soldiers died in a firefight but gave no other details.

The deaths ended a four-day period in which no U.S. forces had been killed. The deaths late on Wednesday brought to 55 the number of U.S. troops killed

in combat since May 1. The U.S. Commander told a news conference the attack on the Jordanian embassy was "the worst on a soft target" since Baghdad fell to American forces on April 9.

Elsewhere, U.S. forces captured four suspected leaders of the anti-U.S. resistance in pre-dawn raids on Thursday, the military said, a day after the Americans netted 18 suspected Saddam Hussein loyalists and found a huge stockpile of weapons.

Shortly after the blast in Baghdad, young Iraqi men stormed the embassy gate and destroyed pictures of the Jordanian King Abdullah and his late father, King Hussein. — AP

THE HINDS

8 AUG 2003

In Iraq's Interest

After UN Mandate, India Must Act

By K Subrahmanyam

11-12
1/8

Consultations are on in the Security Council to secure a new resolution which will give the UN a greater role in the stabilisation and reconstruction of Iraq. The Iraqi governing council was welcomed by Security Council members, though understandably, it could not be accorded the status of representing a sovereign Iraq. Reports from Moscow, Paris and Berlin indicate that if the new Security Council resolution would extend a satisfactory mandate, Russia, France and Germany might even consider contributing troops for Iraq's stabilisation. In Iraq, the situation is reasonably stable except in the Sunni triangle Baghdad-Tikrit-Fallujah. While US forces will perhaps continue to concentrate on eliminating the resistance in this triangle, forces from other nations would normally be deployed in the rest of Iraq.

India, when requested by Washington to provide troops for the stabilisation operation, rightly took the stand that it would consider this only if there was a specific UN mandate for that purpose. Now that the matter is under discussion, India has to make up its mind on its course of action if the Security Council were to come up with a mandate acceptable to those countries which opposed the war bitterly —

France, Russia and Germany.

In international relations, mature nations attempt to improve a given situation and secure their own national interests instead of harping on the wrong-doings of great powers which can neither be rectified nor punished. France and Russia are ardent proponents of a multi-polar world and they bitterly

opposed the US attack on Iraq. Yet Vladimir Putin said he did not want Washington to be defeated in Iraq. Now French diplomats are quoted as saying that they do not want the US occupation of Iraq to fail. In international politics, a country may often be faced with a choice between two alternatives neither of which is to its liking. Statesmanship would dictate a choice of the lesser disliked of the two, if a choice cannot be avoided.

The US attack was disapproved of by the international community and India had expressed itself clearly on it. Now the task before the international community is to stabilise the situation in Iraq, restore sovereignty to the Iraqi people as early as possible and help in its reconstruction. Major European nations are interested in this constructive effort because of Iraq's crucial importance to the international community, its oil and its geostrategic location. Washington made major mistakes in its assessment of the post-Saddam situation and did not frame an appropriate strategy to bring Iraq back to normalcy. It had no understanding of the problems of nation-building in a complex and highly diverse political environment as obtained in Iraq. It is to meet this challenge that they have been compelled to seek

international help. What happens if the US is not given help and other major nations ride the high horse of morality and talk of not lending legitimacy to the occupation? The US will not be defeated and withdraw as in Vietnam because of the importance of oil and the centrality of Iraq to the West Asian strategic scene. The recovery and reconstitution process will be prolonged. If the relatively peaceful areas of Iraq are not looked after by other forces and the US has to spread its forces thin, then its retaliation for violence against its servicemen is likely to be more severe than necessary. At the end of it all, Washington will keep all the economic benefits that could accrue to itself and not share them with those who stayed out when it asked for help. These are the kinds of calculations that are influencing countries like France, Russia and Germany. India cannot afford to ignore them either.

It is ironic that some people argue that our sending troops to Iraq for stabilisation would legitimise the US occupation of Iraq. Yet, the same people welcomed the invitation to General Musharraf from prime minister Vajpayee for the Agra summit. They did not consider that such an invitation to the Kargil aggressor constituted legitimisation of the

Kargil aggression. The same people favour negotiations with Pakistan without any preconditions though it could be argued that such talks would amount to legitimising Pakistan's cross-border terrorism. Such people are prepared to forgive General Musharraf who is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Indians in Kargil, Kashmir and else-

where in India, but will not forgive Washington which may be an arrogant sole superpower but has not hurt a single Indian.

China and the East Asian tigers all registered their phenomenal economic growth by siding strategically with the US during the Cold War era and benefiting from US investments and US favour in terms of market access. The nature of our relationship with Washington will have a significant bearing on our economic growth and access to high technology. Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi were prepared to overlook the Soviet invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan since India needed Soviet support on various issues of national interest and security.

The overwhelming majority of Indian politicians are past-masters in the game of realpolitik. They justify such realpolitik in their own parochial interest and that is accepted by people at large who re-elect them. Therefore, our political class should not be allowed to sacrifice the country's permanent national interests in the name of ethical principles that they hardly practise. Therefore, the decision on sending troops to Iraq should be taken on the basis of our national interest alone.



Udai, Qusay buried

AFP & AP

TIKRIT, Aug. 2. — The bodies of Mr Saddam Hussein's sons, Udai and Qusay, and 14-year-old grandson Mustafa were buried in secret in the family cemetery in Awja in Tikrit region this morning.

"The bodies came by helicopter to the Tikrit airport at 9.30 a.m. The coalition called me to come and pick up the bodies," regional director of the Red Crescent Society in the Tikrit region Ms Thawrah Abed Bakr said. "I took the members of their tribe and uncles to the airbase. I received three metal coffins and I took the papers."

Mr Karim Suleiman al-Majid, an uncle, and tribal chieftains of Mr Hussein's family, Mr Mahmoud al-

Nida and Mr Ali al-Nida, attended the funeral along with 150 people. The family wrapped the bodies in Iraqi flags, a symbol that the men were martyrs in the eyes of relatives. Ms Bakr said: "Everything was finished by 12.30 p.m. I had been told to do it secretly by the family and the tribe."

A US military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the funeral ceremony was quiet and uneventful. There were no outbursts of violence reported in the city.

Iraqi Red Crescent Society president Mr Jamal al-Karbolli said Mr Hussein's relatives approached his organisation four days ago, asking it to act as an intermediary in recovering the bodies.

59-12 378
He confirmed that Ms Bakr had taken the bodies from the US military in Tikrit, but a military official said the army had nothing to do with the transfer of the bodies from Baghdad, where they had been stored.

The bodies of the three had been in refrigeration at the US base at Baghdad International Airport, where they were prepared for burial according to not Muslim custom by military morticians.

The handling of the bodies, including autopsies conducted by the military, had set up a controversy throughout Iraq. Muslim tradition calls for bodies not to be embalmed or in any way retouched and for them to be buried before sundown on the day of death.



Mr Saddam Hussein's relatives at the graves of Qusay (left), Udai (centre) and Qusay's son Mustafa in Awja cemetery, Tikrit, on Saturday. — AFP

Daughters 'miss' Saddam

AMMAN, Aug. 2. — Mr Saddam Hussein's daughters expressed deep affection for their father in interviews, but said they did not know where he was and that they last saw him a week before the Iraq war started.

Raghad and Rana Hussein appeared relaxed as they spoke with Arab satellite station Al-Arabiya and CNN yesterday at a royal palace in Amman, where they are staying with their nine children.

"He was a very good father, loving, has a big heart," Raghad told CNN.

Her voice choked up when Al-Arabiya asked what message she would give to her father. "I miss my father..." — AP

IRAQ / FORMER BAGHDAD VARSITY CHIEF SHOT DEAD

Governing Council names President

TIKRIT (IRAQ), JULY 30. Iraq's American-picked Interim Government today named the leader of a political party banned during the former President, Saddam Hussein's regime, to serve as its first President, with eight other members of a joint Presidency to serve in a monthly rotation in alphabetical order.

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shiite Muslim and chief spokesman for the Islamic Dawa Party, will serve as Council President for August and be followed by Ahmad Chalabi, a Shiite and leader of the Iraqi National Congress. Next would be Iyad Allawi, also a Shiite and secretary-general of the Iraqi National Accord.

The Council set the order of service according to an alphabetical listing of first names in Arabic.

The Council also lashed out at Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, which has given cautious approval to the Council but refused to recognise its authority.

The Council said it would not send representatives to the Cairo-based organisation, the region's most important political body. "We don't want to go where we are not welcome," the Council member, Naseer Kamel al-Chaderchi, told Qatar's *Al-Jazeera* television.

"The Council is made up of different political parties, with different agendas, different ethnic groups. There was no agreement among the members as to the agenda of any one party or among the varying ethnic groups," said Adel Nouri, a senior member of the Kurdistan



The Iraqi interim Governing Council at a meeting in Baghdad on Wednesday. They are (from left) Samir Mahmud, businessman, Adnan Pachachi, head of the Independent Iraqis for Democracy, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, Shia cleric, Wahel Abdul Latif, a Basra judge, and Ibrahim Jaafari, spokesman for al-Dawa party who has been named the first President of the Council. — AFP

Islamic Union Party.

In other developments, Iraqi media reported that the former president of Baghdad University, Mohammed al-Rawi, was killed on Sunday by two men who stormed into the office where he conducted a private medical practice.

Dr. Al-Rawi had been a leading member of Mr. Hussein's Ba'ath Party and resigned his university post after Baghdad fell on April 9.

His killing was seen as one in a series of revenge attacks

against high-level Ba'athists. U.S. forces patrolling in Tikrit came across a black flag strung up in front of a local Government building.

The writing mourned the passing of Uday and Qusai.

After asking his translator to read the lettering to him, Lt. Col. Steve Russell, who is leading the raids in Tikrit, told one of his men to cut it down and hand it to him. Lt. Col. Russell crumpled it in his hands before taking it away.

In northern Iraq, U.S. military

officials said they have found evidence that non-Iraqi fighters are among guerrillas attacking Americans.

The officials said they were finding rocket-propelled grenades wired to timers, a weapon used against coalition forces by insurgents in Afghanistan.

Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda terrorist organisation and remnants of the Taliban are believed to be responsible for the continued attacks against U.S. forces in Afghanistan. — AP

THE HINDO

31 JUL 2003

Voice confers martyrdom on Uday and Qusay

Mazin D
9/20/03

Saddam mourns on tape

Tikrit, July 29 (Reuters): An audio tape purportedly from former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein broadcast today vowed to defeat the United States to avenge the deaths of his two sons by US forces.

"I mourn to you the deaths of Uday and Qusay and those who struggled with them. You are the honour of this nation. America will be defeated," said the voice on the tape, aired by Dubai-based Al Arabiya television.

"They... died martyrs in the name of jihad (holy war)," the voice said.

The speech was rambling, breaking off in mid-sentence on occasions, but a Reuters correspondent familiar with Saddam's voice said the tape sounded like the deposed dictator.

A number of tapes purportedly from Saddam have been broadcast in the past few weeks, but this was the first to refer to the killing of his two sons by US

troops last Tuesday in a bloody raid on a villa in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

The US military said troops hunting Saddam had captured three key figures loyal to the former Iraqi leader, including a top bodyguard, and were closing in on Saddam himself.

Major Josslyn Aberle said one of the captured Saddam loyalists put up a brief struggle and that two gunshots were heard as the raid began in the area of Saddam's home town of Tikrit, north of Baghdad. There were no US casualties.

Television pictures filmed through a night vision lens showed a man being escorted from a building by US soldiers, blood seeping through a blindfold. US troops believe Saddam may be hiding somewhere in the Tigris valley of dusty tomato fields and orchards.

US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage said US forces

nearly captured Saddam in raids yesterday near Tikrit.

"I think most people feel that the noose is tightening pretty regularly around the neck of Saddam Hussein. Even today there were three raids and we believe we were just hours behind Saddam Hussein," Armitage said on CNN.

Officers say that after Saddam's feared sons were killed last week — and Washington promised to pay an Iraqi informant a \$30 million reward — many more Iraqis were coming forward with information on Saddam himself.

The US is offering \$25 million for information leading to the arrest or proof of death of Saddam, toppled from power by US-led forces on April 9.

Washington hopes finding Saddam would help end a guerrilla campaign that has killed 50 US troops since President George W. Bush declared major

combat over on May 1. The US military blames die-hard Saddam loyalists for the attacks, and some officers had said they hoped the killing of Uday and Qusay a week ago in Mosul would demoralise anti-American assailants.

But 11 US soldiers have been killed in attacks since Saddam's sons died in a barrage of machinegun fire, grenades, rockets and anti-tank missiles as they mounted a last stand with AK-47 assault rifles.

Rumours swirled through financial markets today that Saddam had been captured, but the Pentagon said it had no information to provide confirmation.

Washington hopes tentative efforts at self-rule will appease Iraqis who dislike the US occupation. The 25 US appointees on an Iraqi governing council seem to have been making slow progress in its two weeks of existence.

Saddam's bodyguard arrested

TIKRIT (IRAQ), JULY 29. American soldiers overpowered and arrested a bodyguard of the deposed Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, today and said they obtained documents and information that could help them close in on the former dictator.

As "one of Saddam's life-long bodyguards," Adnan Abdullah Abid al-Musslit was believed to have detailed knowledge of Mr. Hussein's hiding places, said Steve Russell, who led the raid. He said documents taken from the home and information obtained would be useful in the hunt for Mr. Hussein.

"Every guy we get tightens the noose," said Lt. Col. Russell, Commander of the 4th Infantry Division's 22nd Infantry Regiment.

The bodyguard struggled to break free as soldiers arrested him, and they had to wrestle him to the ground and drag

him down the stairs, he said.

The series of pre-dawn raids in the heart of Mr. Hussein's hometown led to the arrests of 12 persons, including Daher Ziana, former head of security in Tikrit, and Rafa Idham Ibrahim al-Hassan, a leader of the Saddam fidayeen militia.

'My sons are martyrs'

CAIRO, JULY 29. In a new audiotape attributed to the ousted Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, and broadcast today on the Arab satellite station, Al-Arabiya, he acknowledged the death of his two sons last week in a gunbattle with U.S. troops and praised them as martyrs. "Even if Saddam Hussein has 100 sons other than Uday and Qusay, Saddam Hussein would offer them the same path," he said on the tape, in a calm, even voice. — AP

The raids began at 7 a.m. when soldiers fired three shotgun blasts into the locks of the house where Al-Musslit was living with his family.

Moments later, soldiers pulled al-Musslit from the house bleeding and barefoot. Al-Musslit had retired from his job as one of Mr. Hussein's most trusted bodyguards, but the former Iraqi leader called him back into service before the war started.

About a block away, soldiers stormed a house where Ziana was living, emerging from one of the house's ornate arched entrances with four men with their hands tied behind their back. One of the men was identified as Ziana, Mr. Hussein's security chief in Tikrit. Nearby, soldiers pulled al-Hassan from another house. Al-Hassan was believed to be a brigadier-general and a leader of the fidayeen militia. — AP

REF. HINDO

30 JUL 2003

US invites relatives to claim brothers' bodies

Baghdad, July 26 (AP) — THE UNITED States authorities in Iraq were on Friday night wrestling with the thorny problem of how to dispose of the bullet-riddled bodies of Uday and Qusay Hussein.

US officials, trying to grapple with the problem of Islamic custom which calls for burial as soon as possible after death, said the bodies would be stored in the refrigerated tent at the Baghdad airport until a family member came forward to claim them. This is a not completely outlandish suggestion, consid-

ering the size of their extended family, many of whom are not on the coalition wanted list.

A British spokesman for the coalition provisional authority said they were still consulting Iraq's governing council and religious leaders about how best to preserve the corpses according to Muslim tradition, and no decision had been taken yet.

In Mosul, American troops on Saturday began demolishing the villa where they killed Saddam's sons.

The wall surrounding the fortified villa was knocked down and Iraqi workers clambered

over the roof, pounding it with sledgehammers. Iraqis crowded round newspaper stalls in Baghdad to view gruesome photographs of the bullet-scarred and blood-spattered bodies of Uday and Qusay. With no press on Friday, it was the first opportunity for some to see them.

Officials hope the pictures and television images of the bodies will convince sceptical Iraqis the brothers are dead and demoralise guerrillas who have killed 44 US soldiers since President Bush declared major combat over on May 1.

Iraq's biggest selling newspa-

per, *Azzaman*, splashed colour photographs of the corpses on its front page, declaring that the brothers were dead.

Two men shovelling sand at a building site said they had heard about the pictures but had no time or resources to read newspapers or watch the news.

"Some people say the bodies look like Uday and Qusay, and others say they don't," said one sweat-drenched labourer at a Baghdad building site. "If they really are dead, God will deal with them, but who will deal with us?"

Agencies

Uday's double pops champagne

A FORMER double of Saddam Hussein's elder son Uday said he was relieved at the news of his erstwhile boss's death and felt "free at last" in an interview to be published on Sunday in the German paper *Welt am Sonntag*. "For the first time I feel really free," declared Latif Yahia, who was Uday's double for

five years before fleeing to Manchester after the Gulf war in 1991.

He said when he had heard that Uday and his brother Qusay, had been killed in a raid by American troops in Mosul, "I called my wife to tell her to put champagne on ice to celebrate."

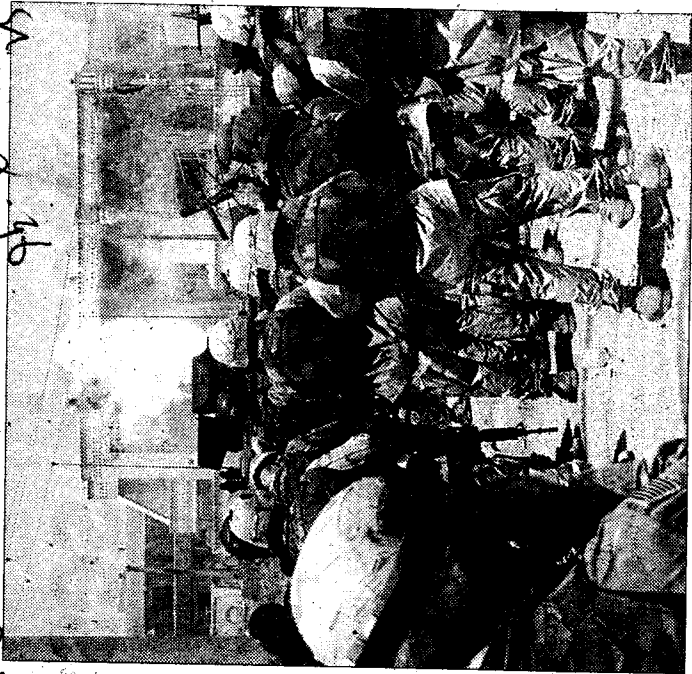
AFP, Berlin

Death easy exit, Iraqis wish two faced trial

ALISSA J. RUBIN, JOHN DANISZEWSKI, JOHN HENDREN & DAVID ZUCCHINO
BAGHDAD/MOSUL, JULY 24

THE shopkeeper leaned over the counter, almost choking with excitement on Wednesday as he talked about the killings of Saddam Hussein's two sons by American soldiers. Then he paused, a look of doubt passing over his face. "I would like to make sure 100 per cent that they are dead," said Majid Rasheed, 40, the owner of a small shoe store in the affluent Marsour neighbourhood.

His shop is just a few feet from the spot where a failed 1996 assassination attempt crippled the oldest son, Uday Hussein. "I would like to see the bodies, even if they are dismembered into 100 pieces," Rasheed said. He stopped again. That was not quite it. "I know I am contradicting myself, because I just said I wanted to see their bodies, but



The raid on the brothers' hideout in Mosul. Reuters

really I would have preferred if they had been arrested and tried in court," he said. "There are so many things hidden that the Iraqi people would like to know.

Rasheed's conflicted feelings were repeated in a number of in-

CONVINCED?

Photos of the bodies of Qusay (bottom left) and Uday issued to prove the two were killed



terviews with Iraqis on Wednesday as they tried to digest the news that the Americans had killed Saddam's two infamous sons, and as they raised ques-

tions about why the pair had been killed rather than captured. Uday Hussein, 39, and his 37-year-old brother, Qusay, occupy a place almost as large and nightmarish in the minds of most Iraqis as does their father. Almost everyone interviewed expressed deep regret that the two would never be called to account publicly for their crimes.

The Iraqis almost unanimously expressed a desire for a court proceeding to help them learn the truth about the regime they lived under for decades. "If they could have been tried in court, it would have offered people evidence of the crimes they had committed; people would finally know," said Fazah Ghazi, 42.

Even if Iraqis become convinced that the two are dead, that may only heighten their sense of having been cheated of the chance to bring the two to justice. Rasheed, the shopkeeper, was sceptical that the Americans had to go in with guns blazing. "How can it be that

the Americans, who have so much fore at their disposal — who have so many different kinds of arms, who have stung guns, who entered Baghdad so quickly — how can it be that it is impossible for them to take just four people alive?" he asked.

A day after the raid in which Uday and Qusay were killed, some obvious questions remained — such as the identity of the tipster who alerted US intelligence to the location of the Hussein brothers, and why American forces opted to use deadly force rather than wait out the fugitives and attempt to capture them alive. Based on statements by the US military commander in Iraq, Lt Gen Ricardo Sanchez, and comments from neighbours and witnesses, a recounting of the day's events can be made. It was a combination of speedy reaction to intelligence and overwhelming force that put an end to two brothers who chose to die together with guns in their hands rather than surrender. —LATWIP

Iranian's killing in Canada worsens row

Tehran, July 24 (Reuters): Iran today accused Canadian police of the "criminal" killing of an Iranian, ratcheting up a diplomatic row that began with the death in Iranian custody of a Canadian journalist this month.

Iranian state media said Canadian police in Vancouver had attacked three young Iranians, killing one and injuring one of the others. It identified the dead man as Keyvan Tabesh and demanded those responsible be brought to justice. Iran and Canada are at odds over the death in Tehran this month of Zahra Kazemi, 54, a Canadian photo-journalist of Iranian descent. Canada recalled its envoy to Tehran over the incident and said it would review its ties with Iran.

"Why have Canadian police, who should safeguard the security of the people, committed this disgraceful crime which scared Iranian citizens living in Canada?" it quoted foreign ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Asefi as saying.

There was no immediate comment from Canada.

Iran's state media said the Vancouver incident happened on Tuesday. But Canadian media have reported that Tabesh, 18, was shot and killed by a policeman in the Port Moody suburb of Vancouver on July 14 after an apparent road-rage incident.

Canada's *Globe and Mail*



Relatives carry the coffin of Iranian-Canadian journalist, Zahra Kazemi, during her funeral in Shiraz. (AFP)

newspaper in a July 18 article said Tabesh's parents, who live in Vancouver, had strongly criticised police for the shooting of their son. The newspaper said Tabesh was brandishing a machete when he was shot.

"Iran wants the Canadian government to give an explicit and transparent and satisfactory explanation about this criminal act and to hand over those responsible for this regrettable event to justice," the Iranian spokesperson said, according to

the radio. His call echoed that of the Canadian government for Tehran to identify and punish those responsible for Kazemi's death. An initial Iranian inquiry said Kazemi died of a brain haemorrhage caused by a severe blow to the head. But it failed to determine whether the blow to her head was deliberate and who might be responsible.

A further investigation has been ordered.

The official Irna news agency quoted Asefi as saying Canadian media had censored the Vancouver incident. "The strong censorship of this story creates more ambiguities," it quoted him as saying.

Kazemi was buried yesterday in Iran against the wishes of her son. Canada, which insisted the body should be returned to Kazemi's home city of Montreal, condemned the burial and said ambassador Philip MacKinnon was being recalled.

The journalist died on July 10, more than two weeks after she was arrested for taking pictures outside a prison in Tehran where many political dissidents are held.

The European Union and Canada have called on Iran to prosecute those responsible for her death. Officials in the Islamic republic have to explain the precise circumstances of Kazemi's death.

Bremer rules out U.N. force for Iraq

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JULY 24. At a time when there is international pressure on the United States to have the United Nations play a more meaningful role in the reconstruction and stabilisation of Iraq, the top American civilian official in Iraq, Paul Bremer, has said that at the present time he did not see any indication that Washington was looking for a U.N. force.

But Mr. Bremer has made the distinction between a United Nations force and a request from the U.N. to other countries to send peacekeeping units.

At the Washington Foreign Press Centre, he was asked by an Indian correspondent what the hesitation was in making the operation in Iraq a U.N. one

as opposed to a United States' work. "At the present time, I do not see any indication that we are inclined to seek a U.N. force. I know some countries have said, including yours, that it would be easier for them to provide troops if there were some kind of U.N. request for those troops. That's a different matter", Mr. Bremer responded.

"The Secretary of State mentioned over the weekend that the administration was willing to consider the question of whether there should be a U.N. resolution inviting countries to provide troops", he said. "But I think it's quite clear from transition economies, countries in political transition over the last 20 years, that it's important to have unity of command in the military side."

THE HINDU

25 JUL 2003

Saddam's sons killed in Mosul

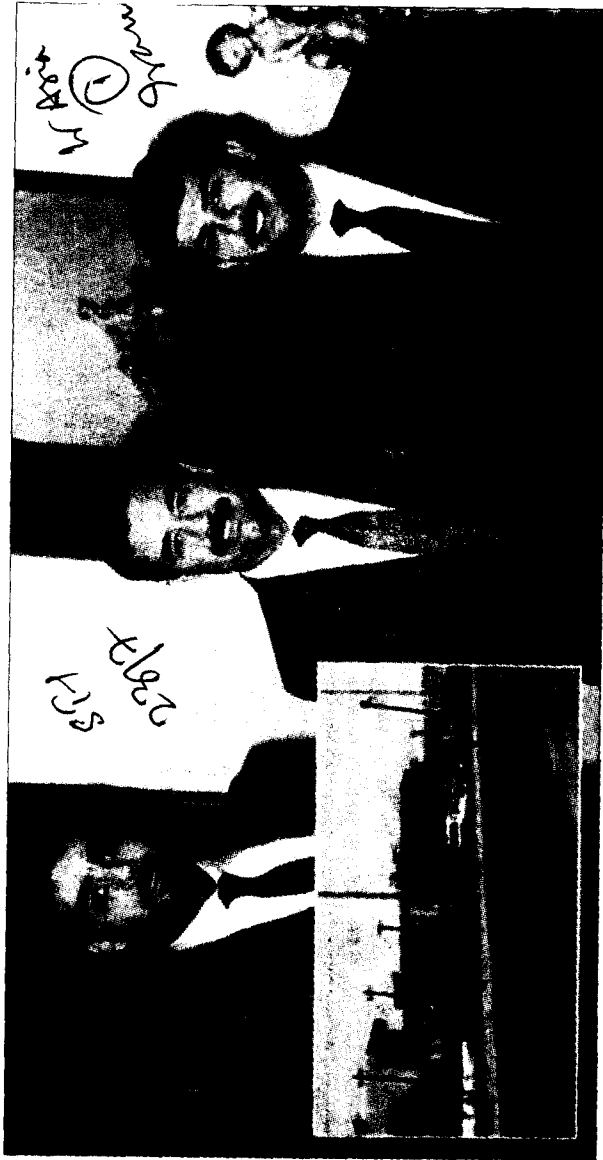
Associated Press

MOSUL, July 22. — Saddam Hussein's sons Uday and Qusay were killed today in a raid by US forces who surrounded the home of a cousin off the main Mosul highway in northern Iraq, a US official said. At least two other Iraqis also were killed, including a 14-year-old boy suspected to be one of Saddam's grandsons.

The US coalition commander, General Sanchez, confirmed the deaths. An official, a member of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, said DNA tests were conducted on the bodies recovered to confirm the identities. In Washington, Pentagon officials said the bodies were flown to another location for the tests.

The raid triggered a gun-battle at the house and residents said that American soldiers had come looking for Saddam's elder son.

The USA has offered a \$25 million reward for information leading to Saddam's capture and \$15 million each for his sons. Fighting broke out after members of the 101st Airborne



REMAINS OF THE REGIME: A file photograph of Saddam Hussein flanked by his sons Uday (left) and Qusay, in happier times. (Inset) The hideout in Mosul where, after a four-hour gunbattle with US forces, the two were killed on Tuesday. — AFP

Division surrounded the stone, columned villa, which belonged to one of Saddam's cousins, a key tribal leader in the region. The building was left charred and smouldering, its high facade riddled with gaping holes from bullets and heavy weaponry as Kiowa helicopters roamed the sky.

Residents of this Mosul neighborhood appeared to have been caught in the crossfire. It was not known how many people were injured, but several were taken to a nearby hospital. In Washington, defence secretary Mr Donald H Rumsfeld briefed President George W.

Bush about the raid during an Oval Office meeting. The killing of Saddam's sons could have a major impact on Iraqi resistance, which has mounted close to a dozen attacks a day against the coalition. The attackers are believed to be led by former military officers loyal to Saddam's sons.

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Victim of WMD

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21/7

THE CONTROVERSY over the missing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has taken a tragic turn with the death of a British weapons expert. It has now become irrelevant whether David Kelly told a BBC journalist that the Tony Blair government 'sexed up' an intelligence report on Iraq. He denied it before a parliamentary committee any way. But what the tragedy has shown is the disastrous impact which an inquiry into official policy at a time of trouble can have on ordinary people. The central point of the WMD debate on both sides of the Atlantic has been the hype which accompanied the Bush and Blair governments' campaigns in favour of the war. Unsurprisingly, it is now coming to light that there was no clear and present danger from the Saddam Hussein regime either to the US or even to Iraq's neighbours.

Following these revelations, the last few weeks have seen both the governments trying to refute the allegation that they misled their people in their eagerness to go to war. These charges have

affected the Blair government much more than its counterpart in Washington presumably because the anti-war mood has been stronger in Britain. Besides, the BBC report may have created even more of a ripple because of the suspicion that the government's communications chief, Alastair Campbell, was supposed to have had a hand in exaggerating the Iraqi threat.

Where the government is concerned, such insinuations may seem no more unusual than a routine day in office, if a little more hectic than what is customary. For someone outside the loop, however, becoming involved in the murky affair must be more than a little stressful. The judicial probe into Kelly's death can prove to be even more damaging to the Blair government considering that the parliamentary investigation thought that the jury was still out on the question of the WMDs. As it is, the popularity ratings of both Mr Bush and Mr Blair have been falling. Now, the tragedy in Britain and the continuing mess in Iraq may make both the leaders rue the day they planned their invasion.

Bush missed WMD dissent in report

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

TIME RUNNING OUT FOR USA: PENTAGON

WASHINGTON, July 19. — As the controversy over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction rages, the White House has said President George W Bush and his National Security Advisor Ms Condoleezza Rice did not "entirely read" the most authoritative pre-war assessment of intelligence, including the State Department claim that report on Baghdad's programme was "highly dubious." In an unusual step, the White House has released intelligence documents intended to prove that Mr Bush did not exaggerate the threat posed by Iraq before the war.

The excerpts from a classified October 2002 intelligence document indicated that the six American intelligence agencies believed that there was "compelling evidence that Saddam is reconstituting a uranium enrichment effort for Baghdad's nuclear weapons programme".

The document also pointed out the dissent expressed by the State Department's intelligence arm which had said that evidence did not "add up to a compelling case" that Iraq was making a comprehensive effort to get nuclear weapons and that Mr Bush's claim that Iraq tried to get uranium from Niger was "highly dubious".

The claim has been discredited by the UN as being based on forgeries and the White House has admitted it was a mistake to include the claim in Mr Bush's state of the Union address. The head of the CIA has taken the blame. A senior White House administration officer who briefed reporters on the report's release also pointed out that neither Mr Bush nor Dr Rice had read the National Intelligence estimate

WASHINGTON, July 19. — THE USA faces "the potential for chaos" in Iraq and is fast running out of time to restore order before being overrun by rising anti-Americanism, according to a Pentagon report. An advisory team sent to Iraq by defence secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld also concluded that the US-led administration in Baghdad is isolated and underfunded and that dramatic progress on security, basic services and economic opportunity for Iraqis must be delivered "in short order".

Their report, a damning indictment of US reconstruction efforts, was issued as Mr Paul Wolfowitz, Mr Rumsfeld's deputy, began a five-day tour of Iraq and as an American soldier was killed in Fallujah taking the US death toll in Iraq to 148. "The window of opportunity to turn things around in Iraq is rapidly closing," the report says. "The next three months are crucial to turning around the security situation, which is volatile in key parts of the country." — **The Times, London**

Thousands of Shiite Muslims brought out a protest rally in Baghdad denouncing US forces for encircling the house of a leading Shiite cleric who gave an anti-American sermon yesterday, adds a AFP report.

the classified 90-page summary, in its entirety. "They did not read the 90-page document," the official was quoted as saying by the *Washington Post*, referring to the "Annex" that contained the State Department's dissent.

He said President Bush was "brieft" on the contents but "I don't think he sat over the long weekend and read every word of it." Under the category of "moderate confidence", the document states that "Iraq does not yet have a nuclear weapon or sufficient material to make one but is likely to have a weapon by 2007 to 2009."

Bush's popularity

President Bush's popularity slipped on growing doubts about the Iraq war and the flagging US economy some 16 months ahead of the 2004 presidential elections, according to a poll released today, adds a

'URANIUM SOURCE'

ROME, July 19. — A journalist for an Italian news magazine has come forward to say it was she who turned over to US diplomats the documents purportedly showing that Saddam Hussein wanted to buy uranium from Niger, and, in an interview published today, said she won't reveal who gave them to her.

Corriere della Sera, a leading Italian daily, quoted Ms Elisabetta Burba, who writes for the weekly *Panorama*, as saying her source "in the past proved to be reliable." "I realised that this could be a worldwide scoop," Ms Burba was quoted saying, "but that's exactly why I was very worried. If it turned out to be a hoax, and I published it, I would have ended my career." The documents, were later declared by experts to be forgeries. — **AP**

20 JUL 2003

JUL 2003

Body in Blair backyard

AMITROY

London, July 18: A senior ministry of defence official in London who was reprimanded by his employers for allegedly being the source of a controversial BBC report on weapons of mass destruction has been found dead after having apparently taken his own life.

The death of 59-year David Kelly, who was shown live on television a few days ago answering questions from the House of Commons foreign affairs committee, has stunned Britain.

Although formal identification is yet to be made, there was little doubt among observers that a body found lying face down in a wooded beauty spot five miles from his 18th century farmhouse in Oxfordshire is that of Kelly.

Kelly left his home for a walk at 3 pm yesterday and was reported missing to police by his wife when he had not returned by 11.45 pm. This morning, just after 9 am, Kelly's body was found and now 50 policemen have been drafted into the investigation.

The government has come under sharp attack for naming Kelly as the source of a report on May 29 by Andrew Gilligan, the BBC's defence correspondent, who said that an intelligence document was "sexed up" on the orders of Alastair Campbell,

19/7 (2)
Tony Blair's director of communications, to strengthen the case for the war in Iraq.

The British Prime Minister, who was today on his way to Tokyo from Washington, where he had justified the war in an address to a joint session of Congress, was informed of Kelly's death.

Although conspiracy theories will abound about the nature of Kelly's death, it is more than likely that he found the stress of dealing with recent events intolerable and took his own life.

The government has been involved in a vitriolic row with the BBC over whether the government falsified intelligence over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Kelly went to his bosses at the ministry of defence and owned up to meeting Gilligan. The secretary of defence, Geoff Hoon, then took the unusual step

of publicly naming Kelly as the man who had briefed Gilligan.

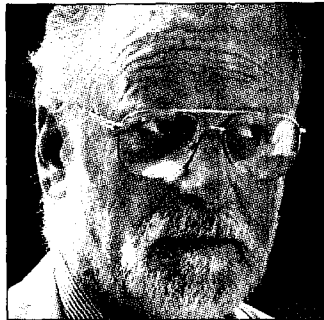
It is still not clear, however, whether Kelly was the source for Gilligan's report, which alleged that information supplied by the intelligence agencies had been embroidered to justify Blair's decision to back President George W. Bush over the war. Blair had said Saddam Hussein was ready to launch his weapons of mass destruction within 45 minutes.

The Commons foreign affairs select committee, which is examining whether Blair was right to launch military action, questioned Kelly live on television last week. At times, Kelly's voice was so soft as to be barely audible.

Looking much older than his age, the white-bearded Kelly said he did not think he was Gilligan's source. The contents of Gilligan's report were so different from their own conversation that he did not think it was based on their chat.

In retrospect, the comments of Andrew Mackinlay, a Labour member of the committee, appear to have been prophetic. He asked Kelly whether he was "chaff", thrown up by the ministry to divert attention.

"Have you ever felt like the fall guy?" asked Mackinlay. "You have been set up, haven't you?" he said. To which, Kelly replied softly: "I accept the process that is happening."



David Kelly

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17/17

Pro-U.S. Mayor shot dead

H. A. 10

BAGHDAD, JULY 16. The pro-American Mayor of the "Sunni Triangle" city of Hadithah was shot and killed on Wednesday in escalating violence in Iraq that also took the life of a U.S. soldier travelling in a supply convoy and an eight-year-old Iraqi child in a separate attack on the U.S. forces guarding a Baghdad bank.

The U.S. military confirmed a report by Al-Jazeera that Mohammed Nayil al-Jurayfi's car was shot at by unidentified attackers as he drove with one of his sons through the city, 240 km northwest of Baghdad. The son was also killed, Al-Jazeera and the military said.

Al-Jazeera said residents of the city had accused the Mayor of collaborating with coalition forces. The Qatar-based broadcaster said Mr. al-Jurayfi's car caught fire after the attack.

The attack was certain to have a chilling effect on other Iraqi officials sympathetic to the Americans. One of the members of the newly inaugurated Iraqi Governing Council, handpicked by the U.S. administrator of Iraq, hails from Hadithah. Samir Shakir Mahmoud, the Council member, is a Sunni but was a leading member of the opposition to Saddam Hussein.

Wednesday's attacks were launched on the eve of a banned holiday that marked the 1968 Ba'athist coup that led 11 years later to Mr. Hussein grabbing power. The July 17th celebration was one of six holiday's important to the Ba'athists that was outlawed by the Governing Council in its first official action.

In violence directed at U.S. forces, the American soldier was killed in a rocket-propelled grenade attack on a supply convoy west of Baghdad near the Abu Ghraib prison, a U.S. military spokesman said. The child died when an attacker threw a grenade into a military vehicle guarding a bank in west Baghdad. The U.S. driver was wounded along with four adult Iraqi by-



An Iraqi boy sits on a surface-to-air missile abandoned at a scrapyard in Baghdad on Wednesday. — AFP

standers, according to a U.S. officer.

"They're killing more Iraqis than they are Americans," the official said.

The U.S. soldiers have come under increasing attacks by suspected loyalists of Mr. Hussein in recent weeks — reaching an average of 12 attacks a day.

A total 33 U.S. soldiers have been killed in hostile action since the U.S. President, George W. Bush, declared an end to major hostilities on May 1.

The Pentagon said that as of Monday 144 U.S. personnel had been killed in combat since the start of the Iraq war. "We need more protection. We've seen enough. We've stayed in Iraq long enough," said a U.S. soldier.

After the attack, troops began house-to-house searches in nearby villages. One resi-

dent said the bombing was the work of men from the tense cities of Fallujah and Ramadi, farther down the road.

In the extreme south of Baghdad, an explosion badly damaged a U.S. Humvee and three U.S. casualties were seen taken away by an Iraqi witness. The coalition had no information on that incident.

Also on Wednesday, a U.S. Marine died in the southern city of Hilla when he fell from the roof of a building he was guarding, the military said.

The new Governing Council — Iraq's first postwar national body — was meeting again later on Wednesday to discuss security and education matters, said Nouri al-Badr, spokesman for the Iraqi National Accord, which holds several seats on the council. — AP

Incident tarnishes Tehran's image, says vice-president

Scribe beaten to death: Iran

Tehran, July 16 (Reuters): Canadian journalist Zahra Kazemi was beaten to death during or after her arrest outside a Tehran prison last month, Iranian vice-president Mohammad Ali Abtahi said today.

Iran's government promised to prosecute those responsible for the death of Montreal-based Kazemi, 54, a Canadian of Iranian descent who died on Friday of what relatives and friends always insisted were head injuries. Iranian officials had earlier said she was killed by a stroke.

"According to a report by the health minister she has died of a brain haemorrhage resulting from beatings," Abtahi said. "The death of Zahra Kazemi... creates a very black picture (of Iran) in the world."

Iran's President Mohammad

Khatami on Sunday ordered four ministers to investigate Kazemi's death.

Abtahi said it was still not clear whether the beating took place during her arrest last month outside Evin prison, where many dissidents are jailed, or during later interrogation.

"As soon as the results of the investigation by the committee appointed by the President are presented to the cabinet, we will definitely introduce to the court those who have committed a probable violation... if a violation is proven," government spokesman Abdollah Ramazanzadeh said.

Kazemi's death appeared likely to mar what had been relatively smooth relations between Iran and Canada, which has insisted her body be returned to her adoptive country.

"From our point of view, because she has Iranian citizenship, no foreign government has the right to make special comments on this issue," Ramazanzadeh said.

"Kazemi was an Iranian citizen and Iranian laws are applicable, not the laws of another country."

Iran's state-run Human Rights Commission said the arrest had taken place under the authority of Tehran prosecutor-general Saeed Mortezaei. "Naturally the same source should be answerable for the situation," it said earlier this week.

Iran's reformers, led by President Mohammad Khatami, have often accused the hardline judiciary of running parallel security forces and unregistered detention centres outside the supervision of the government.



Canada-based Iranian scribe Zahra Kazemi. (Reuters)

War crimes tribunal to try Saddam, aides

Baghdad, July 15 (Reuters): Iraq's new US-backed governing council agreed today to set up a war crimes tribunal that would try ousted President Saddam Hussein and his top associates, a spokesperson for a key party in the council said.

As the number of American combat deaths neared the 1991 Gulf War total, the US military announced a new nationwide crackdown — Operation Soda Mountain — to eliminate armed Iraqi resistance and said its forces had killed five Iraqi fighters. Washington blames attacks on its forces on supporters of Saddam, who disappeared during the US-led invasion. Thirty-four people on a US list of 55 most-wanted Iraqis are either dead or in the hands of US and British forces.

"The US has not declared until now what it's going to do with the 55. The governing coun-

cil will take it upon itself to try them and to punish them according to law," said Entiffadh Qanbar, spokesman for the Iraqi National Congress led by governing council member Ahmad Chalabi. "That includes Saddam Hussein, the biggest criminal."

He did not say whether Saddam would be tried in absentia.

Qanbar said the council formed a commission to lay down laws that would allow it to put suspected war criminals on trial, including for mass killings, executions, and chemical attacks against Kurds in the 1980s. Qanbar said the 25-member council, formed on Sunday, had also decided to create a commission to look into ways to "uproot" Saddam's once all-powerful Baath Party from Iraqi society.

Iraq's US-led administration has banned the party and launched a de-Baathification

process, sacking all senior party members from government jobs. US forces are also trying to crush growing armed resistance and the military said troops had conducted 53 raids across Iraq, detaining 316 people and confiscating arms ammunition and explosives in Operation Soda Mountain launched on Saturday. Another operation, Ivy Serpent, is part of the crackdown.

US forces killed five Iraqis and captured another after they came under ambush while driving out of an ammunition depot, the commander of the unit involved said.

There were no US casualties in the ambush between the cities of Ramadi and Habbaniyah, about 100 km west of Baghdad in particularly hostile territory for US troops.

Anti-American sentiment is also running high in the restive

town of Faluja, where soldiers in the US 3rd Infantry Division said they were bitterly disappointed by a decision to keep them in Iraq indefinitely.

"It's a big shock," said Sergeant Josh Holt of Montgomery, Alabama.

Under fire and unwanted by Iraqis, the soldiers have already had a protracted stay in Iraq. The division was the first American unit to enter Baghdad during the war.

"It has been tough. I have had to take a seven-year-old child home whose father we killed in an exchange of fire," said Holt. "The family just cried. They just cried. I am sure they will try to get revenge. That is the way it works in Iraq."

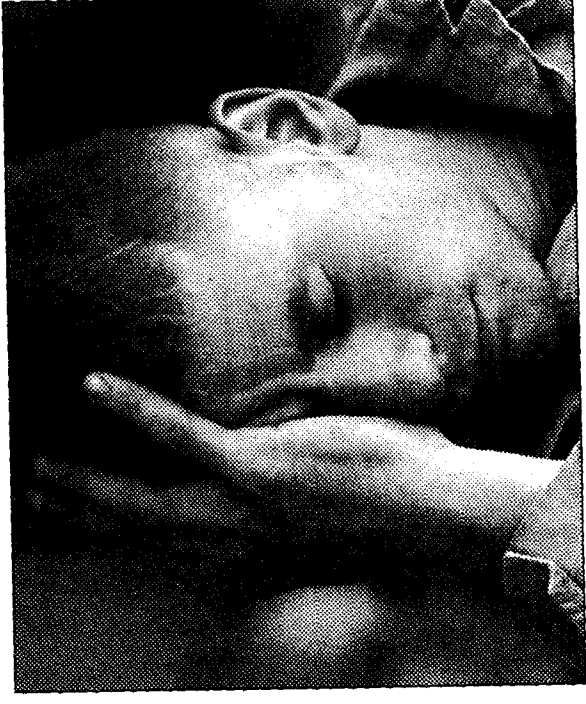
"We were told three times we would be going home in a couple of months. It is not a good time to announce this. We are demotivated," said Sergeant Chris Gr-

isham, a military intelligence officer.

In an abrupt about-turn, the US military said yesterday thousands of troops from the division would stay in Iraq until further notice instead of returning by September in line with an announcement made only last week. Today the US defence department said it expected the entire division to be back home some time this autumn, but was unable to provide a specific timetable.

Thirty-two US soldiers have been killed in Iraq since President George W. Bush declared major combat over on May 1.

A US soldier was killed in a Baghdad ambush yesterday, bringing the number of American troops killed in hostile action since the invasion began on March 20 to 146, one less than the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait.



A US soldier, whose unit's deployment in Iraq has been extended indefinitely, awaits the visit of the Third Infantry Division's commander to their base. (Reuters)

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IRAQ / U.S. SOLDIER KILLED IN GRENADE ATTACK

in Asia
①

Council votes to send team to U.N.

BAGHDAD, JULY 14. Iraq's new Governing Council — a U.S.-sanctioned first step toward democratic Government in post-war Iraq — put off selecting a president on Monday but voted to send a delegation to the U.N. Security Council.

In the streets of the capital, violence against U.S. forces erupted again, with one soldier killed in a rocket-propelled grenade attack.

At the close of its first full day of business, the Council — which was announced to the world on Sunday — issued a statement that said the U.N. delegation would “assert and emphasise the role of the Governing Council as a legitimate Iraqi body during this transitional period.”

Monday also was celebrated as the 45th anniversary of a bloody coup in 1958 when King Faisal II, Iraq's last monarch, was killed by nationalists, provoking years of political trouble and unrest.

It is an occasion that had been celebrated under the former leader, Saddam Hussein, but monarchists in Baghdad were able to gather for the first time to mourn the King's assassination.

Thousands of people — including Sunnis, Shiites and



Supporters of the Communist Party take out a march for the first time in 35 years in Baghdad on Monday. The demonstrators were celebrating the July 14, 1958 coup that toppled the Iraqi monarchy and brought to power the left-leaning nationalist, Abdul Karim Qassem, seen in the poster at centre. — AP

Kurds — attended a ceremony in honour of the possible successor to the throne, Sharif Ali bin Hussein, who greeted well-wishers at his palatial headquarters.

In west Baghdad, one American soldier was killed and six were wounded in the attack by insurgents who fired several

rocket-propelled grenades at the military convoy early on Monday, said a military spokesman. The wounded were taken to a military hospital.

Also on Monday, the military said a marine in southern Iraq died in a non-hostile incident. It provided no details.

The death brought to 32 the

number of American soldiers killed in hostile action since the U.S. President, George W. Bush, declared an end to major fighting on May 1.

The violence followed an apparent failed car-bombing on Sunday night on a police station full of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi police, local police said. — AP

Misgoverning Iraq

Washington digs itself into a hole

The 25-member council set up by the Americans to govern Iraq is unlikely to be given much real power. Although it can appoint ministers and pass budgets, its own members can be appointed and removed by Paul Bremer, the chief US administrator. That closely resembles the governing structure in Pakistan or Iran where General Musharraf or the Ayatollah Ali Khomeini respectively, both men without a political support base hold the strings of power. Meanwhile, guerrilla resistance to US forces in Iraq shows no signs of abating, for which the official explanation is that Iraqis still fear Saddam Hussein will make a comeback and dare not shift their loyalty from him.

That has led Washington to invest a great deal in capturing or killing Saddam, appointing a task force to carry out the mission and with a \$25 million reward for help received from any quarter. There are several dubious assumptions playing out here — for one, killing Saddam would make a martyr of him, which could increase rather than damp down resistance to US occupation forces, particularly so given the anarchy and misgovernance that they have so far visited upon Iraq. Second, any authorized assassination of Saddam would make American officials visiting the region legitimate targets for assassination attempts by the resistance. Putting Saddam Hussein on trial for war crimes is an even worse option — it would not play out well before either an Iraqi or a world audience. The fact of the matter is that Saddam enjoyed friendly relations with the US when he was carrying out his worst atrocity — the gassing of the Kurds — and the question will arise why Washington didn't react then.

Clearly Washington is in a hole regarding Iraq — any government it appoints will be seen as comprising little more than stooges. The hated Chalabi is already in Bremer's Council. That is why Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, who leads one of the most powerful Shia groups in the country, has not deigned to participate in the council himself but instead sent his brother as a deputy. If the objective behind the war on Iraq was stemming proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in effect President Bush may have achieved the very opposite. No WMDs have actually been found yet, while the invasion has probably redoubled Iranian and North Korean search for nuclear weapons.

The Iranians have refused entry to selected sites by IAEA inspectors, while North Korea has thrown them out. With a third of US army manpower tied down in Iraq, there is no purely military means that Washington possesses to impose its will on either Teheran or Pyongyang, bluster notwithstanding.

As far as Iraq is concerned, the logical solution to the present impasse would be for the UN to come in, take complete charge and broker the transition to a legitimate government, but that would injure too many egos in the current Bush administration. The best hope for Iraq, then, may be regime change in Washington itself.

New Iraqi governing council meets

BAGHDAD, July 13. — A governing council bringing together prominent Iraqis from all walks of political and religious life met today for the first time, a first step on the nation's path to democracy, US and Iraqi officials said.

The panel will have real political muscle, with the power to name ministers and approve the 2004 budget, but final control of Iraq still rests with US administrator Mr L Paul Bremer.

"The launch of the governing council will mean that Iraqis play a more central

role in running their country," Mr Bremer said in a speech on Iraqi TV yesterday. "It will represent the diversity of Iraq: whether you are Shiite or Sunni, Arab or Kurd, Baghdadi or Basrawi, man or woman, you will see yourself represented in this council."

Today, the new council vowed to form an "effective government" that will achieve security, revitalise the economy and provide public services. "The building of a new Iraq shall remain among the first priorities of the good Iraqi people," said council member and returning exile Md Barhul Uloom.

"It will require the participation of all Iraqis from all political and social strands who are willing to help accomplish this historic task. The council will direct all of its efforts to achieve security and stability in the country, revitalising the national economy and providing public services," Mr Uloom, an 80-year-old liberal Shiite ayatollah who ran the Islamic Ahl ul-Bayt centre in London, said.

The UN special representative in Iraq, Mr Sergio Vieira de Mello, said he would report to the UN Security Council on July 22 on the "positive news that Iraq has

taken a marked step towards fulfilling that which it is called to achieve by UN Security Council resolution 1483.

"Basic services must be urgently revived, the economy must urgently be revived, the jobless must be found, jobs, new skills must be learnt, law and order must be re-established, the police force must be rebuilt, as possibly the army, the justice system reformed, the full range of human rights must be promoted and protected," the UN envoy said.

"Freedom, dignity and security must from now on be taken for granted by all Iraqis," he added.



Md Barhul Uloom (left), Mr Jalal Talabani (centre) head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Mr Ahmad Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress at a press conference on Sunday. — AFP

WHITE HOUSE ADMITS TO INTELLIGENCE PROBLEMS

USA, Britain differ on Iraqi uranium

New twist to BBC-govt dispute

The Times, London

LONDON, July 9. — A dispute between the British government and BBC grew more complex when a defence staffer said he had an unauthorised meeting with the a BBC reporter whose story is the source of the argument.

Just as it appeared the row would subside, the defence ministry last evening put forward the account of an anonymous official who might, possibly be the source of the disputed report.

The BBC then said he probably wasn't the source, but suggested that if he were, he wouldn't be telling the ministry the same thing he told the reporter.

The ministry statement said a department official had come forward to say he had met with the BBC reporter to discuss the government's dossier on Iraqi weapons a week before the broadcast of Gilligan's report quoting a source. The statement added the official had not mentioned Mr Alastair Campbell in relation to the critical part of the dossier — a claim that Mr Saddam Hussein could use WMDs at 45 minutes' notice. — AP

WASHINGTON/LONDON, July 9. — Differences between Britain and the USA over Iraq's weapons programmes surfaced on Tuesday when the White House admitted that Mr George W had been wrong to have claimed in his State of the Union address that Mr Saddam Hussein had tried to buy uranium from Africa.

The British government, however, stood by its official dossier last September, but the White House conceded for the first time that there were problems with prewar intelligence. The International Atomic Energy Agency has said that documents that claim to show trade was taking place between Iraq and Niger were forgeries.

But Downing Street has always claimed that it had separate sources for the alleged resumption of uranium trade between the two countries, and did not rely on those documents.

The American admission was prompted by a declaration by a former US ambassador that he had told Washington before Mr Bush's speech in January that the uranium evidence was bogus. Mr Joseph Wilson was sent to Niger by the CIA last year to probe British claims that Iraq had tried to purchase uranium. He concluded there was no truth in the allegations.

But Mr Ari Fleischer

White House spokesman, said Mr Wilson's report did not reach White House. There has been no satisfactory reason given as to why Mr Wilson's conclusion, which he gave to the CIA, had not been passed to Mr Bush's speechwriters.

Mr Bush said in his State of the Union speech: "The British government has learnt that Mr Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa".

But after first standing by that claim, the White House abandoned it, saying: "The information is not specific enough for us to be certain that attempts were in fact made... It may in fact be wrong." But British officials said the MI6 remained satisfied that the intelligence about Iraq's "intentions" of buying uranium from Niger was correct.

Rumsfeld: The USA hopes to share the cost and responsibility of the military occupation in Iraq with a coalition of countries, NATO members playing a key role, defence officials said, adds AFP "We've got 19 countries on the ground, we've got commitment from another 19," Mr Donald Rumsfeld, defence secretary, said.

Iraqi agent held: A person was arrested today on charges of acting as an agent of Saddam Hussein's government and spying on Opposition leaders for Iraqi intelligence, adds AP from Chicago

THE STATEMAN

10 JUL 2003

Military perspectives on Iraq

By V.R. Raghavan 107

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INDIAN DEFENCE forces are the only entity whose voice is not yet heard in the debate on sending troops to Iraq. They are, quite rightly, neutral in the political debate swirling in the country. That does not mean that Indian military leaders do not ask hard questions of their political masters. It would not be wrong to say that in the rush to accede to the request from the United States for a sizeable Indian force, some restraint has been introduced by the military seeking critical clarifications from the political leadership. Like a professional and loyal force, it will abide by the final political decision. That does not mean such doubts and questions should be lightly set aside.

It was Cicero who wrote in one of his letters to Atticus that "I prefer the most unjust peace to the justest war that was ever waged." The Indian military leadership would not be remiss in wondering over the nature of the proposed role in Iraq. The war waged in Iraq was unjust enough. The military action now continuing is not ushering in peace either. Will the Indian military be asked to continue a war declared unjust by the nation's Parliament? Or will it be asked to impose an unjust peace by force?

The Indian force is required by the U.S. Command to be in the Kurd-controlled northern part of Iraq. It would therefore relieve the U.S. 101 Division that is currently operating in the area. The U.S. Division is apparently needed to bolster the faltering military control in central Iraq. Baghdad, Falujah, the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf have seen scenes of the U.S. military being attacked. Military 'pacification' of central Iraq is essential to establish a new government. The ratios of troops to space demand the deployment of a greater number of American troops in the Iraqi political heartland. Indian troops will thus enable the U.S. to impose a military dominance through which a political outcome can be enforced.

In the Kurd-held areas, two challenges will face Indian military commanders. The Kurds are sharply divided into two warring groups. They have held their peace on account of U.S. pressure and the hope of a political role for them in Iraq. That outcome is not even on the horizon since there is no legitimate government in Baghdad. What is

Rushing (Indian troops) to Iraq without clarity on the fundamentals of the national interest will place the military in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reasons.

certain is that if Iraq's territorial and ethnic integrity is to be ensured, as promised by the U.S., the Kurds are likely to get no more than a subsidiary role in the future governance of Iraq. Add to this the substantial oil resources of the northern areas and the Kurds' desire to control them and the situation is fraught with both political volatility and military turbulence.

Military leaders justifiably demand to know the political objectives that are to be obtained through military operations. In Iraq, the political objectives would be determined not by New Delhi but by Washington. The decision and judgment of Paul Bremer, the U.S.' chief civilian administrator for Iraq, would be the critical input in determining political and, therefore, military objectives.

In other words, he would instruct Indian commanders on which political groups would be militarily subdued or marginalised. U.S. interests, as viewed through its geo-political prism, would determine Indian military operations. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 does not clarify this; nor was it expected to. The Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal's reference to "grey areas" in the Resolution points to this and other problematical aspects.

Indian military commanders have for long been wary of vague and unclear political directions. For 50 years, operations in India's Northeast have been conducted without political clarity. The Sri Lanka experience remains embedded in Indian military memory as an example of ambivalent, uncertain and unclear political direction on the strategic purposes of military operations. Iraq will witness Indian commanders receiving command directions from U.S. authorities.

By the nature of U.S. strategic needs, the operations will need to be conducted in ways that will go against Indian interests in the region and Indian public sentiment. Indian military commanders will be left in an extremely invidious situation. They will have no support from Delhi in reconciling the demands of a

U.S. chain of command against their understanding of ethical and just war principles. No greater disservice can be done to Indian troops.

The demand for Indian forces in Iraq is evidence of a significant conceptual shift in the U.S. approach to force projection. A half century following the Second World War saw the U.S. relying on bases in foreign countries and its own troops stationed abroad to maintain its strategic control. The U.S. leadership now believes that technological advances in military capabilities give it advantages thus far unavailable. Such advantages are also not going to be available to any other power in the foreseeable future.

Distant combat through missiles and unchallenged air operations can now support short and decisive campaigns by the U.S. of the kind seen in Afghanistan and Iraq. Such operations are short on casualties and therefore easy on collateral political damage at home. This also requires that after U.S. military power attains the objectives of defeating the adversary militarily, other countries' troops are required to control the seized areas. This is witnessed in Afghanistan where a non-U.N. Force is operating under European leadership with NATO assets.

Indian military capability and efficiency place its forces high on the list of countries that can be used to work the new U.S. concept. The reality of a high tech military power using low and medium technology forces to work its interests should not be missed by Indian policy makers. The reality will be attractively packaged in euphemisms of strategic partnerships and partnerships for peace. Indian policy makers may even be offered their Holy Grail of Security Council membership. The fact however will remain of a smaller power buying major power partnership through provisioning competent military labour and paying for it.

The military is the easiest instrument to apply. It responds fast, gets to the scene of action fast and produces results quickly. Political leaders the world over grasp this instrument in haste and live to regret

the decision later. Pulling back a military also imposes costs. The political costs of a pull-back of the military from Iraq, after a flawed choice of deployment, can have serious political costs.

It is the political leadership which must therefore ask the questions the Indian military is seeking answers to. Rushing to Iraq without clarity on the fundamentals of the national interest will place the military in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reasons.

The burden of maintaining a force in Iraq will tax the capacity of Indian authorities to breaking point. Maintaining the IPKF across the Palk Straits in Sri Lanka was bad enough. A supply line that extends by sea from Mumbai to Basra and then by land across Iraq to Mosul will deter any logistician. The costs cannot even be contemplated. Within weeks of Indian forces reaching Kurd areas, we can expect a 'Mosul surcharge' on income tax to fund the enterprise. The impact on internal turn-overs of troops from Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast to the hinterland for rest and retraining will also be felt.

Among other things, a society is judged by the value it places on soldiers. India's leaders and society would have placed themselves in an indefensible position by asking their military to operate against the interests of the Iraqi people. That this would be done under international media scrutiny and in the face of restrained but sullen reactions from Arab states in the region is not going to help India's image either.

The Indian military functions on the basis of trust and confidence in its ranks. The question often asked is whether political leaders can keep trust with the military. Rushing to Iraq, without settling the terms of engagement and policy guidelines, will reinforce the belief in the military that the political leadership cannot be trusted to keep its interests in mind.

India and the United States have every need for working together in the international arena. This is in the mutual interests of the two countries. Their mutual interests in the international order emerging in the post 9/11 era, given India's own terrorist traumas, need not however involve cooperation in military campaigns that are on the wrong side of Indian interests.

Governing Iraq

By M. H. Ansari

A U.S. Army sergeant on duty at a police station in Baghdad tells a journalist, "We have no business being here". He says life is miserable, hot meals, air-conditioning and decent bathrooms are not available and that it is difficult to keep morale high: "We need to get out of here". His counterpart in the Iraqi police considers the Americans arrogant and attributes their loss of public trust to this arrogance.

Two perceptions of a situation in the complex landscape called occupied Iraq. The Americans and the British are being accused of lack of planning and incapacity in attending to the basic needs of the public. Insensitive, heavy-handed tactics in house-to-house search operations, including the use of dogs, has inflamed sentiments among the conservative sections of the population.

The hothouse plants nurtured by America as future rulers of Iraq have already been discarded. Ahmad Chalabi is a disillusioned man and his 'Free Iraq' force, trained by the U.S. Army, has been disbanded. The first U.S. administrator in Iraq, General Jay Garner, was replaced. His successor, Ambassador Paul Bremer, has announced his intention of staying in Iraq for two years and intends to handpick a team of Iraqi counsellors to assist in administering and in drafting a new constitution under which elections would be held. The

impression is that he wants to delay elections to sideline the religious parties. This move has been opposed by Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the ranking Shia divine in Najaf and until now considered apolitical. In a *fatwa* issued last week, the Ayatollah decreed that the move to appoint counsellors is contrary to Islamic law. He has instead suggested that elections be held so that elected representatives can undertake the drafting of the Constitu-

tion. Too much control would revive Kurdish resentment and too much autonomy would upset Turkey. The real problem is in central and southern Iraq where armed attacks on the alliance forces have compelled Mr. Bremer to ask for 50,000 additional troops (bringing the total to two lakhs) and announce substantial cash awards for information on Saddam Hussein and his two sons. The attacks on American and Islamic groups; to appreciate the implications of bypassing the Security Council peacekeeping operations, a direct result of which is the unwillingness of many countries to participate in them; unwillingness to appoint an interim Iraqi administration immediately after the war, and install a democratically elected government at the earliest; failure to establish a rapport with the Shia religious leaders; and, above all, failure to communicate with the Iraqi people and understand the public mood.

An American academic, who knows the region well, has written that conditions in Iraq are desperate and trouble is coming from almost every quarter of the population. The observation of the Army sergeant is therefore understandable. Nor is his Iraqi counterpart wrong.

(The writer is a former Permanent Representative of India at the United Nations.)

The Americans and the British are being accused of lack of planning and incapacity in attending to the basic needs of the public.

British soldiers, and on economic targets, will keep the level of military alert high and that of reconstruction activity low. In such a situation, the battle for the hearts and minds of the Iraqis would be difficult to win. It is 1920 all over again with the Americans taking the place of the British.

Although the U.S. President, George W. Bush, continues to talk aggressively, alarm bells have started ringing in Washington. The question, "who misled the President," is being whispered among those whose responsibility is to ensure that Mr. Bush is re-elected next year and for which a dramatic and decisive victory in Iraq was considered so essential.

What went wrong? The war exercise was a litany of misleading state-

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WEST ASIA / KEY DEMAND OF ABBAS CONCEDED

Israel to free groups of Palestinian detenus

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JERUSALEM, JULY 6. Israel's Cabinet voted on Sunday to release groups of Palestinian prisoners, but the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, said the release would be conditional on a Palestinian crackdown against militant groups.

Securing the freedom of prisoners is a top priority of the Palestinian Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas, and Mr. Sharon said the release would strengthen Mr. Abbas' leadership.

The United States has backed Mr. Abbas' administration, which agreed to a cease-fire with Israel last Sunday and has vowed to crack down on militant groups.

There was no immediate word on the numbers of prisoners who would be released, but earlier in the day, Mr. Sharon met Avi Dichter, chief of Shin Bet, the internal security organisation. Mr. Dichter presented Mr. Sharon with a list of several hundred prisoners who could be released early.

Palestinian officials had no immediate comment on the Cabinet decision. Israel holds some 5,000 Palestinian prisoners and the release is only a small and conditional step toward meeting Palestinian demands of a mass release.

The Cabinet also called for the establishment of a committee that would monitor Palestinian compliance with the

U.S. 'prods' Israel on fence

WASHINGTON, JULY 6. The U.S. is likely to increase pressure on Israel to stop construction of a controversial fence between Israel and the West Bank.

During her trip to West Asia last week, the National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, criticised the Israeli Government's construction of the security fence in a meeting with the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, a report said here. Mr. Sharon said the fence "had no political significance". Officials told the *New York Times* that the exchange illustrated the Administration's willingness to prod Israel and to get involved in the negotiations. — PTI

U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan aimed at halting violence, the Tourism Minister, Benny Elon, said. The release will also be according to guidelines set by the Shin Bet.

"The releases will be carried out in small numbers and will

be conditioned on proof that the Palestinians are living up to their security commitments," Mr. Sharon said after the Cabinet meeting. "If there is no Palestinian Authority determination to fight against terror and stop terror, the releases will stop."

The release is controversial in Israel, where the mass arrests of militants are credited with helping diminish terror attacks. The Ministers were deadlocked at first and the measure was passed only after the Cabinet agreed to set up the monitoring committee.

According to the Government decision, militants who were involved in attacks on Israelis and members of the militant Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups will not be part of the release.

In Gaza City, about 1,200 people, mostly relatives of detainees, marched through the city on Sunday, carrying pictures of family members in Israeli jails and chanting "No peace without the release of all detainees." Also on Sunday, the Israeli Defence Minister, Shaul Mofaz, met the Palestinian security chief, Mohammed Dahlan, to discuss a prisoner release and Palestinian demands for further withdrawals from Palestinian areas. — AP

THE HINDU

7 JUL 2003

Detention of Turkish soldiers by US troops irks ALL

Iraq recruits killed in blast

US @ 11:55 AM 6/5 6/5
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Baghdad, July 5 (Reuters): A blast killed seven US-backed Iraqi police recruits and wounded dozens more west of Baghdad today, police said, in the latest attack aimed at derailing Washington's post-war plans for Iraq.

The US also faced angry accusations from Ankara that US forces had seized Turkish special forces troops in northern Iraq. The Turkish Prime Minister demanded the soldiers' immediate release.

In Ramadi, scene of the deadly attack, a local police chief blamed supporters of Saddam Hussein. A recorded message broadcast yesterday purportedly from the ousted leader called on Iraqis to fight the US-led occupation of their country.

Pools of blood were still spread across the pavement near the police station in Ramadi, 100 km from Baghdad, hours after the explosion late this morning. The recruits had been just a few days from graduation, police said.

Most of the spate of recent attacks have targeted US troops, whose commanders blame isolated Saddam loyalists for the violence. But today's blast underscored that Iraqis cooperating



An injured police recruit lies on a hospital bed in Ramadi, Iraq. (Reuters)

hind the attack. A US military spokesman in Baghdad said he had similar casualty figures to those given by Iraqi police.

Hostile fire has killed 26 American soldiers in Iraq since May 1, when US President George W. Bush declared major combat over in the war that ousted Saddam on April 9. Six British soldiers have been killed in the same period.

In Ankara, the Turkish government said 11 of its special forces based in northern Iraq had been detained by US forces yesterday afternoon. Turkey's foreign minister spoke to US secretary of state Colin Powell about the case, officials said.

"We demanded their immediate release. They (US officials) said they are safe," Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said.

"It's a totally ugly incident, it's something that shouldn't have happened."

The soldiers were accused of planning an attack on the Kurdish governor in the city of Kirkuk, Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet* reported, but foreign minister Abdullah Gul dismissed that charge as "non-sense".

tacks on US forces. "Seven police recruits died and 20 are critically wounded," Ramadi's deputy chief of police, Abdullah Shihan, said. He blamed "mercenaries who aim at destabilising the security of this city".

Some residents and police said the blast was a result of a roadside bomb while others said it was a rocket-propelled grenade or an artillery shell.

Jaadon Mohammad, Ramadi's chief of police, said he believed Saddam loyalists were be-

with the occupying powers also face danger. "Those who refuse to embrace the new Iraq are clearly panicking, they are turning their sights on Iraqis themselves," said Paul Bremer, the head of Iraq's US-led administration. "We will not be deterred from solidifying the freedom of the Iraqi people."

Ramadi is in a mainly Sunni region north and west of Baghdad which was long a bastion of support for Saddam, himself a Sunni, and has seen frequent at-

IRAQ / \$25-M. BOUNTY ON SADDAM

11 killed in heavy clashes near Balad

BALAD (IRAQ), JULY 4. U.S. troops killed 11 Iraqis who ambushed a convoy outside Baghdad on Friday, one of the heaviest clashes yet in the daily grind of attacks on American forces.

The ambush came hours after mortars hit a nearby base, wounding 18 U.S. soldiers. A sniper also shot and killed an American soldier guarding the Baghdad museum, the military said. Meanwhile, the U.S. has put a \$25 millions bounty on the former President, Saddam Hussein's head, and U.S. officials say that the mystery over his whereabouts is encouraging anti-U.S. attacks — though they insist the resistance is not centrally organised.

The ambush came on a highway near Balad, 90 km north of Baghdad, when 11 men attacked a convoy with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire, the military said. U.S. soldiers fired back, killing all. There were no American casualties. U.S. forces have frequently been ambushed on the roads of central Iraq — usually by small groups of insurgents who fire small arms or grenades then flee.

In another bold attack, four mortar rounds rocked a huge U.S. base near Balad late on Thursday, injuring 18 soldiers, said an officer. Flares and tracer bullets sliced across the night



SOURCES: NIMA; Associated Press AP

sky after the blasts. Two soldiers were seriously injured, with one undergoing surgery in a hospital located on the base and another evacuated for treatment, the spokesman said.

Others suffered cuts and punctures from flying shrapnel, and nine soldiers went back to duty, he said.

"This is the first time the base was attacked — and the first time we've seen mortars," he said. The wounded soldiers belonged to Task Force Iron Horse, a 33,000-member unit that has been conducting raids in central Iraq. On Friday, attackers detonated an explosive on a highway in Baghdad's western outskirts, injuring three passengers in a civilian car and two U.S. soldiers travelling in a Humvee convoy, according to an Associated Press photographer on the scene. — AP

W.A. 11-9 5/7

Saddam 'vows' more attacks

BAGHDAD, JULY 4. A voice purported to be that of the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, was aired on *Al-Jazeera* television on Friday, saying he is still in Iraq and vowing more attacks on Americans.

"No to surrender and no to cooperation and we thank God for everything," said the tape, which the voice said was recorded on June 14. The voice urged Iraqis to not aid coalition forces in their attempts to hunt down former Iraqi leaders.

"I call upon you to protect these heroic fighters and not give the invaders any information about them or their whereabouts during their operations. There is resistance and I know you are hearing about this. Not a day passes without them (suffering) losses in our great land, thanks to our great mujahideen. The coming days will, God willing, be days of hardship and trouble for the infidel invaders."

There was no immediate way to confirm the tape's authenticity but those who are familiar with Mr. Hussein's voice



The ousted Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, addressing his countrymen in this image from *Al-Jazeera* on Friday. — Reuters

said it sounded like his. "We (the regime) fulfilled our obligations to you and sacrificed what we had to, except our values, which are based on our deep faith and honour. We did not stab our people or our nation in the back."

Claiming credit for armed attacks on U.S. occupation forces in Iraq, the voice

said, "Oh brothers and sisters, I relay to you good news: Jihad (holy war) cells and brigades have been formed."

Explaining why the regime fell so fast, the voice said: "We refused to hold onto power if that meant submitting to the American threats."

The voice added that his Government preferred to give up power than become a puppet state. "They wanted to occupy us without a fight and destroy our pride."

The voice said he is still in Iraq "among my people" along with a small group of his 'companions.'

Al-Jazeera's chief editor, Ibrahim Hilal, contacted in Doha, Qatar, said the tape was delivered to his office on Friday.

"Someone called us and played back the tape for us and we recorded it. It ran for over 20 minutes, but only 10 minutes are newsworthy. We don't know the source, or where the call came from. We have no reason to doubt its authenticity," he said. — AP

Kurds await date with democracy

By Sabrina Tavernise

14.10.10
A/7

SHORTLY AFTER the end of the first Gulf War, the newly semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq held a rare democratic election. The region-wide election, however, provoked a civil war. There has not been another since. The war broke the region, which calls itself Kurdistan, into two zones, each dominated by a single political party. Neither party tolerates political pluralism. Both have used torture, killings and kidnappings to achieve their political goals, many people in Sulaimaniya say.

As the United States authorities consider how to build a democracy in Iraq, they have repeatedly held up this region as a model. In a message to the Kurdish parliament, L. Paul Bremer, the American in charge of administration in Iraq, said, "I am confident that the example you set, with free elections, will be an inspiration for the rest of the country." There is little doubt that the Kurdish political system has been less repressive than Saddam Hussein's. But a look at the Kurds' faltering experiment with democracy, where patronage and tribal allegiances crowd out the rule of law, shows how difficult it will be to establish a pluralistic political system in Iraq.

"Compared to the rest of Iraq, Kurdistan is fantastic," said David McDowall, author of "A Modern History of Kurds" (St. Martin's Press, 2000). "But it's a long way short of democracy as we know it in the Western world. It's incredibly important that Americans understand that democracy is in no way coming tomorrow."

Conditions in the Kurdish region were hardly ripe for building a democracy. It was under constant military pressure from Saddam Hussein,

whose Government killed an estimated 1,80,000 Kurds during the 1980s. The Iraqi Kurds are surrounded on the other sides by Iran, Turkey and Syria — countries intent on dividing and weakening the Kurds to keep their own Kurdish population from making a move for independence. The parties are not new. The revered

A look at the Kurds' faltering experiment with democracy, where patronage and tribal allegiances crowd out the rule of law, shows how difficult it will be to establish a pluralistic political system in Iraq.

Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani, formed the Kurdish Democratic Party in 1946. Thirty years later, a headstrong young Kurd, Jalal Talabani, quit the party and formed his own — the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. After a bitter war for power in the 1990s, the two parties agreed to an American-brokered peace in 1998 and recently began looking for ways to share power.

The region's main economic activity is trade, much of it only partly legal because of the unclear status of the region. It could not forge formal relations with other countries and was too unstable to attract foreign investors. The Kurdish parties have cemented their power through a near-monopoly on the economy. The lack of clear laws for the region left much room for financial manoeuvring. Political leaders, however, bristle at questions about corruption. A party leader, Talabani, when interviewed, said angrily that "only enemies and propagandists" would raise

questions about conflicts of interest in his party.

The ultimate instrument of party control over people's lives is a vast system of political patronage. Party control extends down to the lowest-level government jobs. A 33-year-old nurse in a Sulaimaniya hospital, who would identify himself only by his

Kurds, who have come into conflict with one of the two governing parties, describe often violent tactics. In Erbil, the capital of the zone run by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, three journalists were arrested last August after writing articles that explored the lack of opportunities for local youth and raised questions about party finances. They were later released, but one of them, Nuradin Waisi, said he had received a death threat from a senior party official. Goran Salih, 31, another of the three, said party officials made their position clear. "They said I will see much trouble in my life if I keep writing in that direction," he said in an interview. Both sides seized hundreds of prisoners during the civil war. People who were jailed described being tortured.

Things have changed since the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Kurdistan's revenues collapsed after coalition forces banned the parties from levying their own duties. Facing an uncertain future, politicians in both parties have been trying to redefine their role. They have even made plans for a merger, which would have been unthinkable a year ago.

Ordinary Kurds, who still live in fear of offending the political parties, have gradually begun to talk about them. The real test, however, will be whether the parties are ready to concede defeat in a political race. Mr. McDowall contends that it will not happen until Iraq has an independent middle class. "Across Iraq, people who have bits of power are now working like crazy to create their own networks," he said. "It's happening invisibly. They will not surrender that power willingly. No one ever does."

— *New York Times*.

US will stay in Iraq as long as needed: Bush

Washington: Acknowledging that the US faces a "massive and long-term undertaking" in Iraq, President George W Bush has said American forces are "engaged in remnants of the former regime as well as members of terrorist groups."



George Bush

"These groups believe that they have found an opportunity to harm America, to shake our resolve in the war on terror and to cause us to leave Iraq before freedom is fully established. They are wrong and they will not succeed."

In his most extensive remarks about Iraq in the two months since he declared that heavy fighting was over, Mr Bush said that "as long as terrorists and their allies plot to harm America, America is at war."

He said US will stay in Iraq as long as necessary until a democratic government is established in Iraq. "There will be no return to tyranny in Iraq," said Mr Bush. "And those who threaten the order and stability of that country will face ruin, just as surely as the regime they once served."

Having liberated Iraq as promised, said Mr Bush, "We will help that country to find a just and representative government, as promised."

Meanwhile, a US soldier who was wounded on Tuesday in an attack on his military convoy in Baghdad has died from his injuries, the US military said on Wednesday.

The soldier belonged to the 352nd Civil Affairs Command—a non-combat unit—which had been involved primarily in the reconstruction of post-war Iraq, assessing which public works projects have priority and assigning funds to them, a spokeswoman said.

The death raises to at least 23 the number of Americans killed by hostile fire in Iraq.

In the restive town of Falluja, US soldiers took to the streets on Wednesday hoping to convince Iraqis they were not behind a deadly mosque explosion, but enraged residents vowed holy war to drive them out of town.

"We will fight a holy war until the last drop of blood. Even boys who are 10 years old will fight until their last drop of blood," said an Iraqi man standing at the al-Hassan mosque, which was hit by an explosion on Monday night.

US military officials flatly denied the accusation and American troops launched a public relations campaign on Wednesday to distance themselves from the mosque explosion. But the town of Falluja, a hotbed of Sunni Muslim anti-US sentiment, was in no mood to listen as the Americans pressed ahead with their effort to win Iraqi hearts and minds. Residents predicted more attacks against American soldiers.

THE IRANIAN PUZZLE

Russia Performs A Balancing Act

By ALEXANDER SHUMILIN

5-8
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A conflict between Iranian students and conservative mullahs which lasted for several days (for the first time after the Islamic 1979 revolution) shows that Iranian problems are of another character than the Iraqi ones. It is clear now that a massive base for opposition is nearly ripe in that country.

Meanwhile, Washington talks in unison about how desirable a change of regime in Teheran is. So far, there is talk about non-military ways of doing this, which is understandable: Iran's military might is much more impressive than that of Iraq shattered by sanctions; besides, the occupation scenario with the installment of "an emigre government" will not work in Iran.

Transformation

Therefore, it would be more correct to talk about the United States' wish to have the present regime modified (with the convincing signs of a Western-type democracy against the background of a rather high level of local society's Islamisation), than the desire to tear it apart. To be more specific — to help the president-reformer Mohammad Khatami to get rid of "mullocracy" in the form of the conservative ancient Ayatollahs' council.

The idea of "Iran's transformation" mostly by political and diplomatic methods (special operation will, no doubt, be kept secret) may become quite acceptable for "old Europe" which has grown weary of the confrontation with its overseas ally around Iraq. Besides, the last report of the IAEA director Mohammed El Baradei warns about Iran's nuclear programmes. Unlike the Iraqi half-real and half-mythical weapons of

The author analyses Middle East conflicts in the Russian Academy of Sciences

mass destruction, Europe takes the threat of an Iranian nuclear bomb quite seriously: in that event, Europeans (not Americans) risk being the first to be shelled by Iranian ballistic missiles. The same is true of Russians

lesson is that, if the Americans choose a correct strategy, they will achieve their goals in Iran.

And then Russia will have to resolve with them the problem of its huge contracts with Iran. In the Iraqi situation, Moscow ma-



as well. It is not difficult to predict the Europeans' position should Washington declare a "crusade against the mullahs": most probably, taught by the Iraqi crisis, they will obediently support the Americans, the more so since they have long officially approved the sanctions against Iran introduced by the US State Department.

Confrontation

Russia alone risks finding itself in a complex situation — with its mega-project in Bushehr and nearly a billion-dollar annual trade with Iran. We are not interested in losing what we have gained — both economically and politically. However, a confrontation with the United States is not an option either.

The Russian leadership does not yet have a single final position on Iran, especially considering the Iraqi lessons. The main

naged to balance somehow between the United States and "old Europe" and then simply criticize Washington in a "nice company of civilised partners" (Paris, Berlin, and Beijing as well). As a result, Moscow avoided a direct political confrontation with Washington and was finally "forgiven" by it. As it is seen now, it is largely due to Washington's political will that Iraqi pseudo-ministers of oil affairs do not dare to do what they declared and cancel the Iraqi contract with the LUK oil company for the development of the West Qurna-2 deposit. It seems Washington realises now that, by excluding Russian companies from the Iraqi registers, the Americans will only confirm the most negative opinions about the true goals of their military campaign in that country. No wonder other Russian companies are actively returning to

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Iraq, which cannot be said about French and German companies:

No wonder that in this situation Moscow is looking for extraordinary "moves" in order to ensure its real interests in Iran. One of them is the recent "gesture" of the Russian atomic power minister who invited Americans to take part in the work on the Bushehr project. At first, the Iranians were shocked. However, getting a bit cooler, they intensified their own gestures of respect towards Moscow by agreeing to sign a protocol on the return of spent uranium to Russia, allow the IAEA inspections and boost trade.

Diplomatic duel

As to Moscow's gestures towards the United States, they do not seem to have impressed the White House much. "Friendly misunderstanding" with respect to Iran began to turn into a "diplomatic duel". Whatever the case, the Russian leadership must urgently work out a common and consolidated position on Iran. Many of its components are already seen in some statements made by Russian officials. As the Kremlin says, Iran is our closest neighbour and Russia intends to cooperate with it.

It will not engage in Byzantine intrigues supporting one ruling group against another. Iran has always been a zone of Russia's special economic interests. Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation (the Bushehr project) should be constantly monitored by IAEA inspectors.

For the first time, Russia states its concern over the opportunity for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. Russia's position seems to be rather balanced: it distances itself from Teheran in the context of the world community's concern over Iranian nuclear programmes and, at the same time, strives to preserve its economic presence there.

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THE STATESMAN

W. ASIA / LEADERS MEET IN SHOW OF RECONCILIATION

Sharon, Abbas pledge peace

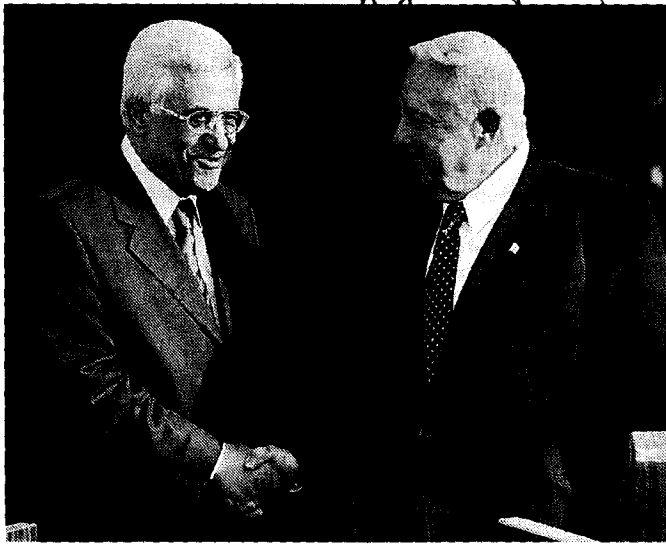
JERUSALEM, JULY 1. Israeli and Palestinian Premiers met in Jerusalem on Tuesday in a public show of reconciliation, rededicating themselves to peace efforts, as armoured vehicles and trucks loaded with military gear drove out of bases near Bethlehem ahead of a planned withdrawal from the West Bank town.

The outdoor ceremony in front of the Israeli Prime Minister's office had former enemies, including the Israeli Defence Minister and the Palestinian security chief, sitting side-by-side and chatting amicably, in a show of peaceful intentions that follows 33 months of bloody Palestinian-Israeli violence.

It was the third such meeting in Jerusalem, but the first time that the two leaders, joined by senior Cabinet Ministers and aides, made a public display of reconciliation.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and the Palestinian Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas, renewed their support for a U.S.-backed peace plan, and asserted their commitment to reach a peace deal. "Prime Minister Abbas, we are facing a new opportunity today, a better future for both peoples," Mr. Sharon said.

"The possibility of a better future before us. I will make every effort to achieve an agreement that will lead us to peace and security."



The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon (right), and his Palestinian counterpart, Mahmoud Abbas, in Jerusalem on Tuesday. — AP

Mr. Abbas responded in kind, and said every day without an agreement is a "an opportunity lost, every life sacrificed is a human tragedy."

The two sides were expected to reconstruct committees to discuss issues like security, finances and prisoners.

The committees operated during the first years of peace efforts in the 1990s but were suspended during the current violence.

The Bethlehem pullout was to begin on Wednesday, in line with the road map, which re-

quires Israel to withdraw to positions it held before the outbreak of fighting in September 2000.

Mosque razed

In other developments on Tuesday, Israeli crews demolished the foundations of a mosque being built without authorisation next to a major Christian shrine, the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, Jesus' boyhood town.

The demolition came after years of intense Christian pressure. — AP

Open to checks, Iran snubs UK

Tehran, June 30 (Reuters): Iran said today it would invite UN nuclear watchdog chief Mohammed ElBaradei to Tehran for talks shortly but rebuffed British calls for it to sign up immediately to tougher inspections of its nuclear facilities.

The International Atomic Energy Agency earlier this month reprimanded Iran for its repeated failure to report on nuclear material, facilities and activities and called on it to sign a document allowing more intrusive, short-notice inspections of nuclear sites.

"Iran is going to invite ElBaradei soon to visit Iran to hold talks to remove technical prob-

lems," Hassan Rohani, secretary general of the Supreme National Security Council, told visiting British foreign secretary Jack Straw, the official Irna news agency reported.

ElBaradei told an IAEA board of governors meeting in Vienna earlier this month that IAEA officials intended to visit Iran "in a few weeks' time" for technical discussions.

He said the agency was particularly interested in discussing the scale of Iran's uranium enrichment programme.

Washington has accused Tehran of secretly trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran says its nuclear ambitions are limited to generating electricity to meet growing demand.

Straw urged Iran to sign up to an IAEA additional protocol, permitting tougher inspections, immediately and unconditionally.

Failure to do so would damage international confidence in Iran and could jeopardise a possible trade agreement between Tehran and the EU, he said.

Iranian officials appeared unmoved by Straw's warnings.

While saying they had not ruled out signing the additional protocol, they insisted Iran should also be allowed access to western technology to develop nuclear energy.

WEST ASIA / TRUCE COMES INTO EFFECT

Israel pulls out of northern Gaza

GAZA CITY (GAZA STRIP), JUNE 30. Israeli and Palestinian commanders shook hands on Monday, bulldozers dismantled checkpoints and Palestinian traffic flowed freely in the Gaza Strip — the most significant sign of disengagement after 33 months of bloody fighting. But one man was killed in a Palestinian shooting.

In line with a U.S.-backed peace plan, Israel pulled troops out of northern Gaza late Sunday, and agreed to withdraw from the West Bank town of Bethlehem on Wednesday. And in another reflection of the bid to end 33 months of fighting, the sides' Prime Ministers — Ariel Sharon of Israel and Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority — were to meet in Jerusalem on Tuesday, Palestinian sources said.

Several Palestinian militant groups announced a suspension of attacks against Israelis on Sunday. But the first full day of truce was marred by the killing of a Bulgarian construction worker. The Bulgarian Foreign Ministry identified him as Krastyu Petkov Radkov (46), who was driving a

truck. The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a militia affiliated with Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility.

Three hours later, Palestinians opened fire on workers building a security fence near the West Bank town of Qalqilya, the military said. No one was hurt, and soldiers returned the fire.

Settlers called for a halt to Israeli gestures to the Palestinians, but Mr. Sharon counselled patience, noting that the process had started only a day before.

"Even if the Palestinians were the fastest in the world and the most determined, you can't expect them to destroy terrorism in a moment, since this morning," he told MPs.

Even before that, both sides were skeptical the cease-fire will hold, having been disappointed so many times before — and a dispute loomed over Israel's demand that the Palestinian Authority dismantle the militant groups altogether.

But there was also a first glimmer of optimism as Israeli troops pulled out of Beit Hanoun, which had seen most of its farm-

land razed by Israeli bulldozers.

"You were late," Mohammed Shabat (65), pointing to the destruction, told Palestinian policemen who took over the Israeli positions. "But, God willing, we will bring this town back to the old days."

"This is a very important and serious step by the Israeli side toward the implementation of the road map," said the Palestinian Information Minister, Nabil Amr. And the Foreign Minister, Nabil Sheath, said Israel should withdraw from all West Bank towns within six weeks. "Things are promising and we must seize this moment," he said.

The two largest Israeli dailies, *Yedioth Ahronot* and *Maariv*, framed their front-pages in blue, normally reserved for editions on Jewish holidays. "Cease-fire," read a banner headline in the *Maariv* daily, above a photo of two soldiers hugging in Gaza. The withdrawal scenes were reminiscent of the mid-1990s, when Israeli troops pulled out of Palestinian population centers as part of interim peace deals. — AP

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OPERATION SIDEWINDER TARGETS SADDAM LOYALISTS

USA launches fresh offensive in Iraq

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Associated Press

CAMP BOOM (Iraq), June 29. — US forces launched a major operation in Iraq early today to crush insurgents and capture senior figures of the ousted regime of Mr Saddam Hussein. More than 20 ground and air raids were conducted and more than 60 suspects arrested in a show of force aimed at stemming a wave of attacks on the US troops.

Operation Sidewinder, kicked off around 2 a.m., is taking place in a vast swath of central Iraqi land from the Iran border to areas north of Baghdad. The region has become "the nexus of paramilitary activities," the US military said.

The raids came as the US civilian administrator of Iraq said the American forces must kill or capture Mr Hussein. "We'll go in with such overwhelming power that they won't even think about shooting us," Lt-Col Mark Young said before the operation was launched. "The raids target former Ba'ath Party loyalists,

terrorists suspected of perpetrating attacks on US forces and former Iraqi military leaders."

Defence secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld blamed the violence on "scattered, disorganised remnants"

attack the US troops. In Dojima, where a group of Sunnis recently polished a portrait of Mr Hussein, police raided the homes of alleged Saddam loyalists suspected of hiding arms. There were no reports of US casualties nor was there any indication that the operation had netted any of the wanted fugitives.

Earlier in the day, two American soldiers were injured and an Iraqi civilian was killed in an attack on a US military convoy on a road leading to Baghdad Airport. In Khaladiyah, 60 km west of Baghdad, a group of Iraqis ambushed a US patrol and attacked the troops with rocket-propelled grenades. The troops returned fire with 25 mm

cannon, but reportedly failed to target the attackers. Yesterday, the US forces arrested 15 suspects in Mosul.

Bodies of the two US soldiers missing since Wednesday were found 32 km northwest of the capital yesterday morning.



US soldiers patrol the banks of the Tigris at Saab Al-Por, close to where the bodies of two American soldiers were found. — AFP

of the ousted regime, while secretary of state Gen. Colin Powell blamed a combination of "leftover" Ba'ath members, *fidayeen* and criminals.

At least 63 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq since 1 May.

The US forces arrested a man in Khalis, 70 km north of Baghdad, suspected of recruiting young men to

Another report on page 3

Straw to step up pressure on Iran

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JUNE 28. Britain is to step up pressure on Iran to open up its controversial nuclear programme to closer international scrutiny by allowing wider access to United Nations weapons inspectors.

The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, who is visiting Iran at the weekend, would emphasise the "sense of urgency" over the issue in the international community, though he is not likely to set a deadline for Iran to accept more intrusive inspections.

In his discussions with his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharazmi, he is expected to dangle the carrot of trade concessions by the European Union in return for Iranian cooperation, but also warn of consequences if Teheran does not oblige.

The blunt message, which Mr. Straw is reported to be carrying, is that it would be in Iran's own interest to be persuaded rather than be forced to comply. "He will make it clear that if Europe's way (of persua-

sion) does not convince, there is only one other choice (force)," one report said echoing the U.S. National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice's warning, during her visit to London on Thursday, that Iran could be in for a "Made in America" solution if it did not fall in line.

Military action

Ms. Rice did not rule out military action saying that "sometimes we have to fight wars to deal with tyrants". Her remarks that "absence of action is not a solution" were seen aimed at putting pressure on Britain and continental Europe to deal with Iran more firmly — if necessary by putting the fear of use of force. Observers said her comments had a "strong echoes of the blunt talking that surrounded the debate before the Iraq war".

A specific demand that Mr. Straw is expected to make is ^{sum of} ^{approval} ^{of} the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency's additional protocol or guarantees on closer inspections of its weapons pro-

gramme. The issue was also believed to have been raised with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, when he visited Britain earlier this week, as Russia is helping Iran with the development of its civilian nuclear facilities.

British officials were quoted as saying that persuading Iran to allow more intrusive weapons inspections was "not going to be straightforward".

Another issue, which Mr. Straw is expected to raise, is Iran's alleged links with terrorists — an allegation, which Teheran has consistently denied, and domestic reforms, especially relating to human rights.

Britain and America have expressed support for demonstrations held in world capitals in recent weeks against the hard-line clerics in Teheran.

This is Mr. Straw's fourth visit to Iran since diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored in 1999 after a bitter row over the Iranian *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, and the first by a senior Western leader after the Iraq war.

Europe, US call for review of Iran's nuke programme

MICHAEL DOBBS
WASHINGTON, JUNE 26

EUROPEAN leaders on Wednesday joined President Bush in demanding stronger international inspections of Iran's nuclear programme, and said they would act to intercept "illegal shipments" of materials that can be used to develop weapons of mass destruction.

A joint statement issued at the end of an annual US-EU summit pledged to use "all means" to halt the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. It singled out North Korea and Iran as the most significant proliferation threats facing the world.

At a White House news conference after the meeting, Bush said the "free world" expected Iran to comply with demands that it agree to intrusive inspections by the International

Iran lodges protest on Blair's remarks

DUBAI: Taking exception to British PM Tony Blair's remarks expressing support for student demonstrations here, Iran lodged a protest against "interference in its internal affairs." Blair's statement that the student demonstrations in Iran deserved British support ran contrary to the principle of respect for national sovereignty of the nations, Deputy Foreign Minister for Euro-American affairs Ali Ahani said.

—PTI

Atomic Energy Agency. "Iran must comply," he said. "If they don't, we'll deal with that."

US suspicions that Iran is developing nuclear weapons have been strengthened over the past few weeks by a recent

IAEA report describing a range of efforts by Tehran to produce fissile materials that could be used for the construction of a nuclear weapon. The Iranian government insists its nuclear research programme is for peaceful purposes only, but has failed to explain why it needs nuclear power.

For the time being, the Bush administration has settled on a strategy of attempting to mobilise international opinion against Tehran, and working through multilateral institutions to put a stop to the suspected Iranian nuclear programme. A senior State Department official, John Bolton, flew to Madrid earlier this month for a meeting with representatives of a dozen other countries, including Spain, Britain, Australia, and Poland, to consider ways of strengthening "interdiction" efforts.

—LAT/MP

6 British soldiers killed in Iraq

LONDON, JUNE 24. Six British soldiers were killed and eight others injured in two incidents in southern Iraq, said the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's office on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Defence refused to say whether the soldiers died in an attack, describing it only as an 'incident.'

The deaths and a subsequent attack occurred within a few km of each other in Amarah, a village north of the city of Basra.

In the second incident, troops from the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment patrolling south of Amarah came under fire, taking a casualty. A helicopter despatched to assist the ground forces came under fire as it landed, wounding seven

people on board, three seriously.

The Ministry of Defence said all personnel on board the helicopter had been taken to a field hospital for treatment. It is investigating whether the two incidents are related.

"There have been two incidents today near Amarah resulting in British casualties. We very much regret to confirm that in one incident six British personnel have been killed," the Ministry of Defence said.

"In the second incident, troops from ... the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment patrolling south of Amarah came under fire. The patrol took one casualty and two vehicles were destroyed. In responding to the incident, an RAF Chinook hel-

icopter carrying a quick reaction force came under fire as it landed. Seven personnel on board the helicopter were wounded, three of them seriously.

The 1st Battalion has around 650 soldiers in Iraq who operated mainly around Basra and the southern oilfields during the conflict. They have been in control of Basra, Iraq's second city, for several weeks where they have been able to patrol the city without helmets and flak jackets.

Several U.S. soldiers have been killed in Iraqi rebel attacks since May 1, when major combat was declared over, but Tuesday's attack is the first major incident involving British troops since Baghdad fell to the coalition forces. — AP

THE HINDO

25 JUN 2003

IRAQ / FLOW OF CRUDE MAY BE AFFECTED

New blast hits oil pipeline

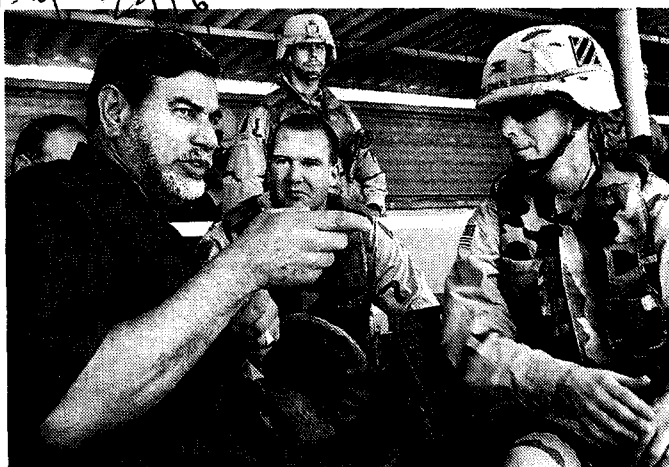
BAGHDAD, JUNE 23. Unknown assailants have attacked a fuel pipeline in western Iraq near the border with Syria, an Iraqi Oil Ministry official said on Monday, warning such attacks could become a daily occurrence.

"The Ministry is aware of an attack near Al-Abidiyah al-Gharbiya not far from the Syrian border," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It seems there are people prepared to mount such attacks every day on Iraq's pipelines," he added, after a gas duct exploded west of Baghdad late on Saturday in a blast described by residents as sabotage. He did not give more details about the latest attack.

A pipeline passes near Al-Abidiyah al-Gharbiya, 300 km northwest of Baghdad, carrying Iraqi oil to the Syrian terminal of Banias on the Mediterranean Sea and to Lebanon, according to infrastructure plans.

U.S. military officials said they were unable to confirm the attack.

An explosion ripped through a gas pipeline near the town of Hit, 150 km west of Baghdad late on Saturday, in what residents said was an attempt to sabotage U.S. efforts to use Iraq's oil revenues to rebuild the country.



The Mayor of Fallujah, Taha Bedani Alwan (left), with U.S. soldiers during the inauguration of the police force in the mainly Sunni Muslim flashpoint town on Monday. Policemen, who worked under the toppled regime of Saddam Hussein, and new recruits were given cars, uniforms and weapons. — AFP

Pay for soldiers

Meanwhile, Iraqi soldiers, first routed and then sacked by the U.S., finally won a battle today when the coalition agreed to pay back salaries, under threat of violence. "The first payments to former soldiers will begin on July 14," the Coalition Provisional Authority said in a statement.

The money would range from \$50 to \$250 for 200,000-250,000

former soldiers. "The payments will be paid monthly and the recipients must renounce Ba'athism and violence," the statement added.

It also gave details of the new Iraqi army the U.S. authorities are to establish, adding that recruiting for that force would begin next week.

"A division of 12,000 soldiers will be trained and be operational in one year," the Authority said. — AFP

HINDU

24 JUN 2003

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DNA tests on to confirm Saddam's death

W. R. ...

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JUNE 22. Speculation over the fate of the former Iraq President, Saddam Hussein, heightened today after a leading British newspaper quoted American sources in Baghdad as saying that he might have been killed in an attack last week on a convoy of vehicles following 'firm' information about his movements.

The Observer, in a "special report", said American specialists were carrying out DNA tests on human remains "believed by the U.S. military sources to be those of Saddam Hussein and one of his sons."

It said the remains were 'retrieved' from the wreckage of the convoy struck by the U.S. missiles in the Western desert, near the Syrian border.

Military sources said the strikes, involving an undisclosed number of Hellfire missiles, were launched against the convoy last Wednesday after the interception of a

satellite telephone conversation involving either Mr. Hussein or his ~~son~~ it claimed, adding the attack took place two days after the U.S. authorities captured Abid Hamad Mahmud, a top aide of Mr. Hussein.

The information about the former President's movements could have come from Mr. Mahmud, the newspaper suggested.

Pentagon mum

The report gave details of the composition of the convoy but said the Pentagon refused to comment on what it called "operational matters." Quoting unnamed sources, it said Mr. Hussein's elder son, Uday, was 'thought' to have been in the convoy with his father.

"The convoy is believed to have been heading for the Syrian border and was intercepted near the frontier town of Qaim," it said, claiming the sources were "cautiously optimistic that they had finally killed the target they described as the 'top man'."

Iran backs away from nuke row, pledges to cooperate

Tehran, June 21

IRAN BACKED away from confrontation over its nuclear program on Saturday, saying it was ready to cooperate more actively with UN inspectors to dispel doubts about the Islamic republic's nuclear ambitions.

"We will definitely try to cooperate more than before with the IAEA and give them the necessary assurances about Iran's activities," the head of Iran's atomic energy programme, Gholamreza Aghazadeh, said in Tehran.

Iran has faced mounting pressure in recent weeks from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog, and the United States over the nature of its nuclear programme.

The IAEA reprimanded Iran on Thursday for repeatedly failing to report nuclear material, facilities and activities as required under its safeguards agreement with the agency. It urged Iran to remain "transparent" and accept without delay or conditions more intrusive, short-notice inspections.

Taking a conciliatory line, Aghazadeh said Iran was positive and optimistic about reaching an agreement with the IAEA on an additional protocol the UN agency has asked Iran to sign to allow more intrusive nuclear inspections and at short notice.

"We have never said we don't

Dozens of Iranian students held

IRANIAN SECURITY forces have rounded up dozens of students in recent days in a move which reformist MPs said would exacerbate tension in the wake of a spate of pro-democracy protests.

Reformist newspapers on Saturday said the arrests were carried out by officials wearing plainclothes and the whereabouts of many of the detained students was unknown. Analysts said the round-up may be aimed at in-

timidating students to deter them from staging mass rallies to commemorate the violent attack on a Tehran University dormitory by Islamic vigilantes on July 9, 1999.

Students have been at the centre of recent demonstrations against clerical rule which started in Tehran and spread to other cities. The protests lasted for 10 consecutive nights but there were no reports of meeting on Friday.

Reuters, Tehran

want to sign the Additional Protocol...Our view about the protocol is positive," he said. "Naturally, the way we will choose is the way of cooperation and reaching an acceptable settlement for both sides."

Asked in Jordan about Aghazadeh's latest comments, IAEA chief Mohammed ElBaradei said he would welcome Iran's cooperation.

"I have lots of confidence that Iran will understand that it is in its best interest to work with the International Atomic Energy Agency," he said. "The more cooperative they are, the more transparent they are, the more confidence they can create in the international community

and the quicker we can resolve the whole nuclear issue in Iran."

Environmental samples

Aghazadeh told the Tehran news conference Iran was ready to discuss the general issue of environmental samples with the IAEA. But earlier on Saturday, he reiterated Iran's resistance to IAEA requests for permission to take samples at the Kalaye Electric Company in Tehran. "We've had no problem concerning environmental samples, but we've been telling the IAEA that this location is a non-nuclear location," Aghazadeh told state television.

Reuters

Iran pleased with IAEA, says US bid has failed

Teheran: Iran welcomed on Friday an International Atomic Energy Agency statement on its nuclear activities and said the United States failed in its efforts to secure a tough resolution against the Islamic republic.

"Generally the report was good and shows that Iran's activities and Iran's reports were effective," said Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation.

He said US efforts to step up pressure on Iran's nuclear programme, which Teheran insists is aimed at producing electricity, had been thwarted by its friends on the IAEA board and Iran's cooperation with UN inspectors.

"America has carried out extensive propaganda for this meeting and we should acknowledge that our friends' efforts and the presentation of enough proofs and documents caused their failure," he told state television.

The IAEA's board of governors on Thursday criticised Iran's failure to comply with agreements designed to prevent the use of civilian nuclear resources to make atomic weapons. But the IAEA statement fell short of the damning resolution the United States had hoped for.

Washington, however, quickly backed it

Iran is ready for closer N-probe, says Putin

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Iran was prepared to accept tight international oversight of its nuclear programme and he called for security guarantees to be given to North Korea to solve the deadlock over its nuclear activity.

In his Kremlin news conference, Mr Putin also said that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat must not be shut out of the West Asia peace process.

Mr Putin said Iranian President Mohammad Khatami had assured him in a telephone call two days ago that his country did not strive for nuclear weapons and it was prepared to sign any protocols required by the International Atomic Energy Agency. AP

and issued a fresh demand to Iran to comply with the watchdog. "This report shows that Iran's activities were transparent. Iran has cooperated and they (the IAEA) are expecting more cooperation," Mr Aghazadeh said. Reuters

2 1 JUN 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

IRAN'S N-PLAN / U.S. APPEAL TO WORLD

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Bush backs pro-democracy protest

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 19. In what is his toughest stance against Iran in recent times, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, has said that the international community should make it clear to Teheran that it will not 'tolerate' the development of a nuclear weapon; and offered strong support to the pro-democracy students protesting the lack of reforms, in the last several days.

"I appreciate those courageous souls who speak out for freedom in Iran. They need to know America stands squarely by their side. And I would urge the Iranian administration to treat them with the utmost respect," the President said.

Mr. Bush's remarks on Iran's nuclear weapons programme and his all-out support to the anti-regime elements in Iran are bound to raise apprehensions in the region and elsewhere, especially in the context of this Republican President having branded Iran as belonging in the "Axis of Evil" along with North Korea.

"The international community must come together to make it very clear to Iran that it will not tolerate the construction of a nuclear weapon. Iran would be dangerous if they have a nuclear weapon," Mr. Bush told reporters. He said the issue had come up for discussion at the recent summit of the Group of Eight in France. "We had a good discussion on the subject with near-universal agreement that we all must work together to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon," the President said.

The Bush administration is virtually paying no attention to Iran's statements that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, for generation of electric power,



RAGING PROTESTS: Activists of the Iranian Opposition People's Mujahideen argue with police during an anti-Teheran demonstration in Paris on Wednesday. — AFP

with officials here questioning why Teheran needs a nuclear programme, given all its oil wealth.

Further, Washington has been leaning quite hard on Russia to halt all assistance to the Iranian programme; but this pressure has not worked well. Aside from concerns about Iran's nuclear weapons programme, the Bush administration has also expressed worries about Teheran's missile programmes and has said that the country has ties to terrorist outfits such as Al-Qaeda.

But in the immediate context, the Republican administration is hoping that the International Atomic Energy Agency will confront Iran on the nuclear issue and find

it in violation of the nuclear treaty. This will then push the issue to the United Nations Security Council. Washington is now demanding that Iran should accept a more intrusive inspections programme, saying it finds the latest IAEA report "deeply troubling."

The White House, meanwhile, has rejected Iran's contention that the report of the IAEA had been tailored to please the U.S. The White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, argued that the United Nations and the IAEA are "proudly independent organisations" which make their own judgements. "Sometimes we agree with them, sometimes we don't," he said.

20 JUN 2003

THE HINDU

Protesters stay in cars, numbers begin to dwindle

Scores held in Iran sweep

2 WPM
1-3
19/6 France WAM (DQ van)

Tehran, June 18 (Reuters): Hundreds of Iranians demanding more freedom demonstrated for the eighth consecutive night early today and scores of protesters were arrested and some injured in rallies in seven cities.

The US backs the protests as a cry for freedom from a people whose government US officials accuse of being part of an "axis of evil" for allegedly developing nuclear arms, backing terrorism and trying to destabilise post-war Iraq.

Protesters in Tehran, wary of possible beatings from hardline Islamic vigilantes which marked previous nights, kept to their cars and sounded their horns in traffic jams around the city's university — the focus of the unrest.

The official Irna news agency reported protests in six other cities in which scores were arrested and several injured.

But numbers taking part in the demonstrations — among the largest and most violent for four years — appeared to be dwindling.

Tension was lower in Tehran, apparently due to the intervention of uniformed police who protected students from attacks by Islamic vigilantes and arrested some vigilante leaders.

"Confronting the plainclothes and wilful people has started, some of them have been arrested and it will continue," intelligence minister Ali Yunesi said, quoted by Irna, referring to arrests of hardline vigilantes.

Iran's government and most parliamentary deputies accused Washington of blatant interference in Iran's internal affairs. Hardline clerics say they have detected a US-inspired plot.

"America has pinned its hope on the unrest, but learned very quickly that it is making a mistake," Yunesi said.

But demonstrators said they were not there for Washington.

"If coming to the streets will

give me more freedom, I don't care who calls for it, I will come here and tell all my friends to come with me," said teenage high school student Amir.

Protesters have expressed anger at moderate President Mohammad Khatami as well as unelected conservative clerics who have blocked his efforts to reform Iran's "Islamic democracy".

Irna said at least 90 people had been arrested in the past two days in the northwestern city of Tabriz where riot police surrounded the university there.

Police used tear gas to break up protests in the southern city of Yazd and the windows of banks, shops and a judiciary building were smashed in Karaj, west of Tehran.

Analysts predict that with most student leaders in jail or having fled the country after campus protests in 1999 and 2002, the unrest was likely to fizzle out.

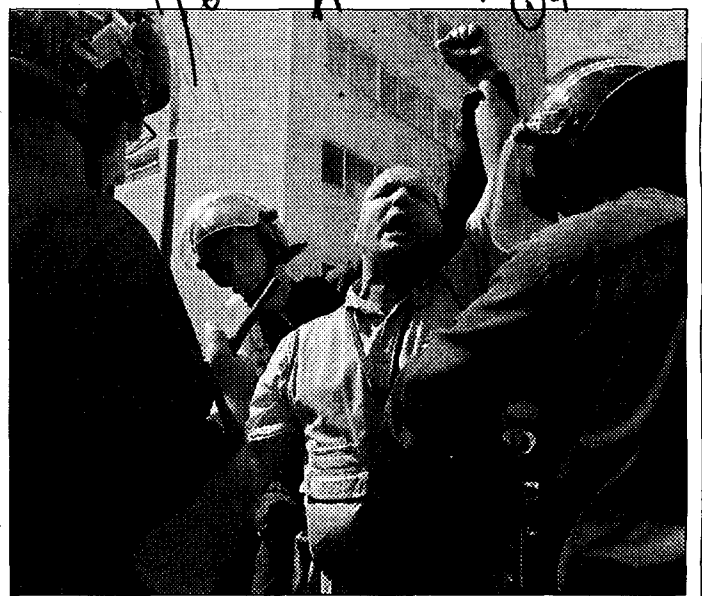
While the President has remained silent on the protests, his younger brother and leading reformist deputy, Mohammad Reza Khatami, said Iran should not use Washington as a scapegoat.

Tailored report

Tehran accused the UN nuclear watchdog on Wednesday of tailoring a damning report to suit Washington's view that Iran is using a civil power programme to obtain nuclear arms via the back door.

But a senior US envoy to the United Nations countered with charges that Iran had violated non-proliferation treaties and was stalling inspection efforts.

The governing board of the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) debated a report claiming that Iran repeatedly breached anti-nuclear treaties over the last 12 years by failing to declare the import, processing and storage of nuclear materials.



An Iranian exile protests in Paris on Wednesday against a mass round-up of Left-wing Iranian exiles, including their leader Maryam Rajavi. (AFP)

Flames in France

Paris, June 18 (Reuters): One Iranian exile died and two others were badly burned after setting themselves ablaze today during a day-long protest against France's mass round-up of dissidents opposed to Islamic rule in Tehran.

Marzieh Babakhani, aged about 40, died in hospital after setting fire to her clothes early today at a protest of about 100 exiles outside France's DST counter-intelligence agency near the Eiffel Tower, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

Segigheh Mojaveri, 38, set herself ablaze at the same protest at midday and Mohammad Vakilifar, about 45, did the same late in the afternoon, witnesses said. Both were rushed to hospital with serious burns.

Exiles had earlier identified Vakilifar by his nickname Sani. He was a political exile living in Germany, said officials of the

National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), whose military arm was the target of yesterday's raid. The two women were living as refugees in France.

In Berne, Swiss police stopped an Iranian from lighting his clothes after dousing himself with a flammable liquid. The NCRI said protesters would stay outside the DST headquarters until the release of their leader, Maryam Rajavi. The DST ran the raid that rounded up 159 exiles.

19 JUN 2003

Unrest home-grown, says Iran's elite

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, JUNE 15. The on-going student protests appear to have triggered a lively internal debate in Iran, with many influential Iranians beginning to question the view orchestrated mainly by the country's hardline clergy that the campus unrest was U.S.-inspired.

According to Mohsen Tor-kashvand, a member of the National Security Commission of the Iranian Parliament, "We shouldn't call the students American or Israeli or regard them as foreign agents." He argued that "students' criticism should be heard and tolerated."

Significantly, Mr. Tor-kashvand's statement has appeared prominently in the conservative English daily, *Teheran Times*. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has described the protests as an expression of a U.S.-inspired plot to destabilise the country's Islamic revolution.

An editorial in the English daily, *Iran News*, meanwhile, has said that the widespread frustration among the Iranian youth that has spilled onto the streets could be attributed to the misuse of "political and family connections" by sections of the Iranian elite to corner the main state-owned avenues of higher education for their wards.

The entrance examination for state-owned higher education institutions was "antiquated", it

said. As a result, a majority of students were pushed into seeking more expensive higher education in private institutions or simply forced to wander the streets.

Meanwhile, the exertions of the pro-hardline vigilantes, Basij, who have sought to break the student protests, are also being roundly criticised. The state-run official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reports that the head of a key journalists' association has written separate letters to Iran's Interior Minister and the police chief, complaining about the harassment of journalists by the Basij. The head of the Iranian Journalists' Guilds said, "in the course of student protests over the past few days, several journalists have been beaten up by plain-clothes elements as well as, unfortunately, by police".

The protests, which began last Tuesday on account of Iran's plans to encourage privatisation of higher education, were apparently triggered by programmes telecast by a U.S.-based pro-monarchist satellite channel.

Iran's Foreign Office spokesperson on Saturday hinted at U.S. links with the monarchists that have, in the past, brought about political change in Teheran.

For instance, the U.S.-inspired coup in 1953 had unseated the nationalist government of Mohammad Mosaddeq and reinstated the Shah of Iran.



A CHILLING NOTE: A ransacked room of a student in the Allameh Tabatabai University in Teheran on Saturday. — AP

The Basij, in a statement, indicated possible U.S. involvement in the week-long unrest. It pointed to U.S. comments in favour of the protestors, the wide-

spread international media coverage of the unrest and the absence of mainstream student organisations in organising the protests to reinforce its views.

SEE HINDO

16 JUN 2003

Troops to Iraq await talks parade

THIS ONE BIT THE BAIT, WILL INDIA?



President George W. Bush holds up his catch while fishing with his father off the coast of Kennebunk, Maine, on Saturday. (Reuters)

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 15: On the eve of a Pentagon team's visit, the Centre indicated it would strive for political consensus and also hold consultations with Iraq's neighbours before deciding on sending troops to Baghdad.

The government thus appeared to have gone more than half way in pleasing the Congress, the main Opposition party, which reportedly mooted both the proposals.

Congress sources said "some sort of coordination with the government" was emerging, though with certain riders.

A wide-ranging consultation with other Opposition parties, however, was necessary so that they do not feel the two main parties, between themselves, sorted out a matter impinging on national sovereignty, they said.

The stand is significant as Parliament's monsoon session is just a few weeks away and Assembly polls — in which the Congress will be pitted directly against the BJP — are scheduled later this year.

After a 70-minute meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi this evening, external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha said the final decision would be taken in the "national interest". (Picture on Page 8)

The decision, he said, would be preceded by consultations with the "concerned authorities", the National Democratic Alliance, "interested" political parties and countries neighbouring Iraq.

1676 UNFINISHED WAR

Battles continue in Iraq despite Bush's declaration of end of major combat

THURSDAY: 70 die in US attack on a "terrorist training camp". An Apache chopper goes down

FRIDAY: 27 Iraqis die as US troops thwart an ambush on a tank patrol near Baghdad

SATURDAY: US troops detain 74 on suspicion of being al Qaida members in northern Iraq

SUNDAY: The US launches Operation Desert Scorpion to hunt down Saddam loyalists blamed for recent attacks. American forces seal roads, search houses and scour the skies with helicopters in restive towns around Baghdad

ception should not gain ground that India was ready to ignore them for the sake of other "interests", they said.

"Iran should not turn against India. The US should have consulted other countries in that region but if it didn't, it doesn't logically follow that India should do the same before despatching its troops," Congress sources said.

The party, said Natwar Singh, also iterated its view that if the troops were finally despatched, they should be under UN command and control, not that of the US-UK.

In a letter to Vajpayee on June 4, Sonia had said: "As you are well aware, Indian troops have been active in different parts of the world for the past five decades but always under UN command and control."

"It appears that this fundamental principle that we have always adhered to may now be abandoned.... The Congress party would be totally opposed to the deployment of Indian troops under any arrangement other than a UN command or as part of a multi-national peace-keeping force that has the explicit mandate of the UN."

Yesterday's hectic consultations within the Congress had, however, hinted at a subtle review of the party's rigid position.

Government sources described today's meeting as an "exploratory exercise" and emphasised that no decision had been taken yet.

Explaining the need for the meeting, Sinha said: "Sonia Gandhi had written to the PM on the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq. The PM thought it best to have a discussion on this, rather than answer through correspondence."

■ See Page 4

Brajesh Mishra and finance minister Jaswant Singh, was held on the eve of a visit by the Pentagon team, which will "clarify" Delhi's queries on troops deployment.

Sinha was careful not to use the phrase "national consensus" which he said "is Natwar Singh's comment. There is no need for me to comment on a comment".

Natwar Singh, who chairs the Congress' foreign affairs cell, said it was his party's suggestion that other political parties and Iraq's neighbours be consulted first. He accompanied Sonia and Manmohan Singh to the meeting.

According to Congress sources, talking to Iraq's neighbours such as Iran and Syria was "necessary" as these countries were Delhi's traditional friends.

With the US making threatening noises against both, a per-

US launches massive raids in Iraqi cities

Saddam's air force chief held

Falluja: Thousands of US troops backed by tanks, planes and helicopters carried out extensive raids early on Sunday in this restive city and in at least two other Iraqi cities, which US officials refused to identify.

The operation, dubbed Operation Desert Scorpion, was one of the largest in Iraq since the end of major fighting. No American casualties were reported, and no figures were released for Iraqi casualties. Dozens of suspected Baath Party members were detained but it was not known whether any senior Iraqi official was held.

The raids had been planned for days, military officials said, and appeared to be the latest phase of an effort to break the back of an ascent armed resistance that had sprung up in the swathe of the country dominated by Iraq's Sunni Muslim minority. More raids are expected.

"This thing is happening all over Iraq tonight," said Lt Col Eric Schwartz, who oversaw raids in the southern half of Falluja, a city 35 miles west of Baghdad that has become a centre of armed resistance. "It's a massive, coordinated effort."

In the last three weeks, 10 US soldiers have been killed and dozens wounded in ambushes carried out by gunmen in the Sunni-dominated areas north and west of Baghdad. A combination of Saddam Hussein loyalists, Islamic militants and foreign fighters are believed to have carried out

the attacks. Using small arms and grenades, the attackers have sharply increased American casualties in Iraq.

Even as Operation Desert Scorpion was launched on Sunday, the US Central Command announced that Operation Peninsula Strike, a massive six-day military assault in north-central Iraq to clamp down on pro-Saddam fighters, had been brought to a close on Thursday. The campaign left at least 113 people dead, according to Iraqi witnesses and US officials.

Earlier on Saturday, Centcom had said that the former commander of the Iraqi air

force, Hamid Raja Shalah, was in the custody of coalition forces. However, it did not say where or when Mr Shalah—number 17 on the coalition's "most wanted" list—was captured.

Following Sunday's raids, Iraqi families complained of heavy-handed tactics by the US troops. Some said soldiers broke into homes and arrested people with no involvement in the attacks on American forces.

Col Schwartz said the raids would be followed by concentrated relief efforts to win the support of the Iraqi people, in a "carrot and stick" approach.

Meanwhile, Adnan Pachachi, a respected elder Iraqi statesman encouraged by Bush administration officials to enter post-war politics, has criticised the US military for its increasingly aggressive operations in Iraq. NYT News Service and Agencies



A US soldier plays ball with an Iraqi boy in Falluja on Sunday.

16 JUN 2003

Iran blasts US for backing protests

16/6 USA 11-10

Teheran: Iranian officials closed ranks on Sunday to criticise the United States for backing a series of pro-democracy demonstrations after thousands staged a fifth night of protests in Teheran.

There were reports of smaller demonstrations in at least two other cities, a sign that the momentum of the protests, which Washington has hailed as a cry for freedom, may be gathering pace.

Iran's foreign ministry accused the US of "flagrant interference in Iran's internal affairs" and said the significance of the protests was being deliberately overstated by US officials.

"The Americans ignore the presence of millions of people to welcome the Supreme Leader and President, but they call the protests of a few individuals the voice of the people," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said in a statement.

Sandwiched between Afghanistan and Iraq, Iran's clerical establishment is unnerved by mounting US pressure since the end of the war in Iraq. Washington accuses Iran of seeking nuclear arms, sponsoring terrorism and fomenting unrest in Iraq. But parliament speaker Mehdi Karroubi, a leading figure in Iran's

pro-reform movement, which has struggled to make headway against powerful conservatives, said Iran was united in its rejection of US pressure.

"All the differences and discussions among the children of the (Islamic) revolution are differences of taste but they are all united against the enemy," he said in a speech to parliament. "They stand up to the enemy and won't accept any change." While venting most of their anger at unelected clerics who wield ultimate power in Iran, protesters have also lambasted moderate President Mohammad Khatami. They accuse him of failing to deliver promised improvements in democracy, justice and social freedoms after six years in power.

The White House on Saturday voiced concern over the violent suppression of the protests after a spate of attacks on students and demonstrators by hardline Islamic vigilantes brandishing clubs and chains. "The United States views with great concern the use of violence against Iranian students peacefully expressing their political views," it said in a statement. "Iranians, like all people, have a right to determine their own destiny and the US supports their aspirations to live in freedom."

The ISNA news agency reported clashes in Shiraz and Ahvaz on Saturday in which one person was stabbed to death. But in Teheran earlier on Sunday there was no repeat of the violent scenes of the previous night when hardline Islamic vigilantes took control of the streets in central Teheran. Reuters

16 JUN 2003

US troops kill 97 Iraqi guerrillas

Baghdad, June 13

US TROOPS killed 27 Iraqis who ambushed a tank patrol on Friday, after killing at least 70 at a guerrilla camp the day before, in the bloodiest clashes since President Bush declared major combat over.

The US military has launched two big operations west and north of Baghdad this week to try to root out what it says are diehard Saddam Hussein loyalists behind a recent spate of attacks on American troops in mainly Sunni Muslim areas. A US statement said an organized group of fighters had fired rocket-propelled grenades at a 4th Infantry Division tank patrol in Balad, about 60 miles from the capital.

"The tanks returned fire, killing four of the attackers, and forcing the remainder to flee," it said. "Tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles reinforced with AH-64 Apache helicopters pursued the enemy personnel, killing 23 of the attackers."

No US casualties were reported in the clash.

Some 4,000 troops have been scouring an area around the

Tigris river northeast of Balad since Monday in "Operation Peninsula Strike," which the military said was the biggest operation it had launched in the past six weeks.

In the other big assault, launched early on Thursday, at least 70 people were killed at a "terrorist" training camp in northwest Iraq, a US military spokesman said on Friday.

He said the 101st Airborne Division and special operations units were involved in the raid that began with an air strike on the camp, 90 miles northwest of Baghdad. One US soldier was wounded. The operation was still in progress.

The spokesman said a US helicopter had been shot down during the operation on Thursday. The Apache's two-member crew were rescued unhurt as two other Apaches engaged irregular Iraqi fighters. It was the first time a US helicopter had been shot down since the fall of Baghdad on April 9.

The statement said 70 to 80 SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles, 75 to 78 rocket-propelled grenades and a score of AK-47 assault rifles had been found at the suspected training camp.

US officials have released no other details on the camp, though one said the military believed that some of those protesters were not Iraqis. Arab volunteers from several countries fought with Iraqi forces during the war launched on March 20.

Bush had accused Saddam of having links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network. The former Iraqi leader denied this and the United States has provided no conclusive evidence.

Some 40 US soldiers have been killed in attacks and ambushes in Iraq since the beginning of May. The US military says this week's operations are part of "the continued effort to eradicate Baath Party loyalists, paramilitary groups and other subversive elements".

Reuters



Protesters gather in front of the Palestine Hotel at Freedom Square in Baghdad on Friday to demonstrate against the US forces who allegedly entered the Abu Hanifa Mosque and stole money.

AFP

'Saddam' letter threatens new attacks

Dubai, June 13

SADDAM HUSSEIN has called on foreigners to leave Iraq and threatened attacks in countries with troops occupying his former state, according to a letter he purportedly faxed to an Arabic newspaper on Friday.

"We warn all foreign citizens and all those who came with cowardly occupier ... of the need to leave Iraq before the 17th of next June," said the three-page letter, sent to the London-based *al-Quds al-Arabi*.
Abdel-Bari Atwan, the editor of the paper, said the author may have intended to warn about July 17, a day which would mark the anniversary of Saddam's Baath party coming to power in 1968.

"If this period ends without them leaving, it will be our right to take our defence to their countries. As they kill the sons of Iraq, we will respond," said the letter signed "Saddam Hussein".
Following a US and British invasion that toppled Saddam on April 9, other countries have sent troops to help with the task of restoring security in Iraq.

The "Saddam" letter singled out Poland and Denmark as nations with troops in Iraq.

Atwan said the handwriting and signature were the same as four other letters attributed to the ousted Iraqi leader and faxed to the paper in the weeks after the war. He said he had no indication where the letter, dated June 12 and received on Friday, was faxed from. The fate of Saddam and his family are unknown.

"I would prefer that we had clear evidence that Saddam is dead or that we had him alive in our custody," Paul Bremer, the US civil administrator in Iraq, said in Washington on Thursday. "I think it does make a difference because it allows the Baathists to go around saying, 'Saddam is alive, and he's going to come back, and we're going to come back.'"

Reuters

War civilian toll may be 10,000

London, June 13

figures with 14 other counts, most of them taken in Iraq, which, it says, bear out its findings.

Researchers from several groups have visited hospitals and mortuaries in Iraq and interviewed relatives of the dead, some are conducting surveys in the main cities.

Three completed studies suggest that between 1,700 and 2,356 (it is) often on the low side.

"The totality is now producing an unassailable sense that there were a hell of a lot of civilian deaths in Iraq."

The Guardian

AT LEAST 5,000 civilians may have been killed during the invasion of Iraq, an independent research group has claimed. As more evidence is collated, it says, the figure could reach 10,000.

Iraq Body Count (IBC), a volunteer group of British and US academics and researchers, compiled statistics on civilian casualties from media reports and estimated that between 5,000 and 7,000 civilians died in the conflict.

Its latest report compares those and an IBC report author, said

IRAQ CLASHES

U.S. forces have killed almost 100 people in Iraq in separate clashes over the last two days

Northwest Iraq U.S. troops kill at least 70 people in raid on "terrorist" training camp launched on Thursday

Balad U.S. forces kill 27 Iraqis who ambushed a tank patrol on Friday

REUTERS

HQ-12
M16
IRAQ / FOREIGN FIGHTERS' ROLE SUSPECTED

Ambush triggers battle; 27 dead

BALAD (IRAQ), JUNE 13. The U.S. forces killed 27 Iraqi fighters in a ground and air pursuit on Friday after the Iraqis attacked an American tank patrol north of Baghdad, bringing the opposition death toll in four days of skirmishes to about 100, according to the military.

Friday's clash came as American forces pressed forward with a massive sweep to crush resistance by supporters of Saddam Hussein's ousted regime north of Baghdad.

Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers said the U.S. forces were sifting through intelligence that "foreign fighters" may have been at an alleged terrorist training camp northwest of Baghdad bombed early Thursday by U.S. forces.

In Washington on Friday, a senior Pentagon official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said about 70 opposition fighters were killed in Thursday's attack — most apparently non-Iraqis from other countries in the region.

If confirmed, it would be the first indication since the war's end that non-Iraqi volunteers were still in the country.

Before the war in March, Iraq claimed that thousands of Arab fighters poured into the country to resist the invasion. They provided some of the stiffest resistance once American forces entered Baghdad.

Separately, the U.S. troops acting on an intelligence tip arrested 74 people described as sympathisers of the Al-Qaida terrorist network in a raid on Thursday near the northern city of Kirkuk, said the U.S. Central Command.

The U.S. Central Command said an "organised group" ambushed the tanks with rocket propelled grenades near Balad, near the capital on the main highway north. The statement did not mention the U.S. casualties.

The patrol returned fire and killed four of the assailants in the initial gunbattle, the military said.

When the rest of the attackers fled, Apache helicopters joined the chase along with tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, killing 23 more assailants. The statement did not say whether any escaped.

Witnesses said the attackers rushed towards the tank column from a thicket of reeds near sunflower fields on an isolated



Claiming that the U.S. forces entered a mosque and stole money there, protesters demand action against the troops, in Baghdad on Friday. — AFP

rural road a few miles south of Balad.

A young farmer, said he was hiding with his family in his house about 150 meters away when he heard the shooting and saw flashes of gunfire. After the clash, the Americans took away the bodies, he said.

The attack was the latest in increasing resistance to the American-led occupation of Iraq since the war was declared over on May 1. Since then, about 40

On Thursday, American warplanes bombed an alleged training facility 150 km northwest of Baghdad, looking for members of the now-banned Ba'ath Party, Iraqi paramilitary groups and "other subversive elements," said a military statement.

A fierce ground battle followed the air

strike in which the Iraqi forces suffered heavy casualties. One American soldier was wounded, said the U.S. Central Command.

Also on Thursday, Iraqi fighters shot down an Apache helicopter gunship — the first American aircraft downed by ground fire since Mr. Hussein's ouster two months ago — and a U.S. F-16 fighter-bomber crashed on Thursday. The crews of the aircraft were rescued unharmed.

Earlier this week, U.S. forces launched a sweep through towns of the so-called "Sunni triangle" north of and west of Baghdad in central Iraq.

Coalition forces did not give a total of Iraqi casualties in the operation, but said about 400 Iraqis have been arrested. — AP

14 JUN 2003

14 JUN 2003

THE HINDO

US is fomenting trouble in our country, says Iran

Teheran: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Thursday accused the United States of stirring up trouble in the country after anti-regime protesters defied threats of a crackdown and took to the streets for a second night running.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Washington had realised it could not overthrow the Islamic Republic's regime militarily and "wanted to create trouble in Iran ... Divide the people and create a chasm between the regime and the populace."

In a speech in the southern city of Varamin, broadcast on state television, he

said if the US "see that disgruntled people and adventurers want to cause trouble, and if they can turn them into mercenaries, they will not hesitate to do so in giving them their support."

"Four people on a street corner raise their voices and (the United States) immediately announces that it supports them," he said.

Mr Khamenei's speech was broadcast only hours after parts of the Iranian capital were brought to a standstill as thousands of protesters jammed the streets on Wednesday for a second straight night.

He warned that Iran would be "pitiless"

towards rabble-rousers.

He also slammed people at home who by their words or actions "feed the despair and deception" of the populace, an apparent allusion to reformist MPs and other liberals who have been pressing him to break a political deadlock.

But he also appealed for calm, calling on "young believers and Hezbollahis (partisans of god) to avoid direct confrontation with the troublemakers to avoid giving a pretext to the enemies."

Meanwhile, in Kazakhstan, Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi criticised US

policy in West Asia and said it was "provoking bewilderment and hostility."

"There is no country in the world that is happy about the existing domination of one single country and about America's use of force in solving various issues," Mr Kharrazi told journalists after talks with Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev in the Kazakh capital Astana.

He said Iran was ready to defend its principles and interests, but believed stability and peace in the region and the world could only be achieved through cooperation and understanding. AFP

Student protests worry Iran's hardliners

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, JUNE 12. Iran's anti-riot police and Islamic vigilantes have so far succeeded in preventing student-led protest groups from teaming up at the Tehran University campus. But sporadic anti-establishment protests, which began on Tuesday, had not disappeared on Thursday.

Unlike in the past, the show of defiance mostly by young people on the streets of Tehran has a new flavour. This week's protests, for instance, have not spared Iran's moderate leader, Mohammad Khatami, from attack. Slogans shouted by the protesters have targeted both the hardliners led by Iran's supreme spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, as well as Mr. Khatami.

Iranian students had staged a major three-day protest in July 1999 against the hard-line establishment's decision to close a pro-reform newspaper. Those protests were widely seen as an expression of support for Mr. Khatami.

Authorities in Teheran are now worried that despite the altered nature of this week's demonstrations, the anger on the streets of the Iranian capital could peak on July 4, the fourth

anniversary of the 1999 protests. The timing of the demonstrations has also caused concern among the hard-line leadership. This is because this week's protests are surfacing at a time when the United States, after the Iraq war, has repeatedly warned Iran to change course.

The U.S. has accused Iran of interfering in Iraq, developing nuclear weapons and harbouring Al-Qaeda terrorists. A show of internal disarray at this time, therefore, will send negative signals, which can encourage Washington to intensify its political pressure on Teheran. Besides, these protests are being staged at a time when the friction between the moderate elected Government of Mr. Khatami and the unelected but powerful clerical establishment has touched a new high.

Mr. Khatami has been seeking more effective powers, but is being blocked by hardliners in the supervisory Guardians Council and the Expediency Council. Most pieces of legislation passed by Iran's elected Parliament pass into the hands of the Guardians Council for approval. In case of deadlock between the two, the Expediency Council intervenes to remove the logjam.

Mr. Khatami wants this arrangement altered, as, in his view, it has often blocked meaningful reforms. Iran watchers point out that the recent protests are an expression of frustration among the Iranian youth against the unending tussle between the reformers and the hard-liners.

Iran's clerical hierarchy, however, sees it as the manifestation of a U.S.-inspired plot,

which is meant to destabilise the Islamic revolution. Iran's Intelligence Minister, Ali Yunesi, on Wednesday asserted that the protests were "organised by foreign media and satellite television channels" — a reference to the pro-monarchist media based in the U.S. The son of the deposed former Shah of Iran, who resides in the U.S., is frequently projected in the U.S. media as a successor to the pre-

sent Islamic regime in Iran. On Sunday, Ayatollah Khamenei, had urged students to foil what he said was a "devilish" U.S. plot to destabilise the Islamic Republic. "The United States is trying in various ways ... to tell the Iranian public that our decision-making bodies are confused," he said. The last major student-led protests in Iran took place in November and early December 2002.



A handout picture from the Iranian Students' News Agency (INA) shows students detaining two men, suspected to be headline militia members, during protests in front of the dormitory of Tehran University early Thursday. — AFP

IRAN / PRO-REFORM SLOGANS

Students' protest snowballs

Handwritten: *Hashem Aghajari*

Handwritten: *HO-15 17/6*

TEHRAN, JUNE 11. Thousands of Iranians took to the streets in the early hours today, chanting anti-government slogans in largely peaceful protests after police surrounded a Tehran student dormitory, witnesses said.

Uniformed and plainclothes police officers with batons later moved to break up the protest, but there were no major clashes and witnesses said they saw only a handful of arrests. But several motorcycles were torched and some shops' windows and a state bank were smashed as demonstrators dispersed.

Residents said a student protest over plans to privatise universities developed into a political demonstration by some 3,000 people who gathered upon hearing that police had surrounded the dormitory.

"Political prisoners must be freed," the crowd shouted in a square near Tehran University, the scene almost four years ago of the biggest pro-reform unrest since the 1979 revolution — which was also led from the same campus. Other chants were directed against Iran's clerical rulers. Residents said the chants were the most extreme since the unrest four years ago.

Many people said they had gathered after hearing calls by U.S.-based Iranian exile satellite television channels to go to the campus after the student protests on Tuesday. But hundreds of police blocked their way and stood guard around dormitories where Tuesday's student protests took place. The witnesses said some protesters lit fires in the streets.

"I heard the students had gathered from television," said a 46-year-old housewife. "I came here to send a message to (U.S. Secretary of State) Colin Powell that we want change."

The head of security at Tehran governor's office said more protests might be expected.

"As we come closer to the atmosphere of July 9, (1999) these issues can be used as a pretext for the same thing to happen," the ISNA student news agency quoted Ali Taala as saying. "We will not allow that to happen."

High unemployment and frustration with Iran's strict Islamic laws have fed discontent among the overwhelmingly youthful population, around 70 per cent of which is under 30 and has little memory of life before the revolution.

Iran saw its biggest pro-reform protests in three years last year after an academic dissident, Hashem Aghajari, was sentenced to death for blasphemy. The verdict was later overturned.

The initial court verdict in November sparked almost two months of protests as thousands of students boycotted classes and staged rallies, insisting Mr. Aghajari's trial and sentencing highlighted political repression and a lack of free speech. The largely peaceful protests turned violent at times. Hundreds were arrested by baton-wielding police, and Basij militiamen attacked rallies.

Dozens of pro-reform intellectuals, journalists and student leaders have been jailed as part of a conservative crackdown that followed the student protests in 1999. — Reuters

SEE HINDO

12 JUN 2003

US pressure over nukes will backfire, says Iran

Teheran: Iran warned on Monday that foreign pressure over its nuclear capabilities, branded a threat to peace by Washington, would backfire and harden Iran's position.

Since its rapid conquest of Iraq, Washington has tightened the screw on neighbouring Iran, which it accuses of sheltering Al Qaida fugitives, backing terrorism and developing nuclear arms.

"Excessive pressure on Iran would untie the hands of those who do not believe in dialogue," said foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi. "Even those who favour constructive talks would not accept the language of force and threat."

The United States and European Union are divided over Iran. The EU favours a policy of encouraging embattled reformers around President Mohammad Khatami, while Washington argues this is a waste of time since he has no real power to affect change.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in a report obtained by Reuters on Friday, accused Iran of failing to comply with safeguards to curb the

spread of nuclear weapons and sent a team of inspectors to the country on Saturday.

Mr Asefi played down the visit, which comes a week before IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei formally presents his report on Iran's nuclear ambitions to agency governors in Vienna on June 16.

"The visit was planned months ago and has nothing to do with the agency's report," Mr Asefi said. "The visit proves Iran's transparency and close cooperation."

Fresh from war in Iraq over banned weapons, the US described the report as "deeply troubling."

Since the Iraq war, US administration hawks have raised the spectre of military action against Iran, but President George W. Bush, who put Iran in an "axis of evil" with pre-war Iraq and North Korea, has denied he has plans to attack it.

Even so, many in Iran suspect the Islamic Republic may be next on a US hit-list of regimes to be overthrown.

"We hope Iran's constructive cooperation with the agency and other coun-

tries makes the international community better aware of America's evil intentions," Mr Asefi said.

"We are always alert about America's policies...but we have no doubt the Americans won't be deluded into mistaking Iran for Iraq. Such a mistake would be irreparable," he said. Reuters

10 JUN 2003

Carrot for Iraq troops

OUR DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

Washington, June 9: America is dangling the carrot of Iraq's reconstruction contracts to entice India into contributing troops for stabilising Baghdad.

When US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld made the unusual gesture of calling on L.K. Advani in his hotel suite within hours of the deputy Prime Minister's arrival here on Sunday, he let the Indians read between his lines that there would be a carrot for Delhi if its troops were allowed to help get Iraq back on its feet.

Advani, who has been authorised by the Cabinet Committee on Security to talk about the possible deployment of Indian troops — but not to convey any decision on the subject — responded to the Americans by hitting them where they are at their weakest: their sense of history, or rather the lack of it.

Advani recalled the role of Indian troops after the First World War in the creation of modern-day Iraq in 1932. That role is perpetuated in memory

by an obelisk in al Kut in Iraq, which pays tributes to "Hindoos and Sikhs" who lost their lives in the Mesopotamian war.

Advani's objective in delving into history during his first 24 hours of meetings here was clear: India is not about to repeat history, once decided for it by the British. In the Mesopotamian war, the Indian troops were in

L.K. Advani tonight met President George W. Bush at the Oval Office in the White House. Bush will send a team to Delhi next Monday to discuss the peacekeeping force.

Iraq at the bidding of the British. Replace the UK with the US seven decades later and history will be repeated.

On the other hand, if the UN is involved in nation-building in Iraq, India would be more than willing to help the process not only with troops but other forms of assistance, such as a trained workforce with previous experience in Iraq.

After initial talks between

the deputy Prime Minister and American leaders, the contours of the US request for Indian troops for Iraq could be summed up as follows.

Apart from hints of reconstruction contracts in Iraq as a partner in nation-building, Washington would see New Delhi as a close ally in the global fight against terrorism if it commits the troops. Perhaps the closest of allies after the UK and Israel, along with Poland, Australia and Denmark.

The Americans also believe that the Indians could send a message to the Gulf countries if it establishes a physical presence in Iraq, courtesy Washington.

That message could strengthen India's leverage in the Gulf. It could also neutralise religious extremism in India, which sees some elements in the Gulf as its fountainhead.

The Indian strategy is to hold out. Even if, in the end, India sends troops to Iraq, it will be in return for something "very big". What is "big" and how "big" will be decided by the collective political wisdom in Delhi.

10 JUN 2003

THOSE IRAQI WEAPONS!

5/8 Bush and Blair in a bind 6/6

THE elusive weapons of mass destruction that Saddam Hussein was supposed to have stockpiled to threaten the world are causing sleepless nights to Bush and Blair, far more discomfort than if they actually existed. The reasons are not far to seek. Anglo-American gyrations in the Security Council apart, it was the central justification trotted out to go to war. Therefore they had to be found. First it was General Tommy Franks, the commander of the huge force assembled to put the fear of God into Saddam who said that it would take months, maybe years to find those weapons. Blair echoed the statement. When weeks passed and no sign of the weapons emerged, the war criminals began to get nervous. In the month of April there were three attempts to suggest that they had found something. Used chemical suits, empty drums with traces of chemicals, and finally mobile trucks with nothing else to support them except their capacity to ferry the weapons. When it got too close for comfort, the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna asked for permission to enter Iraq and inspect for themselves — their concern was that according to reports put out dirty weapons could perhaps be manufactured. Promptly the occupying powers did an about-face. What America found was not dangerous after all!

Bush moved cautiously to suggest that Saddam had either, *destroyed*, hid or exported the weapons outside Iraq. It was absurd to suggest that any country would turn itself into a safe-deposit vault for Saddam's benefit and risk being attacked itself. Further to the extent that Bush admitted the possibility that they were destroyed was it not incumbent upon him to make sure before he delivered his ultimatum and started the war? Rumsfeld then gave it as his opinion that Saddam had destroyed the weapons before he was attacked. This is too absurd for words. Saddam has been on notice since September 2002 when Bush made his extraordinary speech to the UN that Bush would go to war. He would have had to have his head examined to destroy the weapons just when he was likely to need them most! Bush and Rumsfeld thought that as they had Iran in their sights by then, no one would notice or bother. Blair was in a more difficult position. Without American hysteria and jingoism to help him, the British Prime Minister found himself out on a limb. He had to find the weapons to survive. So he insisted, the very next day after Bush delivered his conviction that the weapons did not exist, that they did exist and he would find them. He may have thought he had gained some respite but it did not last long. The American Senate caught on to the fact that the CIA had led the country by the nose and decided to investigate the reports they had been putting out about these deadly weapons. This forced Bush on the back foot. He too started to say that the weapons existed and would be found. What this leads to logically is the increased risk that something would be planted to justify the war and save the murderous duo from the fury of their people.

Interesting asides are the comments of Jack Straw that all this should be forgotten and the only reality is the victory of the coalition and the international community should take it from there. The British Foreign Office says the weapons inspectors were not detectives and were not expected to search for the weapons in a country the size of France. The American Ambassador to India says in a written piece that Security Council Resolution 678 passed in 1991 to get Iraq out of Kuwait is valid, a decade later, to wage war on Iraq in different circumstances altogether. If the consequences were not so serious, the antics of Bush and Blair, would do credit to a circus turn. And all for a mess of pottage, remember!

Bush vows to uncover truth about Iraqi WMD

As Sayliyah Camp (Qatar): US President George W. Bush vowed on Thursday to uncover the truth about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD), whose failure to show up so far has embarrassed war ally British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

But Mr Bush hinted it could be a long and difficult search as he wrapped up a week-long, six-nation journey with a flag-waving speech to cheering US troops at the base in Qatar where the US military had its combat operations centre for the Iraq war.

Mr Bush has largely escaped political trouble at home over the absence of conclusive evidence that Saddam Hussein had chemical and biological weapons, which Washington and London cited to a sceptical world as the main reason why Saddam had to be toppled. Mr Bush and his top aides point to the discovery of two mobile biological weapons laboratories as proof of Saddam's guilt and say the weapons themselves were either concealed well, destroyed or moved before the war.

"This is a man who spent decades hiding

tools of mass murder," said Mr Bush, who later left for home. "He knew the inspectors were looking for them. You know better than me he's got a big country in which to hide them." "We're on the look. We'll reveal the truth," Mr Bush said.

Failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has put Mr Bush's closest war ally, Mr Blair, in political hot water at home. Mr Blair's office has denied a BBC report that it made an intelligence report "sexier" by playing up a line that Saddam could deploy such weapons at 45 minutes' notice.

Mr Bush emphasised in his speech to the troops that the war liberated Iraq from a brutal dictator. "You see, the world is now learning what many of you have seen," he told them. "They're learning about the mass graves, thousands of people just summarily executed." Mr Bush was briefed on the turbulent situation in post-war Iraq in morning talks with General Tommy Franks, commander of the US Central Command that waged war on Iraq, and Paul Bremer, the US administrator of Iraq. Reuters