

Perfectly logical to hunt fugitives: Rumsfeld

Washington, Dec. 10 (Reuters): The Pentagon yesterday defended US military attempts to kill insurgent leaders in Afghanistan and Iraq following a botched American air strike that killed nine children in an Afghan village.

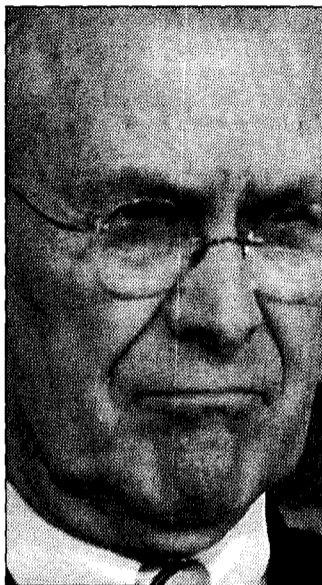
Defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, pressed during a Pentagon briefing on why the military continued to attempt "targeted killings" despite tragic errors, countered that the US preferred to capture those it was hunting.

"We would be happy to capture them. We would be happy to have them surrender. And if they don't, we would be happy to kill them. And that's what's going on," Rumsfeld said.

"The implication, or the connotation, of 'targeted killing,' I think, is unfortunate because it suggests an appetite to do that, which is not the case," Rumsfeld added.

But he said it was "perfectly logical" to hunt down and try to capture or kill fugitives in Iraq who are killing Iraqi civilians and allied military forces.

The deaths of the children will likely add to the problems the United States has faced winning hearts and minds in the troubled south of Afghanistan, where militants are most active, ahead of elections due next year.



Donald Rumsfeld

US air force Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the military Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the briefing that it was not clear whether Saturday's air strike that killed the children in Afghanistan had also killed the target, Mullah Wazir.

"It's unclear whether or not he was the one killed in the strike," Myers said. "He was the fella we were after. He was connected to the recent killings of two ring road contractors, so we

were after him. We think he is also connected to other known terrorists operating in Afghanistan."

Myers said US army Brig. Gen. Lloyd Austin, the commander of Joint Task Force 180 in Afghanistan, had visited the village of Makur, which a US A-10 aircraft attacked with gunfire and killed the children while they played.

"He has been to the village ... We are talking to the village leaders. We have provided various things to the villagers to try and help with their grief. Nothing can do that, of course, when you lose nine children."

In November, six civilians were killed in an air strike in the southern province of Paktia, and nearly three weeks before that eight members of the same family, including children, died in a similar attack in the province of Nuristan.

In July last year, the Afghan government said 48 people had been killed and 117 hurt in Uruzgan province when a US AC-130 gunship attacked a wedding party. Myers conceded that there were risks when the military went after any specific target and the results were sometimes imperfect. But he said careful analysis was conducted before attacks were launched against fugitives or other targets.

THE TELEGRAPH

11 DEC 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

Bush leaves awe in his Baghdad wake

Tikrit, Nov. 28 (Reuters): Awe-some, courageous, a good move for morale, no way — these were some of the reactions of American soldiers when President George W. Bush flew secretly into Iraq for Thanksgiving yesterday.

"That is absolutely awesome," said Sergeant Aaron Hildernbrandt, from Claremont, Florida, as he watched news of Bush's two-and-a-half hour swing-through on television in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

"I think that shows real personal courage," said his companion Sergeant Gilbert Nail of Oklahoma, both of whom had just returned from a patrol through Saddam Hussein's hometown.

Bush secretly left his Texas ranch late on Wednesday and flew on Air Force One to Baghdad, where he helped serve Thanksgiving lunch to around 600 soldiers at Baghdad International Airport.

The lightning presidential visit seemed to go some way to dispelling an impression of low morale among US troops in Iraq

given by many recent reports. "I think this is a great move. For him to actually come here and spend time with the troops on the holiday. This is a good move," said Private Michael Debratta from New York as he manned a checkpoint in central Baghdad.

"This is definitely a good move for morale. It makes us feel better that our leader is actually here on a holiday."

Bush's bold visit was kept secret from all but a very small pool of White House reporters who travelled with him on the long flight from the US.

The President, wearing a grey military zip-up top, was welcomed by Paul Bremer, the US-appointed governor of Iraq, and helped serve food to a group of stunned soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division and the 1st Armored Division.

They cheered and shouted as Bush, who is the overall commander of US forces, entered the military mess at the airport, and whooped and whistled as he made a short address.

"I was just looking for a

a strong message from the commander-in-chief that we're focused on winning. It's a real morale booster." The US has more than 130,000 troops in Iraq. In recent months they have faced a deepening insurgency from loyalists of the former regime, who almost daily set off explosions or fire mortars at US positions.

More than 180 US soldiers have been killed since Washington declared an end to major combat on May 1. But despite those losses, soldiers said today's visit from Bush was just the sort of thing to keep them upbeat.

"It's a total morale booster," said Nail in Tikrit. "I didn't get to see him but what matters is that he cares enough to come and visit."

Daring stunt

Britain's *Times* newspaper hailed Bush's trip as "one of the most daring stunts in modern American history".

"Probably not since the American Civil War, when battles raged only a few miles from Washington, has the incumbent

of the White House deliberately placed himself in so much danger," the newspaper's diplomatic editor wrote.

"Election raid on Baghdad," declared a front-page headline in France's Left-wing newspaper *Liberation*, beside a photograph of Bush carrying a platter laden with roast turkey and fruit and surrounded by US troops.

"This 'Baghdad coup', primarily intended for the US public, was a brilliantly conceived and executed piece of election propaganda," the newspaper said.

But opinions on the trip differed in other sections of the press, with Britain's tabloid *Daily Mirror* newspaper and *The Independent* both running a similar photograph of Bush holding a platter with the headline: "The Turkey has landed".

In Baghdad, discussions were under way on amendments to a new US-backed plan to hand sovereignty back to Iraqis by July, after the Shia cleric, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, said the political roadmap paid too little heed to Islam and did not include enough Iraqi involvement.



President Bush poses with a soldier for a picture at the Baghdad International Airport. (AP)

warm meal somewhere," Bush said. "Thanks for inviting me to dinner... I can't think of a finer group of folks to have Thanksgiving dinner with than you all."

Lieutenant Colonel Steve Russell, the commander of the 1-

"I think that's great. It sends

29/11

W/W

Tanks-giving Dinner

Dubya's unprecedented morale booster

for US troops in Iraq

As a piece of political theatre it was unprecedented. Before George W Bush dropped in for Thanksgiving dinner in Baghdad, no US president had ever entered a war zone, be it in the two World Wars, Korea or Vietnam. The surprise visit was conducted with all the tight security of a military manoeuvre which in a sense it was. To thunderous applause, a teary-eyed Mr Bush said: "I was just looking for a warm meal somewhere... I can't think of a finer group of folks to have Thanksgiving dinner with than you all..." Apart from a taste for Thanksgiving turkey, why did the president take the awesome risk of going into territory so hostile that several US aircraft have been downed in it by enemy fire, not to mention the near-miss that almost got key deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz? Could just a localised morale booster for troops at a time of steadily increasing casualties justify hazarding the US's first citizen to such clear and present danger? Or could it be that Mr Bush had his eye on a larger political coup? Namely, to try and upstage in one stroke his Democratic opponents as well as the growing band of domestic critics who have begun to question the entire global war against terrorism.

It is significant indeed that for the first time since 9/11, Mr Bush's popularity ratings in the US have dropped to below 50 per cent. In the event, the reactions to Mr Bush's daring PR exercise are mixed. While the troops in Baghdad cheered him enthusiastically, political adversaries at home remained sceptical both of the visit and the reasons behind it. "His visit won't change the fact that those brave men and women should never have been fighting in Iraq in the first place," said Jay Carson, spokesman for Democratic presidential front-runner Howard Dean. It is precisely such criticism that Mr Bush was seeking to neutralise by his flamboyant gesture of patriotism. In effect, what Dubya has been trying to do — whether in Baghdad or his earlier unscheduled landing on a US air carrier dressed in combat fatigues — is to project himself in the popular mind as the commander-in-chief of a global alliance against international terrorism. It is only by creating a siege mentality within his domestic constituency that Mr Bush can justify the continuation of anti-libertarian laws such as the US Patriot Act and other measures which curtail civic freedoms within America. However, with a year still to go for the presidential elections, Dubya will have to think hard to follow up on his Baghdad act. Where will the encore take place?

... a demonstration against terrorism in Baghdad on Tuesday

WSO
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Democrats call for change in Iraq policy

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, NOV. 28. The sudden visit of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, to Baghdad is meeting measured comments from his political opponents with at least one prominent Democrat saying that perhaps this is a time for him to take a fresh look at the "failed" policy.

"It's nice that he made it over there today, but his visit won't change the fact that those brave men and women should never have been fighting in Iraq in the first place", a spokesman for the Democratic front-runner, Howard Dean, has been quoted as saying.

The trip, according to Senator John Kerry, was the "right thing to do for our country". But the Democratic contender for the presidential election of 2004 also said, "When Thanksgiving is over, I hope the President will take the time to correct his failed policy in Iraq that has placed our soldiers in a shooting gallery." There is no question of the fact that Mr. Bush's decision visit Baghdad to celebrate Thanksgiving with American soldiers came at a time when his Iraq policy was being criticised at home and overseas and with the definite realisation that the issue is hurting the President in his re-election campaign.

"We are not going to throw stones at the guy for trying to do nice things for the troops. When the President goes and spends time with the troops, that's a good thing", the Communications Director for another Democratic contender, Wesley Clark, said. Political analysts are arguing that it will take much more than this Thanksgiving trip to Baghdad to have Iraq go away as an issue

in 2004. That said, the Democrats also realise that the party has to be careful over the manner it goes after the incumbent on issues of national security and terrorism.

More than what went on in Baghdad, including the surprise element for the troops on the Presidential visit, what is attracting attention here is the extraordinary secrecy that went into the planning and execution of trip that was held as a closely guarded secret for several weeks. According to the White House, the First Lady, Laura Bush, did not know about the trip until about two days ago; and the President's daughters knew only a few hours before he left. The President's parents — the former President and the First Lady — came to the ranch in Crawford, Texas, to celebrate Thanksgiving, but did not know of their son's trip until they arrived for dinner.

The handful of persons who were in the "know" included the Secretaries of State and Defence, the President's National Security Advisor and the White House Chief of Staff. Even the spokesman, who was giving the daily briefing in Crawford, Texas, on Wednesday did not seem to have had an idea; and many of the President's Secret Service agents were unaware of his travel plan. Mr. Bush himself took a routine 45-minute trip from his ranch to Waco, Texas, to board Air Force One on his way to Andrews Air Force base en route to Baghdad. Reporters, who were picked up in Crawford and also the Washington-based ones at Andrews Air Force base, were told about the strict ground rules — no communications. Mediapersons had their cell phones and pagers taken away.

SURPRISE VISIT ON THANKSGIVING DAY

Bush basks in Baghdad glory

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Nov. 27. — Mr George W Bush made a surprise visit to US troops in Baghdad today. The visit, coinciding with the Thanksgiving Day holiday in the USA, was the first trip ever by a US President to Iraq. US officials spent tense moments, concerned about the President's safety.

Addressing a gathering of 600 soldiers, stunned and delighted by his appearance, Mr Bush said: "You're defending the American people from danger and we're grateful (to you)."

The President's plane — its lights darkened and windows closed to minimise chances of making it a target — landed at Baghdad International Airport. White House officials went to extraordinary lengths to keep the trip a secret, fearing its disclosure would prompt attempts to kill him.

Mr Bush spoke with soldiers from the 1st Armoured Division and the 82nd Airborne Division at an airport mess hall. "You are defeating the terrorists here in Iraq, so we don't have to face them in our own country." Terrorists are testing America's resolve, he said, and "they hope we'll run".

"We did not charge hundreds of miles into the heart of Iraq, pay a bitter cost of casualties, defeat a ruthless dictator and liberate 25 million people only to retreat before a band of thugs and assassins," the President said, prompting a standing ovation and cheers.

Wearing an exercise jacket with a 1st Armoured Division patch, Mr Bush stood in a line for food, dished out sweet potatoes and corn for the Thanksgiving din-

A tightly held secret

BAGHDAD, Nov. 27. — The news of Mr George W Bush's trip to Iraq was not released till he was in the air on his way back home. "If this breaks while we're in the air we're turning around," White House communications director Mr Dan Bartlett said on the flight to Baghdad.

The plan was known to a handful of the President's aides. First lady Mrs Laura Bush was in the dark till Tuesday or Wednesday. Mr Bush's parents, former President Mr George Bush and Barbara Bush, were invited to his ranch for the Thanksgiving holiday, but were not informed. "If you were sitting outside the ranch, you would not have known he had just left," Mr Bartlett said. The White House had put out word that the President would spend Thanksgiving at his Crawford ranch with his wife and his parents. Even the dinner menu was announced.

The President slipped away from his ranch and was driven to a nearby airport, where he climbed Air Force One from the rear. The plane stopped at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, to pick up a few aides and four reporters and a camera crew sworn to secrecy. Five photographers and another reporter accompanied him from Texas after being summoned just hours before his departure. — AP

ner of the troops, and posed with a platter of a fresh-baked turkey.

As for Mr Bush taking the risk of a trip to Baghdad, an aide said it was appropriate for the President to visit troops on the Thanksgiving Day. "It is also appropriate that the President travel in a way that his safety and security will not be compromised," he said.

Bush lands in Baghdad for a bite

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HOT TURKEY: President George Bush offers a Thanksgiving platter to US troops on his surprise visit to Baghdad on Thursday. AP

SHOCK AND AWE AS PRESIDENT PULLS OFF MISSION INCREDIBLE

Baghdad, November 27

IN A stunning mission conducted under utmost secrecy, President George Bush flew into Baghdad to pay a surprise Thanksgiving Day visit to US troops on Thursday.

In an elaborate plan to ensure his security, Bush slipped away from his Texas ranch on Wednesday night, reached Iraq on Thursday and spent two-and-a-half hours with the troops to boost their morale amid mounting casualties.

"I bring a message on behalf of America: We thank you for your service, we are proud of you and America stands solidly behind you," Bush told about 600 soldiers, stunned to see him emerge from a side door inside a military mess at Baghdad airport.

The event was kept secret until Bush was in the Iraqi capital. Had word of the trip leaked it would have been cancelled, it was so secret that even Bush's parents were not told. He told his wife only hours before leaving and his daughters just before departing.

Earlier, it had been announced that Bush would spend Thanksgiving with his family, and a menu for the dinner had even been made public. But Bush dropped the family dinner plans for the trip, making

him the first US President to visit Iraq. Bush Sr visited US troops in Kuwait on Thanksgiving Day in 1990, on the eve of the Gulf war.

Without hinting of the enormous surprise, Iraq's US civil administrator Paul Bremer told the soldiers he was supposed to read out the President's Thanksgiving message but would instead defer to the most senior person on the premises. At that point, Bush emerged wearing a military jacket amid loud cheering.

"I was just looking for a warm meal somewhere," Bush said. "Thanks for inviting me to dinner... I can't think of a finer group of folks to have Thanksgiving dinner with than you all."

Seven months after he declared war on Iraq, only to see a guerrilla insurgency ensue, Bush vowed to stay the course. With the economy perking up now, Iraq is emerging as the greatest threat to his re-election in 2004.

From start to finish, Bush's trip took about 30 hours, 27 of them spent in the air. Accompanying him were a handful of top aides, a contingent of US Secret Service agents and a small group of reporters, all sworn to secrecy. White House wouldn't say how Bush was smuggled out of the ranch.

Agencies

WASHINGTON REDUCES LOAN GUARANTEES TO TEL-AVIV BY \$289 M

America penalises Israel

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Nov. 26. — The Bush administration decided to reduce US loan guarantees to Israel by \$289.5 million as a way of registering its disapproval of Israeli actions on the West Bank.

The cut will be made from \$1.4 billion in US guarantees due this year, the Israeli embassy said. Overall, Israel has been due to receive \$9 billion in guarantees over three years.

The guarantees are designed to help the battered Israeli economy by making it easier for Israel to acquire loans at favorable rates.

No specific reason was given, but the cut was believed to reflect the administration's displeasure with settlement activity and construction of a security barrier designed to screen out Palestinian terrorists.

The amount was fixed yesterday by the two sides in a White House meeting presided over by Ms Condoleezza Rice, the US national security adviser. The State Department



STEPS TOWARDS PEACE: Jordanian prisoners, released by Israel on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr, arrive at the border post on the Allenby Bridge crossing late on Tuesday. — AFP

notified Congress last month that the guarantees would be reduced for "activities inconsistent with understandings reached with the USA, but no amount was mentioned. A letter then to Rep. Henry J. Hyde, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, did

not specify whether the reductions would be punishment for expanding settlements on the West Bank, building a security barrier or both.

Mr Daniel Ayalon, the Israeli ambassador, said he was satisfied that an agreement had been reached and "this will enable Israel to go

ding activities in the West Bank and Gaza and is a reflection of close and continuing consultations between our two governments".

Peace progress

Palestinian officials plan to secure a pledge from militant groups next week to halt all attacks against Israel — which they will then present to Israel along with the demand for full implementation of the US-backed "road map" peace plan, a report adds from Ramallah.

The comments made by top Palestinian negotiator Mr Saeb Erekat yesterday were welcomed by Israel. It's the latest sign of progress in efforts by to halt three years of violence and resume full-fledged peace talks.

In a separate development, Jewish settlers proposed their own plan — dismantling the Palestinian Authority and incorporating the West Bank into Israel.

Also, the moderate Opposition Labour Party is working on its own plan, a party official said, including a pullout from most of the West Bank and Gaza.

US military pays peanuts for Iraq 'blunders'

Baghdad, November 26

THE US military has paid out \$1.5m to Iraqi civilians in response to a wave of negligence and wrongful death claims filed against American soldiers.

Families have come forward with accounts of how American soldiers shot dead or seriously wounded unarmed Iraqi civilians with no apparent cause. In many cases their stories are confirmed by Iraqi police investigations.

On Tuesday, the US military in Baghdad admitted that a total \$1,540,050 has been paid out up to November 12 for personal injury, death or damage to property. A total 10,402 claims had been filed, the military said. There were no figures given for how many claims had been accepted. "The US pays claims for personal injury, wrongful death and property damage," it said. "Payments will only be made for non-combat related activities and instances where soldiers have acted negligently or wrongfully."

Commanders make payments from their discretionary funds, rarely even admitting liability. Payouts average just

a few hundred dollars and in some cases families have been asked to sign forms waiving their right to press for further compensation. In one area of south-western Baghdad, controlled by the 82nd Airborne Division, an officer said a total of \$106,000 had been paid out to 176 claimants since July.

Beyond the initial payments there is little recourse for families of the dead. No American soldier has been prosecuted for illegally killing an Iraqi civilian and commanders refuse even to count the number of civilians killed or injured by their soldiers. Iraqi courts, because of an order issued by the US-led authority in Baghdad in June, are forbidden from hearing cases against American soldiers or any other foreign troops or officials in Iraq.

Human Rights Watch concluded that US troops were operating "with impunity. The individual cases of civilian deaths... reveal a pattern by US forces of over-aggressive tactics, indiscriminate shooting in residential areas and a quick reliance on lethal force", Human Rights Watch said. "The lack of timely and thorough investigations into many questionable incidents has created an atmosphere of impunity, in which many soldiers feel they can pull the trigger without coming under review."

For the families of the dead, the killings and the lack of legal recourse has provoked a groundswell of opposition to the US military occupation.

In some cases, relatives have spoken of their plans to join the guerrilla resistance to avenge the deaths of their relatives. "I know the American soldiers are not inhuman because I saw them when they first came and they behaved well. But now they have changed and I don't know why," said Faiz Alwasity, who works for Civic, the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, one of the few groups that has helped secure payments for civilian victims of the US military operations in Afghanistan and now Iraq. "They are becoming more aggressive, maybe because they are frightened. I am afraid this is creating more resistance against them."

The Guardian

Rocket strike greets Straw in Baghdad

Baghdad, November 26

BRITAIN'S FOREIGN secretary on Wednesday said a swifter transfer of power to Iraqis would improve security, hours after guerrillas fired rockets at the fortified Baghdad compound where he was staying.

Jack Straw, on an unannounced visit, told reporters he had been unaware of the blasts that echoed across Baghdad on Tuesday and prompted an alarm in the sprawling compound of the US-British administration.

"Attack. Take cover. This is not a test," blared loudspeakers at the compound in one of Saddam Hussein's former palace complexes. Sirens wailed, flares lit up the night sky and US helicopters clattered overhead.

A spokesman for the US 1st Armored Division said at least two rockets had been fired in Tuesday's attack in Baghdad, but caused no casualties. Two Iraqi police were wounded in a separate rocket-propelled grenade attack near a petrol station.

Straw acknowledged that security conditions remained difficult in Iraq, where insurgents have killed 184 US soldiers since Washington declared major combat over on May 1, according to the latest Pentagon toll.

"I'm absolutely sure that a more rapid political process will assist the security situation," he told a news conference.

Straw said he could give no date for the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq pending negotiations with Iraqi authorities on the future status of foreign forces. "We will stay as long as the Iraqi government and people want us to stay and there is a job for us to do," he declared.

Reuters



An Iraqi cries while praying in front of the Imam Ali shrine during Id at Najaf.

REUTERS

AT A GLANCE

US MILITARY HAS PAID: \$1.5 million

REASON: Personal injury, death or damage to property

NO. OF CLAIMS: 10,402

AVERAGE PAYOUT: A few hundred dollars. Sometimes only \$50-60

PRICE: Families waive right to further damages

RULES

- Payment only for non-combat-related activities
- No US soldier prosecuted for illegally killing an Iraqi civilian. No count of civilian deaths/injuries kept
- Iraqi courts forbidden from hearing cases against US troops or any other foreign soldier

US non-committal on new Iraq resolution

Washington: The US state department has refused to make any commitment on the Iraqi governing council's (IGC) request for the UN security council to issue a new resolution formally abolishing the US-led occupation when a provisional government is elected in June.

Current IGC chairman Jalal Talabani said a new resolution would be needed to cover the situation at the end of June 2004, when a provisional government - Iraq's first since the ouster of Saddam Hussein - is due to be elected.

The IGC announced on Monday that they made the request in a letter to the United Nations security council.

US officials should first "study the letter and meet with other members of the security

council," said state department spokesman Richard Boucher. "They'll be meetings next week with consultations."

It will be up to the IGC "to explain what they consider the appropriate timing for some kind of UN resolution," Mr Boucher said.

"As far as some eventual resolution, I think that remains a matter that needs to be explored with the governing council and eventually with the security council at the appropriate time," Mr Boucher said.

Meanwhile, Iraq's top religious figure, Ayatollah Ali Sistani, wants to "reconsider" an agreement with the US-led coalition on the transfer of power to the Iraqis, a Shiite politician said in Najaf. Agencies

Wife, daughter of Saddam aide held

Tikrit: The US troops arrested the wife and daughter of leading Iraqi fugitive Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, who is suspected of masterminding some of the attacks against coalition forces, a US official said on Wednesday.

Al-douri's wife and daughter, whose names were not immediately available, were apprehended on Tuesday during a raid in Samarra, 115 km north of Baghdad, according to Lt. Col. William Macdonald, spokesman of the 4th infantry division. AP

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NOT SUCH A ROYAL WELCOME

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IT WAS NOT planned that way but the United States President, George W. Bush, now knows the rage against him for initiating the Iraq war and more generally at U.S. foreign policy post-September 11 — not just anywhere but in the country that counts itself as America's closest international ally. Mr. Bush's state visit to Britain was finalised two years ago when a war in Iraq was not on the horizon. He arrived this week in London as the guest of Queen Elizabeth but it appears there has been no more unwelcome visitor in the last 20 years. For Britons angry over the U.S.-led war of occupation and their own Government's complicity in it, the Bush visit provided just the right platform to express their discontent. For weeks before the visit, the 'Stop The War' coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain asked their supporters to take to the streets during Mr. Bush's stay and London geared for protest marches and demonstration all through this week. The saturation security ensured he did not get to see these protests but his toasts to the Anglo-American alliance and to his "special relationship" with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, have for sure been overshadowed by footage of anti-war marchers gathered at the Trafalgar Square. In fact, many in the ruling Labour Party viewed the visit as inappropriate at a time when troops of both countries are bogged down in Iraq. They are worried it could cost the party voter support already eroded by Mr. Blair's decision to weigh in on the side of the U.S.

The Bush visit to Britain has highlighted how much of a hate figure the U.S. President has become, not just in the Arab street but pretty much around the world. From Seoul to London, it seems the same story. On a recent visit

to Australia, Mr. Bush's handlers swished him through his engagements to ensure that the street protests did not penetrate his security wall but they could not prevent heckling when he addressed the Australian Parliament. In the Philippines, thousands of people took to the streets during President Bush's short visit to that country. A recent European Union survey revealed that 53 per cent of Europeans believe the U.S. to be a threat to world peace. Evidently, it is no longer just the fringe that thinks Mr. Bush is dangerous. Speaking in London, he defended his Iraq policy and the U.S. commitment to creating "free societies... that do not breed terror". That is unlikely to go down well in a country where very large numbers of people believe U.S. actions are making the world a less safe place. That number must have risen after the terrorist bombing of British targets in Istanbul.

Beyond Iraq, the protests in Britain take on added significance in the context of the 2004 U.S. presidential elections in which Mr. Bush will seek a second term. It may be that his campaign team viewed the visit to Britain, with all its royal trimmings — the stay at Buckingham Palace, lunch and dinner with the Queen — as an event that would make him seem more of a statesman to voters back home. After all, this was the first ever-state visit by a U.S. President to Britain. The protests, which began even before Mr. Bush set foot in London, put a damper on that. More than any before it, this American presidency has shown the manner in which the U.S. can seek to dominate the world's agenda. The anti-Bush protests across Britain this week will, in their own way, convey the grave implications of this to millions of American voters.

100,000 troops in Iraq till 2006

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New York, November 22

US ARMY officials plan to keep 100,000 troops in Iraq through early 2006, reflecting concern that stabilising Iraq could be more difficult than originally planned, The *New York Times* reported on Saturday.

The newspaper reported that a "senior Army officer" warned that maintaining a force of such size beyond early 2006 would cause the Army to "really start to feel the pain" from stress on overtaxed active-duty, reserve and National Guard troops.

But the *Times* said another senior military official cautioned that while the senior Army officer's comments reflect-

ed prudent planning, it "has nothing to do with what the security situation on the ground might be in 18 months".

The newspaper said the Pentagon plans to reduce the US military presence in Iraq to 105,000 by May from the current 130,000, and that while some defence officials have raised the possibility of shrinking the force even more next year, the senior officer said planners were assuming the number of US forces in Iraq would probably stay the same when the military begins its third one-year troop rotation in March 2005.

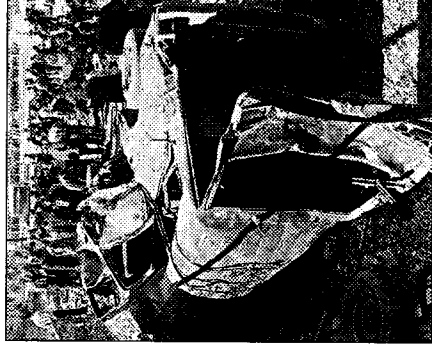
"What we're looking at doing is making some assumptions with the Marines about sustain-

ing the type of force we're going to need," said the officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"As you look at this, it wouldn't seem prudent right now to plan on using a force of less than what is there now, for March '05." That force would presumably remain in Iraq until March 2006, although its size could fluctuate, depending on conditions on the ground, the *Times* said.

The views of senior Army and Marine Corps officers involved in the planning in Washington are important, the report added, because they track and respond to what ground commanders in Iraq say they require.

Reuters



AFP
A vehicle damaged in the bombing at Baquba, Iraq, on Saturday.

19-17
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Talks focus on security assurance for N. Korea

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, NOV. 20. The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, James Kelly, held talks with the South Korean Assistant Foreign Minister, Lee Soo-hyuck, in Seoul today to prepare the ground for a possible new round of multilateral parleys on North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

No firm announcement has yet been made about the dates and venue of what might be the second round of six-party talks on the Korean nuclear issue. China had hosted the first-ever talks on that issue and scale in Beijing last August, the other participants being the United States and North Korea besides South Korea as also Japan and Russia. Mr. Kelly discussed the

Korean nuclear question with the Chinese Vice-Foreign Ministers, Dai Bingguo and Wang Yi, in Beijing on Wednesday, amid speculation that the next round of six-party talks might take place by about the middle of next month. While no substantive details of Mr. Kelly's latest consultations in Beijing were made public, Mr. Lee said in Seoul today that they had discussed the possible details of a "security assurance" that the U.S. was thinking of extending to Pyongyang in a bid to persuade it to abandon its nuclear weapons "programme" in a verifiable and irreversible fashion. The consultations on the "security assurance" were still "at a very initial stage", Mr. Lee told the local media. A new nuance,

relating to the specific context of a possible "security assurance", had come into sharp focus during Mr. Kelly's talks with the Japanese leaders in Tokyo on November 17 and 18. This was the poster how Washington could offer a "security assurance" to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without altering the dynamics of the long-standing U.S.-Japan alliance.

Mr. Kelly held talks with the Japanese Foreign Minister, Yoriko Kawaguchi, and the Director General of the Japanese Defence Agency, Shigeru Ishiba. Outlining Tokyo's concerns, Mr. Ishiba said the relevant issues were related to the sustainability of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Bush, Blair unite to condemn terror

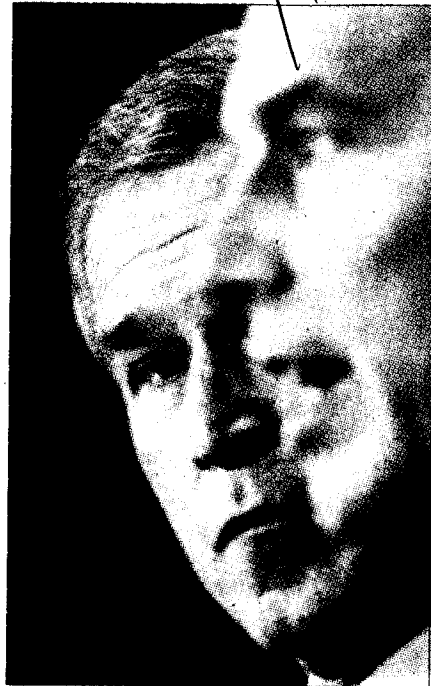
Associated Press

LONDON, Nov. 20. — The US President and British Prime Minister stood united today on the war on terror and condemned the blasts in Turkey.

Mr Tony Blair, speaking after a meeting with Mr George W Bush, called the Istanbul blasts "the latest terrorist outrage". The attacks should not lessen "in any way" the two countries' commitment in Iraq, he said. "Once again we're reminded of the evil these terrorists pose to innocent people everywhere and to our way life... Once again, we must affirm that in the face of this terrorism there must be no holding back, no compromise, no hesitation in confronting this menace, in attacking it wherever and whenever we can and in defeating it utterly." Mr Bush said: "The nature of the terrorist enemy is evident once more. We see their utter contempt for innocent life. They hate freedom. They hate free nations."

With the attacks sure to refocus attention on terrorism, Mr Bush and Mr Blair warned against complacency and used the bombings to justify their troops' continued presence in Iraq. Mr Blair called the process of ensuring a stable, democratic Iraq "an essential part in defeating this fanaticism and extremism". In a bid to turn the tide of opinion on the Iraq occupation, he said: "Our response is not to flinch or give way or concede one inch. We stand absolutely firm until this job is done." Mr Bush said: "They need to be stopped and we will stop them."

Protests against Mr Bush's visit raged with thousands of demonstrators marching through Central Lon-



FACE OFF: Mr George W Bush looks on as Mr Tony Blair answers a question at a joint press conference in London on Thursday. (Right) Police keep an eye on part of an estimated 100,000 demonstrators marching through the streets of central London. — AFP

Palace to take legal action against phony footman

LONDON, Nov. 20. — Stung by a phony footman who turned out to be a tabloid reporter, Buckingham Palace today said it was taking legal action against the *Daily Mirror* and its journalist, Ryan Parry. "We will be asking the High Court to restrain the newspaper and Mr (Ryan) Parry from further publication of information in breach of the duty of confidence he owes to his former employer," a statement from the palace said.

Meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth II has agreed to the most extensive independent review of security at Buckingham Palace after an undercover reporter worked undetected as a footman for two months. After talks between the Queen, the Prime Minister and Sir John Stevens, the Metropolitan (London) Police Commissioner, it was announced that the Security Commission, headed by Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, one of Britain's most senior judges, will conduct the inquiry. Dame Elizabeth will have unfettered access to the Palace and its officials. An interim report will be delivered by Christmas. — The Times, London & AP

don today. Several US expatriates, led by maimed Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic, marched through West End behind a banner declaring: 'Proud of my country, ashamed of its

President'. They were joined by hundreds of Britishers, including school children who defied authorities to take a day off for the protest, said a Stop The War Coalition activist.

However, good news came in for Mr Blair as his government narrowly avoided defeat (by 17 votes) in the House of Commons today over plans to reform the health service.

No let-up in anti-American attacks in Iraq

Associated Press

KIRKUK, Nov. 20. — At least five people were killed and 40, including children, injured today when a bomb apparently hidden in a pickup truck exploded at the offices of a US-allied Kurdish political party in this northern oil centre.

It was the second car-bombing in as many days against Iraqis who cooperate with the US-led occupation. Kirkuk mayor Mr Abdul Rahman Mustapha said: "All indications point to a suicide attack. One body has not been identified and it could be the driver."

Also today, a pro-US politician was assassinated in the southern port city of Basra, his party said. Mr Jalal Johar, an official with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, said the powerful explosion occurred about 10:30 a.m. It shattered windows and damaged doors at the two-story yellow and green PUK building and blew out the windows of the nearby radio and TV station.

The PUK is a group that supports American efforts in Iraq. Party chief Mr Jalal Talabani is the current head of the US-installed Iraqi Governing Council.

Late yesterday, a car bomb exploded outside the home of Sheik Amer Ali Suleiman, a tribal leader in Ramadi, about 100 km west of Baghdad. Hospital workers said today that two people were killed in the attack.

Pageantry, protests welcome US President to UK

Associated Press

LONDON, Nov. 19. — Amid royal pageantry and anti-war protests, the US President began his state visit to Britain by defending the invasion of Iraq as a necessary use of military power while likening reconstruction efforts to rebuilding a shattered Europe after two world wars.

Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip gave a royal salute to the American leader today, by greeting Mr Bush at Buckingham Palace to open his state visit.

As ceremonial cannon blasts shook the palace, the President and his wife, Mrs Laura Bush, moved down a receiving line with the queen and prince, greeting Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair, Foreign Secretary Mr Jack Straw and a phalanx of military officers in formal dress. Mr Bush and the prince then inspected a column of Coldstream Guards, with their trademark grey coats and tall, furry black hats.

Protesters gathered outside the palace today behind metal barriers, watched by large numbers of yellow-jacketed police officers.



ROWDY ROADS: Protesters demonstrate against the US policy of detaining prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in London on Wednesday. — AFP

Protesters were kept several dozen metres from the palace gates, but their chants could be heard inside the palace grounds as the President greeted dignitaries.

Ms Nina Baker, a Scottish Green Party activist from Glasgow who was outside the palace, said she opposed Mr Bush's visit but was not anti-American. "Everything about

him (Mr Bush) is just deeply depressing," Ms Baker said. "Mr Bush stole the presidency, Mr Blair lied to the people, Mr Bush led us down the path of war. They are not listening to the public."

Several dozen anti-war protesters stood outside the palace on last night, their shouts of "Bush go home" and other invective drowned out

by the two helicopters ferrying the presidential entourage.

The real test of anti-Bush sentiment will come tomorrow. The Stop the War Coalition expects 100,000 to march past Parliament and 10 Downing Street.

London's left-wing mayor, Mr Ken Livingstone, told the protesters they would command "the moral high ground" only if they kept their demonstrations violence-free. "There will be no place for violence of any kind in London this week. Protests must be peaceful and within the law," Mr Livingstone — a critic of Mr Blair's foreign policy — said.

A senior Metropolitan Police officer, pledged his force would provide a level of security "second to none". Hundreds of officers were deployed last night on foot patrols around Buckingham Palace, some of them armed-unusually in Britain — with firearms as well as batons and pepper sprays.

Mr Bush's visit dominated newspapers in Britain this morning. Headlines concentrated on the unprecedented level of security surrounding the visit, with the *Times of London's* front page leading with "President strolls into Fortress Britain".



A ROYAL WELCOME: Mr George W Bush and his wife stand with Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip during the ceremonial welcome at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday. — AFP

Bush on the defensive over Iraq offensive

LONDON, Nov. 19. — The US President today defended the war in Iraq, saying military might must be used at times to confront the continuing, global danger of terrorism. "In some cases, the measured use of force is all that protects us

from a chaotic world ruled by force," Mr George W Bush told academics gathered at Whitehall Palace.

During his state visit here, Mr Bush was seeking to puncture what he views as misconceptions in Europe about America's use

of force in Iraq. "There are principled objections to the use of force in every generation and I credit the motives behind these views," he said, mindful of the bitter opposition among many in Britain and across Europe to the Iraq war. — AP

THE STATESMAN

20 NOV 2003

US rushing with Iraqification: Critics

CARLA ANNE ROBBINS &
YOCHI J. DREAZEN
WASHINGTON/ BAGHDAD, NOV 17

BRUSHING aside Ambassador L. Paul Bremer's warning, the Bush administration has decided to quickly hand over political and military power to the Iraqis in a bid to stabilise Iraq and reduce US presence there.

But questions are being raised over whether the institutions the US is racing to put into place under so-called Iraqification will be up to the job.

Under the new agreement, finalized with the Iraqi Governing Council, Washington would end its occupation by the end of June: dissolving the US hand-picked Council and transferring sovereignty and political control to an interim Iraqi government. By then, the US hopes, some 2,00,000 new Iraqi securitymen would begin to shoulder more of the military burden.

US troops, however, would remain a significant presence backing the new government. The obstacles and risks are enormous.

Critics worry the 130,000-security personnel can't be trained adequately by then. Moreover, by ced-

France, Italy for quicker handover of power

PARIS: Both Italy and France on Monday called for a quicker transfer of power to a provisional Iraqi government. While French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said that a mid-2004 timetable favoured by the US too slow, the Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi said: "I think we have reached the conviction that we should accelerate our support for an immediate implementation" of the latest UN resolution on Iraq. "Only in this way, we can obtain the gradual transfer of sovereignty to a fully-recognised Iraqi government," Ciampi said.

1971
Villepin said: "My view is that it is too late. We need to move faster. This is an urgent situation. In Baghdad we already have a temporary governing council, a constitutional committee, a council of ministers. Each counts 25 members." — Agencies

ing political power so quickly, the US is giving up much of its control over who will run the government

and what's written into a new Iraqi constitution. That could well open the

way for Islamists or former sympathizers of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime.

From
Wall Street Journal

'Al Qaeda behind Turkey blasts'

Planning attacks on Britain, Italy, Australia and Japan

AGENCIES
LONDON, NOVEMBER 17

LONDON-based Arabic newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* said on Sunday that Al Qaeda had claimed responsibility for the bombings of two Istanbul synagogues which killed 23 people, and vowed further attacks.

Editor Abdel-Bari Atwan said

they found that Mossad agents were working at the synagogues and therefore they bombed them," he said.

The same Al Qaeda division claimed responsibility for the August attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad. Like the Turkey bombings, the Baghdad assault involved an explosives-laden vehicle.

The newspaper's editor,



A US soldier stands beside a banner with a quotation from the Koran reading, "What God will, and there is no power but the power of God" during a raid in Baghdad on Monday. President George W. Bush told *The Sun* on Monday that the US would wage war again — and alone if necessary — to ensure the safety of the world. Meanwhile, following former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's new tape in which he warned of more deaths for the US-led troops, US Administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, on Monday said the ousted President must be captured or killed. Reuters

In a region where the memory of the US retreat from Lebanon is still fresh, any sign that the US is looking for a rapid exit could strengthen the will of insurgents.

"You don't start talking about drawing down troops while the deaths of American soldiers are increasing," warns Senator John McCain, the Arizona Republican.

US officials say the new approach was driven by demands of Iraqi leaders and based in logic, not politics. Their hope is that returning political power to Iraqis will calm popular Iraqi anger.

Moreover, putting Iraqi forces on the front lines should result in better intelligence, US officials say. "They can go and search an Iraqi house and not cause the animosity," said Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, adding, "You don't need months and months of training for that."

At the center of the US plan is an effort to develop Iraqi forces that can provide enough security to allow Americans to begin pulling back.

The Pentagon appears to be basing its first round of troop cuts on the calculation that Iraqis will pick up many of the less-skilled jobs now being done by US troops. A good part of the US plan is also based on the Pentagon's belief that the enemy is relatively small,

US probes ties between Saudi funds, terror outfits

JOSH MEYER
WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 17

EVEN as they nurture a partnership with Saudi Arabia to smash Al-Qaeda, US officials are quietly investigating whether funds disbursed by Riyadh have helped finance international terrorism.

Counterterrorism officials involved in the effort, which has included the subpoenaing of Saudi government bank records in the US, said it is one of their most pressing and politically sensitive priorities: tracing as much as \$4 billion a year that the Saudi government has spent worldwide, partly in an effort to gain support for its strict brand of conservative Islam, known as Wahhabism.

The probe involves efforts to determine not only where the money went, but also if Saudi officials — knowingly or unwittingly — helped bankroll terror cells through official donations to Islamic leaders, mosques, schools, cultural centers and other projects.

The FBI and Treasury Department are also seeking to trace Saudi money spent on efforts to recruit Wahhabi followers, including inmates in federal prisons and within the US military, and the financial aid given to thousands of Saudi students.

So far, the investigation has found no evidence of intentional wrongdoing by Saudis. "Most of it appears legitimate," a senior US official said. "But we are looking beyond that and trying to determine where all

America can wage war again, alone: Bush

London, Nov. 17 (Reuters): The US would wage war again, and alone if necessary, to ensure the long-term safety of the world, President George W. Bush said in an interview published today.

Bush told Britain's leading tabloid, the *Sun*, on the eve of a state visit that he felt compelled to act following the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington.

"I was at Ground Zero after the attacks," he said. "I remember this haze and the smells and the death and destruction. I'll al-

ways remember that. I made up my mind right then. We were at war and we were going to win the war. And I still feel that determination today."

The paper quoted Bush as saying US forces and their coalition allies had ended the tyranny of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, smashed the grip of Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network in Afghanistan and forced the UN to stop turning its back on terror.

The mass-selling *Sun* newspaper, best known for its semi-naked Page Three girls, is owned

by tycoon Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, the most influential media empire in Britain.

Bush's choice to grant it an interview raised eyebrows among American journalists, who questioned its suitability for a President who has publicly embraced evangelical Protestantism. "After coming to office with a vow to restore dignity to the White House, the President... granted an exclusive interview to a British tabloid that features daily photographs of nude women," the *Washington Post*

said in an article on its website. The *Post* said the President had gone "down market" and pointed out that he had not given an exclusive interview to many of the US national newspapers this year. Bush, unpopular in Britain following the US-led war on Iraq, arrives tomorrow for a visit that includes meetings with Queen Elizabeth and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, his closest wartime ally.

In another interview with a British newspaper, influential Pentagon adviser Richard Perle

echoed Bush's comments, saying the possibility of future conflicts could not be ruled out.

"Of course he (Bush) is going to stick with that principle, because it is fundamental to fighting and winning the war against terror," Perle, one of the architects of the US invasion of Iraq, told the *Daily Telegraph*. "So, does this entail a risk we will find ourselves in conflict with other governments? Sure, it does."

While in Britain, Bush will stay at the Queen's London residence, Buckingham Palace, visit

Blair's northern English constituency and talk to relatives of British soldiers killed in Iraq.

Blair's ratings have plunged since the Iraq war and the failure to find weapons of mass destruction — the government's main justification for launching the military campaign — but Bush said the decision to go to war should not be judged on short-term results.

"I set big goals," he said. "I know what we're doing is going to have a positive effect on this world."



President George W. Bush at the White House. (AFP)

19 NOV 2002
THE TELEGRAPH

TIKRIT TARGETS SHELLED ■ RAIDS IN BAGHDAD

US troops go on the offensive in Iraq

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Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Nov. 17. — Mortar and tank fire lit up the night sky over Mr Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit before dawn today in a show of force to intimidate the resistance, while troops angered residents by mounting their biggest-ever hunt for weapons and explosives in a middle class Baghdad area.

Meanwhile, in the city of Ramadi west of Baghdad, US troops announced they had arrested an a leader of the *fidayeen* guerrillas responsible for bomb attacks and ambushes on US forces. The suspect, Kazim Mohammed Faris, was a "high value target", a military statement said.

US forces have reacted to the increasing attacks in which dozens of Americans and their allies have died by mounting a massive show of force in central and northern Iraq.

Buildings factories and other facilities believed used as staging areas for guerrilla attacks have been bombed from the air and blasted by artillery barrages. Troops have carried out dozens of raids aimed at apprehending suspects and seizing weapons and bomb-making materials.

One such "cordon-and-search" raid early today in Baghdad's middle-class Azamiyah district netted 21 suspects along with 30 Kalashnikov AK-47 automatic rifles, about a dozen shotguns and 10 handguns. Most suspects had violated a one weapon per house rule.

Some 2,000 troops of the 1st Armoured Division —

backed by tanks — vehicles and low-flying helicopters took part in the nighttime raid, sealing off a 20 block area and searching every single building inside it.

But many citizens of the neighbourhood next to the Tigris River said they were puzzled by the choice of target, because the area — which is home to bureaucrats, lawyers



STRIKE BACK: US mortar fire light up Tikrit's pre-dawn sky on Monday as American troops went on a major offensive against anti-coalition insurgency. — AFP

and other professionals — has not seen any rebel activity.

Late last night and early today, US troops bombarded the outskirts of Tikrit with mortar and tank fire in simultaneous assaults that set off explosions booming across the town. Apache helicopters also blasted unspecified targets.

Meanwhile, a tape purportedly made by Mr Saddam Hussein urged the rebels to escalate attacks against the occupation and "agents brought by foreign armies" —

an apparent reference to Iraqis supporting the coalition.

The speaker on the tape, aired on Al-Arabiya TV, said the only way to end the chaos in Iraq was for Saddam and his now-outlawed Baath Party to return to power. The speaker also lashed out at Iraqis who cooperate with the US military, calling them "stray dogs that walk alongside the caravan".

The CIA said it would review the tape for its authenticity. President Bush dismissed the recording. "The evil ones now find themselves in crisis and this is God's will for them," he said.

'Hurry up'

France's foreign minister said in an interview published today in the French daily *Le Croix* that the plan to establish a sovereign government in Iraq was "too slow". Mr Dominique de Villepin urged the Americans to have a provisional government in place by the end of 2003.

In the UNHQ, Italy's President called for the US-led coalition, Iraqi Governing Council and UN to help speed up the process of transferring sovereignty in Iraq to an Iraqi government. Mr Carlo Azeglio Ciampi held talks with UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan yesterday.

"I think that we have reached the conviction that we should accelerate our support for an immediate implementation" of the latest UN resolution on Iraq, Mr Ciampi told reporters after the meeting.

■ Editorial: Coalition bashing, page 6

US sets June date for Iraq power shift

NY Times and Reuters
Baghdad, November 15

IRAQ'S INTERIM Governing Council said on Saturday that a transitional sovereign government would be in place by next June and an elected government would follow by the end of 2005 after the drafting of a constitution.

The Governing Council unveiled the new timetable after the US gave up its earlier insistence that a constitution be drafted and ratified before a sovereign government could take over from the US-British occupying powers. Washington hopes the move will change the perception of the US as an occupying power and curb the mounting attacks on its forces in the country.

Jalal Talabani, the council's current chairman, said the transition would involve "the creation of a permanent constitution by an elected council, directly elected by the people, and also the election of a new government according to the articles of this new constitution before the end of 2005".

In the meantime, a transitional council will be selected by May next year, which will pick the transitional government by the end of June, he said. "At its assumption of power, the state of occupation would end."

US officials have made clear that while Iraq would no longer legally be under a state of occupation, a sizeable number of troops would remain in the country.

The plan to accelerate the transfer of power was put forward by Iraqi leaders this week, and taken to Washington by L. Paul Bremer III, the

American administrator in Iraq. On reaching Baghdad, Bremer told members of the Iraqi Governing Council that the White House had broadly accepted the plan. The agreement envisions giving Iraqis control over their own wealth and political affairs before a constitution is adopted.

12 dead in mid-air crash

Twelve coalition soldiers were killed when two US helicopters crashed in Mosul on Saturday, the US military said. Nine soldiers were injured in the crash that occurred at 1830 local time, said a military spokesman. He said the two helicopters belonged to the 101st Airborne Division which controls northern Iraq.

Baghdad blast

One US soldier was killed and two were wounded in a bomb attack in Baghdad on Saturday, the US military said. Later in the afternoon, an explosion was heard in central Baghdad and smoke could be seen rising from an area close to the headquarters of Iraq's US-led administration.

Japan to send troops

Japan's defence minister on Saturday told Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that his government still intended to send troops to Iraq "at an early date", but was closely watching the situation on the ground. The move follows Japan's refusal to send non-combat forces after Wednesday's attack in southern Iraq that killed 18 Italians.

Agencies

USA proposes to grant sovereignty to Iraqis after selection of a transitional government

'Occupation end by June'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Nov. 15. — The US-led occupation of Iraq will end by June next year after the selection of a transitional government, the Iraqi Governing Council said today.

"The new government will be in charge of negotiating with the occupying forces over how to regulate their presence in the country," Mr. Jalal Talabani, who heads the US-appointed Governing Council, told reporters after a six-hour meeting with top US administrator Mr. I. Paul Bremer.

Yesterday, Mr. Bremer returned to Baghdad following emergency talks in Washington to brief the 23-seat body on the Bush administration's policy shift regarding a return of Iraqi sovereignty.

Senior administration officials said the proposed changes included forming a new gov-

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TOKYO KEEPS RUMSFELD GUESSING

TOKYO, Nov. 15. — Japan's Prime Minister and defence chief have assured US Defence Secretary Mr. Donald Rumsfeld that Tokyo will send troops to Iraq "as soon as possible", but sidestepped the crucial issue of timing.

Prime Minister Mr. Junichiro Koizumi yesterday said the situation in Iraq remained far from reassuring, indicating that he would be cautious over the timing of the dispatch of Self-Defence Force personnel to that country.

Mr. Rumsfeld sounded a conciliatory note, saying he appreciated the support that Japan and other countries have provided for the reconstruction of Iraq.

— **Yomiuri Shimbun/ANN**



Mr. Rumsfeld:
No headway

ernment before a Constitution is written, thus granting Iraq sovereignty by the middle of 2004. Previously, Washington insisted that a new charter be written and adopted before general elections are held, a process that was likely to last at least another year.

Mr. Talabani stressed during the press conference that the end of the US occupation would not necessarily mean the departure of all American

troops. However, he added, they would have a new status. "Concerning external security, this government will negotiate with coalition forces that will change from occupation forces to presence."

Mr. Talabani said: "As of now we will begin a dialogue with occupation authorities on the security matters but when the transitional government is set up all authorities will be transferred to this government. It will be an independent and sovereign government in charge of security in Iraq, internal security as well as the (Iraq's) budget of Iraq and in control of all parts of Iraq. Then no other powers will have authority concerning internal security."

The new plan appeared to be to shift security responsibility to the Iraqis to reduce US casualties before next year's US presidential election.

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U.S. occupation will end by June, says Council

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BAGHDAD, NOV. 15. The U.S.-led occupation of Iraq will end by June next year after the selection of a transitional government, the U.S. appointed Governing Council said on Saturday.

"The new Government will be in charge of negotiating with the occupying forces over how to regulate their presence in the country," Jalal Talabani, who heads the Council, told reporters after a six-hour meeting with the top U.S. administrator, Paul Bremer. On Friday, Mr. Bremer returned to Baghdad following emergency talks in Washington to brief the 23-seat body on the Bush administration's policy

shift regarding a return of Iraqi sovereignty.

Senior administration officials told The Associated Press that the proposed changes included forming a new Government before a Constitution is written, thus granting Iraq sovereignty by the middle of 2004. Previously, the Bush administration has insisted that a new charter be written and adopted before general elections are held, a process that was likely to last at least another year.

Mr. Talabani stressed during the press conference that the end of the U.S. occupation would not necessarily mean the departure of all American

troops. However, Mr. Talabani said they would have a new status.

U.S. soldier killed

On Saturday, a roadside bomb exploded next to a patrol in a Baghdad neighbourhood killing a U.S. soldier and injuring two others, a statement said. The wounded were evacuated to a military hospital in central Baghdad, it said.

Meanwhile, the military toll from Wednesday's suicide attack in the southern city of Nasiriyah reached 17 Saturday when a severely wounded soldier was pronounced dead in Kuwait. — AP

Bush rushes Iraq power handover

CIA report warns of chaos, adds to scare

Washington, November 13

THE WHITE House on Wednesday drew up emergency plans to accelerate the transfer of power in Iraq after being shown a devastating CIA report warning that the guerrilla war was in danger of escalating out of US control.

The Bush administration moved up its timetable for self-government in Iraq, deciding to try to hold elections in the first half of next year and turn civilian authority over to a temporary government before a new constitution is written.

The new plan was intended in part, they said, to change the political climate in Iraq and reduce the anger toward occupying forces that fosters support for violence, including attacks on US and other foreign forces, by demonstrating to Iraqis that America is moving more quickly to establish self-rule.

The CIA report, an "appraisal of situation" commissioned by its director George Tenet and written by the CIA station chief in Baghdad, said the insurgency was gaining ground among the people, and already numbers in the tens of thousands.

One military intelligence assessment estimates the insurgents' strength at 50,000. Analysts cautioned that such a figure was speculative, but it does indicate a deep-rooted revolt on a far greater scale than the Pentagon had led the administration to believe.

An intelligence source in Washington familiar with the CIA report described it as a "bleak assessment that the resistance is broad, strong and getting stronger".

"It says we are going to lose the situation unless there is a rapid and dramatic change of course," the source said.

"There are thousands in the resistance — not just a core of

Japan backs out

JAPAN ON Thursday ruled out any rapid despatch of forces to Iraq. The announcement came a day after a devastating suicide attack on Italian troops in Nassiriyah. The country had earlier decided to send non-combat troops to southern Iraq by the year-end.

Reuters, Baghdad

Baathists. They are in the thousands, and growing every day. Not all those people are actually firing, but providing support, shelter and all that."

Although, the report was an internal CIA document it was widely circulated within the administration. Even more unusually, it carried an endorsement by Paul Bremer, the civilian head of the US-run occupation of Iraq — a possible sign that he was seeking to bypass his superiors in the Pentagon and send a message directly to President George Bush on how bad the situation has become. "Obviously, the terrorists are trying to encourage the Iraqi people to believe that the US is not going to stay the course," Bremer said. "I think the situation with the Iraqi public is, frankly, not easy to quantify."

Meanwhile, the US military said on Thursday another soldier had been killed in an attack in Baghdad, and American soldiers in the flashpoint town of Fallujah came under fresh attack.

US forces hit back on Wednesday night, destroying a Baghdad warehouse thought to be used by guerrillas and killing two Iraqis in a helicopter strike. A military spokesman said the crackdown, named Operation Iron Hammer, would intensify in coming days.

The Guardian & NY Times



An Iraqi baby sleeps in a house during an early morning raid by American troops in Baquba on Thursday.

REUTERS

Anti-Bush wave hits Americans in UK

London, November 13

THE BRITISH abandoned their stiff upper lips and hugged Americans after 9/11. Now much of that goodwill has evaporated and the blame is being laid firmly at the door of George W. Bush.

After the twin tower attacks, a military band broke with tradition and played the American national anthem at the Changing of the Guard ceremony at Buckingham Palace. Less than 18 months later, one million people took to London's streets to protest against the forthcoming US-led

war in Iraq. Now with President Bush heading to these shores next week to see Tony Blair, the 200,000 Americans living in London face a wave not of anti-Americanism but anti-Bushism.

"It's tougher being an American in London than it used to be," Our President has made it so," said *Newsweek's* London correspondent Stryker McGuire. "Even among friendly Britons, there's a growing scepticism about the gun-toting, electric-chairing land that has let Dubya be Dubya for nigh on three years now. Blair and Bush definitely

are the odd couple," he added. Christine Swanson, back home after taking the kids to school, said: "I am frustrated. As horrible as September 11 was, it was a real opportunity to move forward in a positive way. There was a lot of goodwill to tap into and it took the incredible talent of George Bush to piss it all away in two years."

Almost 25 years after she first called London home, Pennsylvania-born Virginia Schultz vividly recalls the days after 9/11. "People were hugging me in the street. I thought the way they reacted then was wonderful."

"Right now there is strong anti-Americanism and I compare it to the Vietnam War. Bush has been targeted as the villain in all of this. I think he is even more unpopular than Nixon was."

The *New York Times'* London correspondent Warren Hoge said, "America is now something of a rogue state, a pariah nation." "People repeatedly say it isn't. Americans we don't like, it is just Bush. He pushes hot buttons. Bush has so much to do with this rather stupendous fall-off in American popularity."

Reuters

US Senate nod to Syria sanctions

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, Nov. 12. — The US Congress has approved tough new sanctions on Syria for its alleged support to militants and reported attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

The Senate yesterday amended the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act, imposing sanctions with 89 members voting in favour and four senators opposing the move.

The Amendment, offered by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Mr Richard Lugar, gave Mr George W Bush greater powers to waive the economic and diplomatic sanctions if he deems it in national interest.

The House of Representatives have already approved the measures by a 398 to four vote last month.

The legislation gives the US President a range of options to impose sanctions against Syria, from restricting US exports and business investment to downgrading Washington's diplomatic representation and imposing travel restrictions on Syrian diplomats in the USA.

The Bill also bans "dual-use" technology exports, and allows the US government to freeze Syria's assets in the USA and restrict overflight rights for Syrian aircraft inside US airspace. The legislation also calls on Damascus to end its occupation of Lebanon.

Mr Bush last month ended two years of opposition to the Bill and has indicated he would sign it. The sanctions come as in the wake of bitterness in US-Syria ties over Damascus' alleged ties with groups Washington terms as terrorists.

The State Department has accused Syria actively supporting militant groups like Hizbullah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and providing safe transit for fighters infiltrating Iraq and targeting US forces there.

GUANTANAMO BAY / LEGALITY OF DETENTION CHALLENGED

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U.S. Supreme Court to hear prisoners' plea

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, NOV. 11. In a significant move, the U.S. Supreme Court has said that it will hear an appeal asking if foreigners held at the Guantanamo Bay base in Cuba have recourse to the American court system.

The Supreme Court will hear the petition next year and a ruling is expected around July. This is the first time that the nation's highest court has agreed to hear a case related to the war on terrorism. The U.S. is said to be holding an estimated 650 persons at the Guantanamo Bay base with the Bush administration contending that since the men were picked up overseas on suspicion of terrorism and are being kept in a foreign land, they could be detained indefinitely and without charges or trials.

The detained men are mostly Muslims and have no access to the world outside. The expectation is that eventually, some of these detainees could be tried before tribunals; but the Repub-

lican administration has been tight-lipped about this as well. Some of the prisoners have already been shipped back to their country.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has said that the mental condition of a large number of the detainees was deteriorating.

Lawyers for those detained and civil rights activists have been asking for access to the court system, arguing among other things, that the U. S. "has created a prison on Guantanamo Bay that operates entirely outside the law."

But the Bush administration sees this differently.

"We believe that the law is on our side" argued the President's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, stressing that the detainees "are being treated consistently with international law and we believe that we're right in this."

The case before the Supreme Court has to do with four British and Australian detenus, who were seized in Pakistan.

The lawyers for the four are saying that their clients have nothing to do with the Al-Qaeda, other terror outfits or the events of 9/11.

The court will also hear the challenge of 12 Kuwaiti men who were taken into custody in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Their lawyers maintain that they are not terrorists and have not participated in any hostile act against the U.S.

The apex court has had several opportunities to hear terror-related cases in the recent past; but had declined to do so in every one of them.

By deciding to hear the first batch of appeal, the court, in its ruling next year, could set the stage for more such cases to be brought to its attention.

The Bush administration, through the Solicitor General, has told the court that the Guantanamo Bay base detentions served "vital objectives of preventing combatants from continuing to aid our enemies and gathering intelligence to further the overall war effort".

— George Bush

Democracy at Home

George Bush draws up a blueprint of democracy for the world

In his address to the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy on November 6, George Bush outlined a vision of greater freedom for much of the world, but particularly for the Middle East. But in doing so, he traced a version of American contribution to the history of democracy that strains credulity. Mr Bush's paean to democracy starts with Ronald Reagan's 1982 forecast that more and more nations would become free with the collapse of communism. No quarrels with that. What is problematic is the glorious role Dubya assigns to the US in achieving this transformation: "It is no accident that the rise of so many democracies took place in a time when the world's most influential nation was itself a democracy. The US made military and moral commitments in Europe and Asia, which protected free nations from aggression, and created the conditions in which new democracies could flourish". Around the time Mr Reagan was painting a splendid future picture of democracy, the US was sowing the seeds of jihadism in Afghanistan as part of its fight against communism. Today, that Frankenstein's monster has turned on America with vicious consequences for the whole world. Mr Bush then goes on to lament the long years of western accommodation of the lack of freedom in the Middle East. But why only the Middle East?

Consider the long list of American client regimes: Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, Marshal Phibul Songkhram and other generals in Thailand, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, General Ayub Khan in Pakistan, General Pinochet in Chile, Colonel Armas in Guatemala and the many Brazilian generals. For a more recent example of American support to 'democracy', we hardly need go beyond Pakistan and its military dictator, Pervez Musharraf. Equally, some might be tempted to ask why a superpower intent on democratising the world didn't think of the most democratic way to get into Iraq — through the forum of the UN. If this were not enough, there is also the state of civil liberties in Mr Bush's own country. In the two years since 9/11, America has witnessed a scaling back of democratic freedoms, that even by domestic opinion, is far too sweeping in its scope. In a recent editorial, *The New York Times* called upon the US supreme court to critically examine the radical nature of some of the administrative decisions, particularly those that allow anyone suspected of being an "enemy combatant", American citizens included, to be indefinitely confined and denied access to lawyers and family members. Like charity, perhaps democracy should begin at home.

U.S. shuts Riyadh mission

RIYADH, NOV. 8. Washington's decision to shut its embassy in Saudi Arabia was based on fresh information about Muslim militants' plans and followed a call to target Western 'crusaders', diplomats said today. The U.S. embassy in Riyadh and its consulates in the coastal cities of Jeddah and Dhahran were all closed today — a working day in the Gulf — after what the United States said was credible information 'terrorists' were about to strike.

Its warning to U.S. citizens in the kingdom followed raids in which five militants suspected of links to Saudi-born Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda movement were killed since Monday.

Osama, in an audio tape last month, vowed more suicide attacks inside and outside the United States and both Washington and London dramatically raised their threat warnings to nationals in the Gulf Arab state in late October. Diplomats said the embassy — set in a high security diplomatic compound on the outskirts of Riyadh and protected by armoured vehicles — was unlikely to reopen tomorrow. — Reuters

TROOPS FOR IRAQ / TURKEY BACKTRACKS ON DECISION

U.S. launches air attacks in new tactic

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, NOV. 8. A day after downing a U.S. Black Hawk helicopter, Iraqi resistance forces killed two more American troops on Saturday even as the occupation forces took recourse to air power to counter the growing opposition to its presence.

A roadside bomb killed two U.S. soldiers, who were part of a convoy in the flashpoint town of Fallujah, west of Baghdad, the U.S. military command said. The total U.S. death roll after the incident reached 149 after Washington's declaration on May 1 that major combat operations in Iraq were over.

Ending the controversy surrounding the cause of Friday's helicopter crash, which killed six soldiers, U.S. military sources said the chopper had been brought down by Iraqi ground fire. The U.S. occupation forces have lost three helicopters in two weeks, and a record number of 32 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq during the week. A rocket-propelled grenade hit a Black Hawk helicopter on October 25 and a surface-to-air missile brought down a Chinook helicopter last Sunday, killing 16 troops.

Faced with the growing Iraqi resistance, the U.S. military, shifting its tactics after Friday's helicopter crash, began increasing the use of its airpower today. F-16 fighter planes bombed targets near Tikrit, 175



A person stands distraught next to his house destroyed during an attack by U.S. forces in Tikrit on Saturday. — Reuters

km north of Baghdad, and ground troops, supported by Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, blew up several houses, which the U.S. military suspected were being used by resistance fighters. American

fighter jets dropped several 500-pound bombs close to the chopper crash site, before ground forces launched their attack using heavy weapons. The occupation forces have rarely used fighter planes to

combat the Iraqi resistance after May 1. Tikrit, the hometown of the former President, Saddam Hussein, has been one of the hubs of the resistance.

In another blow to U.S. efforts to sustain its control over Iraq, Turkey has formally announced that it would not be sending its troops to supplement the Anglo-American forces.

Iraqi Kurds and Arab nationalists in Iraq had rejected the proposal for the deployment of a 10,000-strong Turkish military force in Iraq, as it triggered unhappy memories of 400 years of Ottoman rule in the country till World War 1. The deployment of Turkish troops could have also set a precedent for intervention in Iraq by other neighbouring countries.

Red Cross shuts offices

Meanwhile, disregarding exhortations by the U.S. to stay, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has decided to shut down its offices in Baghdad and the southern Iraqi city of Basra indefinitely.

The Red Cross had already pulled out a large portion of its foreign staff after a suicide car bombing of its headquarters late last month.

The ICRC president, Jacob Kellenberger, was quoted as saying that the group had decided not to work in Iraq under military protection, as it compromises its concept of independent humanitarian action.

US loses another copter, 6 men in Iraq

SASA KAVIC
TIKRIT, NOVEMBER 7

An American Black Hawk helicopter crashed near Saddam Hussein's hometown in Iraq on Friday, killing at least six people on board in the second deadly downing of a US helicopter in five days. American officers based at one of Saddam's former palaces in Tikrit, close to where the helicopter crashed, said it was not yet known whether guerrillas had shot it down.

"At approximately 9 a.m. 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," the spokesman added.

The Black Hawk is the US Army's front-line utility helicopter, designed to carry 11 combat-ready assault troops, and is also used for medical evacuations.

The military said preliminary reports indicated six deaths and two injuries.

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

Meanwhile, in the northern city of Mosul, an ambush on a convoy killed one soldier and wounded six others on Friday, Sergeant Kelly Tyler of the 101st Airborne Division said. In a separate attack in the town, a roadside bomb wounded three American soldiers.

The ambush brought to at least 140 the



US soldiers at a memorial for Sunday's Chinook helicopter victims at Al Asad air base on Thursday. Reuters

number of US soldiers killed in action since Washington declared major combat over on May 1—more than the 114 killed in March and April.

On Friday morning in Baghdad, guerrillas with "long beards" also fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a US tank and a civilian vehicle with American soldiers inside, wounding one soldier and an Iraqi boy, witnesses said. Near the restive town of Baquba, US troops were hunting for Rashid. Locals said troops were hunting for Rashid Taan Kazim, a former chairman of Saddam's Baath Party who is number 49 on the US list of 55 most-wanted Iraqi fugitives.

The mounting toll and the failure to find Saddam's alleged weapons of mass destruction have put pressure on US President George W. Bush, bidding for re-election next year.

—Reuters

IRAQ / SPANISH DIPLOMATS LEAVE

Grenade attack on U.S. base in Mosul

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BAGHDAD, NOV. 5. The U.S. forces in the northern city of Mosul came under attack on Wednesday as resistance fighters fired rocket-propelled grenades at a military compound and a bomb exploded near a convoy in the centre of the city.

An Iraqi youth was killed in the blast near Mosul's city hall, sources said. Two others were slightly injured.

No U.S. casualties were reported in the two incidents.

Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city, had been relatively quiet in the past several months, but the security situation has deteriorated since October.

The continuing attacks by shadowy groups of Iraqi resistance fighters have cast doubt on the ability of the U.S.-led coalition to contain the growing insurgency, and have sparked an exodus from Baghdad of international organisations and diplomats from several Western countries.

Spain, a close U.S. ally, withdrew many of its diplomatic staff on Wednesday because of escalating violence.

Huge explosions thundered through Baghdad on Tuesday as the attackers targeted the 5-sq.km "Green Zone," which includes coalition headquarters, the military press centre and other key facilities.

Iraqi police said two mortars fell in the zone, but the U.S. officials said the headquarters itself, located in one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces, was not damaged. A Pentagon spokesman said three persons were wounded. It was unclear if

they were military or civilians.

The huge detonations sent coalition staffers running into the hallways. It was the second mortar attack against the Green Zone in as many days.

The Spanish withdrawal followed the slaying of a Spanish navy captain in the truck bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad on Aug. 19, and the Oct. 9 killing of a Spanish sergeant working for military intelligence. Security at the Spanish embassy had been stepped up in recent weeks.

Two other coalition members have withdrawn diplomats from Iraq because of stepped-up insurgent attacks. Last month, Bulgaria and the Netherlands moved their diplomats to Jordan, also citing worsening security. Britain's Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, said on Wednesday that the security situation in Iraq remains a concern, but he insisted most parts of the country and the capital Baghdad were "very calm."

Separately, officials said Iraq's Oil Ministry has replaced the director of the Government's petroleum marketing agency in a bid to accelerate oil exports, considered the key to economic revival.

Shamkhi Faraj was named to head the State Oil Marketing Organisation, replacing Mohammed Jibouri, who had been running the agency since May. The move was confirmed by senior Ministry officials. Mr. Faraj formerly worked at OPEC and is considered knowledgeable in petroleum marketing, an official said. — AP

THE HINDU

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THE HINDU

Iraq: U.S. panel to get 'WMD details'

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, NOV. 3. According to the Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Pat Roberts, the White House has agreed to turnover material on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction that was used to justify the invasion. But the top Democrat on the panel, Senator Jay Rockefeller, is unwilling to read much into this saying he would like to see what kind of documents are offered.

The Senate panel looking into the administration's rationale — chiefly on weapons of mass destruction — justifying the March invasion is miffed at the fashion in which the White House has gone about the whole business; and has demanded in letters to senior officials that documents and agreements reached on personal interviews be turned over.

"In a spirit of cooperation that the White House has agreed to supply us with the documents and the interviews we want," the Republican Senator Roberts, said on Sunday. His Democratic colleague was less than enthusiastic about the whole thing. "I

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want to see the documentation before I'm satisfied. I want to know that we really have it in hand", Mr. Rockefeller said. In being optimistic of this new found willingness of the White House, Mr. Roberts was not sure however as to when the materials would be turned over. "Every document we want will be made available; whether or not it's available on Monday or Tuesday is another thing." From the very beginning, the White House has been saying that while cooperation would be forthcoming, not everything that the Senate panel has been asking will be immediately given. And when push comes to shove, the White House is willing to invoke Executive Privilege to block access to documents and materials.

The Senate panel is keen on having access to the CIA officials who daily brief the President, George W Bush, and officials. Whether the White House will make these individuals available to law-makers remains to be seen. There is yet another facet to the goings on in Capitol Hill. The Republicans on the Senate Intelligence Panel wish to con-

fine this probe to the intelligence agencies and their assessments of the goings on in Iraq, especially proscribed weapons and systems. The Democrats wish to go a step further: how the White House used the intelligence findings and estimates. There is the strong view that this White House had taken the intelligence estimates and findings and doctored them to suit a particular policy. And one question that has repeatedly come up is if the 'threat' from Saddam Hussein was 'imminent' to warrant the outright invasion and occupation of Iraq.

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The quagmire curdles

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THE DEATH of 16 American soldiers on Sunday is the worst US casualty for a single day in 'post-war' Iraq. The political meaning of the tragic incident is best understood when it is seen that the number of US soldiers who have died since the end of major fighting has now exceeded that of troops killed during the invasion. There seems to be an agreement among western, including American, commentators that the occupation is not working. However, the broad opinion also seems to be that America can't just get up and go when the country is in its present state of chaos, although a possible challenger to President George W. Bush in the upcoming presidential election has suggested that the US go to the UN for another resolution on Iraq in which an exit strategy is adumbrated.

There is no question that the rising curve of American soldiers falling in the desert will be a major election issue

in the US. A charged political atmosphere is hardly the best time to reflect on political and military strategies. Expectedly, in Sunday's aftermath, the White House reaffirmed its resolve to push ahead in Iraq, a "long hard slog" in the words of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

US representative Paul Bremer and Iraq's governing council hand-picked by him now suspect each other, largely on issues relating to sovereignty. There is also a gap between the US and Britain on assessing who the enemy is in Iraq. In the beginning, everyone thought it comprised the remnants of the Ba'athists and al-Qaeda. The Americans now say Saddam Hussein himself is the lynchpin. But the British see disparate groups making up the resistance. A former national security advisor to President Clinton has even spoken of a "classical guerrilla war". The context is grave and few want to get in to bail the US out.

U.S. ARMY VEHICLE BURNT IN FALLUJAH

15 soldiers dead, 21 injured as U.S. helicopter is downed in Iraq

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, NOV. 2. Capping a week of escalating violence, the Iraqi resistance to U.S. occupation touched a new high on Sunday when the resistance forces shot down a transport helicopter carrying dozens of soldiers, killing at least 15 soldiers and injuring 21.

This is the highest number of troops the U.S. has lost in a single day in Iraq since April. Another American soldier died in a separate incident in Baghdad later today.

The Chinook helicopter was brought down near the village of Hasi, 10 km south of Fallujah, the centre of the anti-U.S. guerilla campaign.

Eyewitnesses said they saw a couple of surface-to-air missiles fired at two U.S. helicopters that were apparently ferrying 50 soldiers heading on leave. One of the helicopters took a hit, caught fire and crashed on the corn-fields. The other hovered in the air for some time before

landing near the downed chopper. Soon afterwards, six smaller U.S. Black Hawk helicopters, apparently providing surveillance back-up, dotted the sky, while dozens of U.S. soldiers swarmed around the wreckage to carry out evacuation, which continued for nearly two hours. Local residents later carried away charred pieces of the wreckage.

American military helicopters had been targeted twice earlier since the May 1 announcement of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, that the major combat in Iraq had ended. A U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter crash-landed on October 25 in Tikrit after being hit by ground fire, while on June 12, a U.S. Army attack helicopter was downed in the western desert.

Today's incident followed the appearance of leaflets earlier this week calling for three days of Iraqi resistance beginning on Saturday and marking six months of the end of the war in Iraq. On Friday, the U.S. issued warnings appre-

hending major guerilla attacks around this period, and the United Nations transferred its last remaining staff in Baghdad to Cyprus.

In other major attacks, U.S. forces locked horns with resistive residents in the Abu Ghraib area, on the western end of Baghdad.

An agency report, quoting local people said that four American soldiers were killed in this incident, the second such engagement in three days. In Fallujah, a U.S. military vehicle was set ablaze early this morning.

Television pictures showed jubilant crowds gathering in the town, with the U.S. military vehicle that was set aflame visible in the background. Residents reported four U.S. fatalities, but there was no confirmation from the U.S. military command.

The spurt in guerilla resistance began last Sunday when the Al Rashid hotel in Baghdad, the centre of U.S. occupation, in which the visiting U.S. Deputy Secre-

tary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, was staying, was attacked with rockets.

This was followed the next day with the suicide raids on the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and at least three police stations, leading to an estimated 40 deaths and injuries to another 200 people.

Besides, the Iraqi resistance, for the first time targeted a train ferrying supplies to the U.S. military earlier in the week. According to the U.S. military command, attacks on U.S. forces had spiralled to an unprecedented average of 33 a day in the previous week.

Blast rips pipeline

AFP reports from Tikrit:

An explosion tore apart an oil pipeline near Kirkuk, an official said.

The last ripped through the pipeline in the region of Mashruh al-Therthar, southeast of the city of Samara.

tragedy, says Ru field: Page 13

Oil pipeline set ablaze near Tikrit

2 US soldiers die in Mosul blast

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Nov. 1. — A roadside bomb killed at least two US soldiers today in Mosul, and many parents kept children away from classes in the capital after leaflets attributed to Saddam Hussein's party warned of a "Day of Resistance" against the US occupation.

The US military said two US 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 both badly injured.

However, there was no sign of a rumoured wave of attacks which the resistance was allegedly planning for Baghdad today.

Insurgents were active elsewhere, attacking a US convoy near Heet. An oil pipeline was on fire about 15 km north of Saddam's hometown of Tikrit. Witnesses said they suspected sabotage because the blaze was preceded by an explosion.



Iraqis look at a destroyed car. Witnesses said a 6-year-old boy was in the car when it was smashed by a US tank, in Baghdad's suburb of Abu Gharib on Saturday. — AFP

'No evidence of Saddam hand'

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1. — US secretary of State General Colin Powell has said there is no evidence to suggest ousted Iraqi leader Mr Saddam Hussein is coordinating some of the attacks against US forces in Iraq. Gen. Powell, in an interview to be aired on ABC Television's *Nightline* programme, flatly rejected comments of unnamed senior US officials who were quoted in the *New York Times* as saying there were indications Saddam may be directing attacks from his hometown of Tikrit.

"I speak on the record and I don't know what these sources or who they were were saying, but when I saw the story and came in and pulled up all the intelligence I could from my people as well as talking to the people at the agency, I don't know the basis of those stories," Gen. Powell said yesterday. — AFP

Saudis assured of US support against terror

Associated Press

RIYADH, Nov. 10. — Saudi Arabia received US assurances of help in the war on terror today after a suicide car bombing killed at least 17 people and injured more than 122 in its capital.

Armed police and military guards and armoured vehicles blocked the roads leading to the compound housing mostly Arab foreigners, located in a ravine



Mr Armitage: Pledging support.

surrounded by hills, that was the scene of Saturday's attack. Security also was heavier at compounds for Western foreigners today.

Arriving in the wake of the attack, US deputy secretary of state Mr Richard Armitage said close cooperation in the war on terrorism was needed to prevent more Al-Qaida attacks in the kingdom. "On behalf of my nation I will just pledge that we will be fully participating partners (in the war on terror) if

that is the desire of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

Jordan's King Abdullah II expressed his "strong condemnation" of the attack. In a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, the king assured him that "Jordan stands with its brothers in Saudi Arabia and rejects attempts to destabilise the kingdom."

Saturday night's car bombing was portrayed by Saudi officials as proof of the Al-Qaida's "willingness to shed Arab and

Muslim blood" as well in its zeal to bring down the US-linked Saudi monarchy. At least 13 of those killed were Arabs, with four as yet unidentified.

A US embassy spokesperson today said after a daily review of the threat level, staff and their families were told they could now travel outside Riyadh's heavily guarded diplomatic quarter to which they had been ordered restricted on Saturday. But, the embassy would remain closed.

Slow learner

Rumsfeld reverses gear abruptly

Vice-President Dick Cheney, secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz have been key figures driving Washington's Iraq policy, and the general unilateralist stance of which it is an outcome. Rumsfeld, in particular, has made gung-ho political announcements on Iraq into an art form, intended to suggest that things are going swimmingly and the violence and chaos is only a temporary blip before the dawn of civilisation. In fact, of course, Rumsfeld and his friends by unleashing this violence and chaos are writing recruitment posters for Islamic fundamentalism and the Al Qaeda. It is also becoming known that the neoconservative cabal in the Bush administration, who the President follows rather than leads, had a plan for invading Iraq even before 9/11. After the event they simply activated the plan taking advantage of the national trauma and anger. A recent internal memo that was circulated by Rumsfeld, and leaked to the press, shows that even Rumsfeld is beginning to get what is apparent to the rest of the world, that the "war on terror" is going seriously wrong.

Rumsfeld mentions the slow progress in tracking down Taliban leaders, raises the pertinent question whether the number of terrorists being captured or killed is greater or less than the number of new terrorists being created, and notes that both Afghanistan and Iraq will be a "long, hard slog". He also mentions, thrice, the role of Pakistan's madrasahs in nurturing terrorists. That's an area that has dropped out of view since General Musharraf lined up behind America and also promised to reform them in his January 12, 2002 speech, a promise that he has forgotten to remember because the Bushies have indulged him rather than holding his feet to the fire. Rumsfeld also suggests that the US has relied too much on military operations and too little on diplomatic and other means to fight terror.

That's close to what critics of US policy have been saying, that too little attention is paid to non-military means such as nation-building that ensures stable states — an approach Rumsfeld once derided. In a recent interview Rumsfeld even suggested a central role for NATO in global security, a far cry from his unilateralist calls for a "coalition of the willing" and running down France and Germany. Rumsfeld's abrupt change of heart seems linked to his changed status in Washington favouring Condoleezza Rice. He is also clever enough to use this to insulate himself from the fallout of an Iraq policy that is failing disastrously.

Iraqis strike at Rumsfeld deputy's hotel

Baghdad, October 26

IN A daring strike, anti-American forces unleashed a barrage of rockets on Sunday against the Al-Rasheed Hotel, a symbol of the US presence, killing a US soldier and wounding 15 people.

Visiting Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who appeared shaken as he addressed reporters shortly after the 6.10 am (local time) attack, promised it would not deter USA in its mission to transform Iraq. "There are a few who refuse to accept the reality of a new and free Iraq," he said. "We will be unrelenting in our pursuit of them."

In Washington, hours after the attack, Secretary of State Colin Powell, admitting the situation was "dangerous" with remnants of the old regime still active, said "we are in for a long, hard test of will and ... are prepared to meet that test".

The 15 wounded include seven US civilians, four American military personnel and four "non-US coalition civilian partners", a statement by the US command said.

Sunday's attack brings the toll of US servicemen killed since the start of the Iraq War in March to 343. Of them, 219 died in hostile action and 124 in non-combat incidents.

Wolfowitz, on a three-day Iraq tour, was believed to have been in the Al-Rasheed, which housed both civilian occupation officials and US military forces. The hotel's western concrete face was left pockmarked with a half-dozen or more holes and

Symbolic return

IRAQ WILL soon have a new flag and national anthem as part of efforts to sever all links with the Saddam era and his Baath party.

"For the anthem, there is a consensus to go back to the one used before the early 1980s and which was called 'My homeland'," an official said. Saddam had brought in a new song glorifying his Baath Party. "I also think we will go back to the old emblem from the time of Abdul Karim Kassem which had a cogwheel with wheat instead of the eagle now in use." Kassem ruled Iraq from 1958 to '63.

AFP, Baghdad

shattered windows in nearly ten rooms. The heaviest damage was on the fifth and eighth floors of the modern, 18-storeyed building. The hotel also was attacked on September 27 with small rockets, causing only minimal damage.

The attackers had boldly driven to the edge of a park just 500 yards southwest of the hotel, towing what looked like a portable, two-wheeled generator, Iraqi police said. They quickly fled, and rockets suddenly ignited within the trailer, apparently on a timer, flashing toward the nearby hotel. Their impact resounded across central Baghdad. Three approaching security guards were injured by the ignition blast.

After the attack, scores of US offi-

cialists fled the building in pyjamas, heading for a nearby convention centre housing occupation offices.

Wolfowitz, expressing "profound sympathy" for the victims, said danger persists in Iraq "as long as there are criminals out there staging hit-and-run attacks."

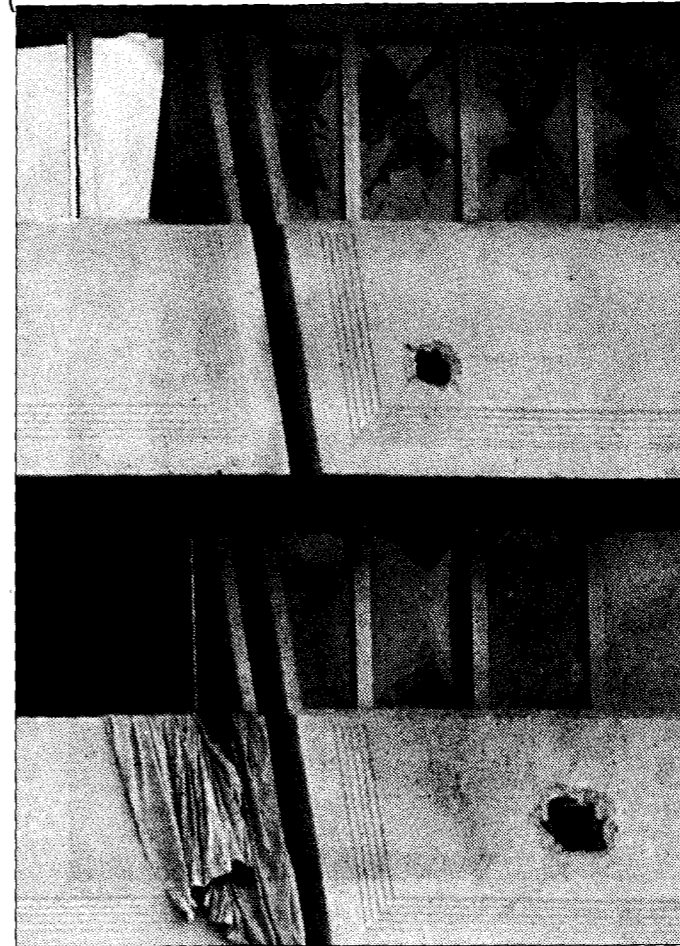
Just a day earlier, and only hours after the deputy secretary left the 4th Infantry base at Tikrit, a division helicopter crash-landed after insurgents fired a rocket-propelled grenade near the base. The Black Hawk pilot managed to maintain control after the hit and crash-landed, said a spokesman. Five crew-members were injured.

After the attack, US troops flooded the area, closing off roads around the "green zone," a heavily-guarded district of central Baghdad that includes the palace headquarters of the coalition and offices of the Iraqi Governing Council. The morning clamp-down caused massive traffic jams.

The rockets were fired two hours after coalition authorities ended the night-time curfew in Baghdad in preparation for Ramzan, which begins here Monday. Officials had cited improved security as the reason for ending the curfew.

An Iraqi police commander said the attackers, in a Chevrolet pick-up, had driven down a main road passing a few hundred yards from the hotel and stopped at the edge of the city's main Zawra Park. The hotel is part of a compound on the Tigris used by the US administration and, to Iraqis, a symbol of US occupation.

Reuters & AP



TERROR'S SIGNATURE: Shattered windows of the Al-Rasheed Hotel, in central Baghdad, which was struck by eight rockets early on Sunday.

WTC attack probe panel frowns on document delays

THE HEAD of the federal commission investigating the 9/11 attacks said the White House was withholding highly classified intelligence documents and he was ready to subpoena them if they were not released within weeks, *New York Times* reported in its Sunday edition.

Thomas Kean, chairman of the bipartisan National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, said he also thought the commission would soon be forced to subpoena other executive branch agencies, the newspaper reported. In the interview, conducted on Friday, he cited the Bush administration's delay in providing documents and evidence as the reason.

Earlier this month, the commission voted to subpoena the Federal Aviation Administration after it decided the agency withheld documents related to the attacks.

"Any document that has to do with this investigation cannot be beyond our reach," said Kean, the former Republican Governor of New Jersey. It was the first explicit public warning to the White House that it risked subpoena and a possible courtroom battle with the commission over access to the documents, which include Oval Office intelligence reports that preceded the attacks.

The commission has "been very successful in getting a lot of materials that I don't think anybody has ever seen before," he said. "Within the legal constraints that (the White House) seem to have, they've been fully cooperative. But we're not going to be satisfied until we get every document that we need."

The White House did have not any immediate comment on the report. In August, the Accounting Office, Congress' investigative arm, said Vice-President Cheney stymied its probe by refusing to turn over documents.

Reuters, New York

Billions for Iraq beat US expectations

Whoosh! Inspiring stamina, Mr Bush

Honolulu, Oct. 24 (Reuters): Globe-trotter George W. Bush skidded to a halt in Hawaii yesterday after a week-long sprint through six Asia-Pacific nations, spending mere hours in most.

Not a big tourist, Bush stopped long enough only for official meetings, seeing little of what each country had to offer.

Aides cited several reasons for his high-speed travel, but the overriding ones were: He wanted to get his business done and move on, and he didn't want to burden governments with long stays given security concerns these days.

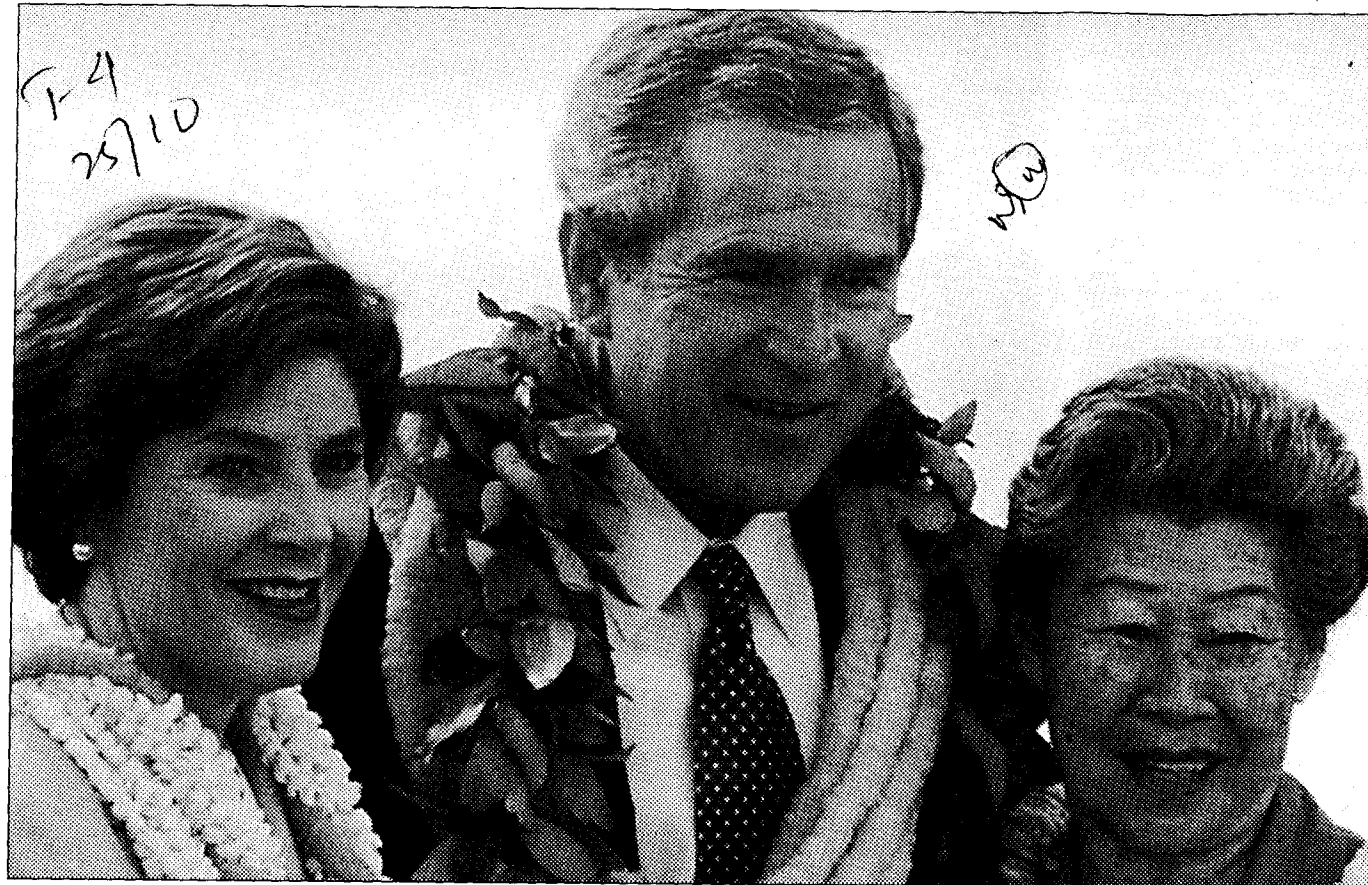
Thus you had a four-hour visit to Indonesia, a 20-hour visit to close ally Australia, a layover in Tokyo.

His first stop on the 26,629-mile odyssey was in Tokyo, where he saw the inside of the palace, ate dinner and was given two things by Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi: the nickname of "Beef Man" because of his fondness for meat, and a Sony robot dog that responds to spoken command.

The only problem was the dog only responds to commands in Japanese, and Bush speaks Texan and Spanish.

On to Manila for an eight-hour state visit to the Philippines, Bush could not stay overnight due to security concerns related to fears of a militant attack.

So after putting on a formal barong shirt and having dinner



President Bush and first lady Laura Bush with Hilma Chang, a volunteer at the USS Arizona Memorial, in Hawaii on Thursday. (AP)

with Philippine glitterati, it was back on Air Force One bound for Bangkok for the night.

In the Thai capital, Bush remained behind closed doors in meetings with various world leaders throughout the two-and-a-half day stay, venturing out only for a brief tour of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

It was said that President Calvin Coolidge won a bet to a man who said he believed he could get Coolidge to say more than two words. "You lose," said Coolidge.

That is an important context given Bush's reaction to seeing the Emerald Buddha.

"Inspiring," he said, and kept moving.

Maybe it would not be so striking except for the memory of his predecessor, Bill Clinton, who could wander in a museum for hours and hear endless commentary from tour guides, and even tell the tour guides a thing or two.

Ronald Reagan would spend days just getting to Asia to adjust to the time difference.

"Different presidents are going to have different styles, no question about it," said White House communications director Dan Bartlett.

It was dark by the time Bush

got to Singapore. He talked terror with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, had a meal, slept, and was up and gone bright and early for Bali, Indonesia.

In Bali, the brilliant backdrop of turquoise sea, breaking surf and waving palm fronds invited a slow pace. But it was not to be. At a joint news conference, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri looked tempted to call on more than four questioners. This could turn it into an extended session and cost some more time before the next flight.

Bush started edging away from the podium. He looked at Megawati and said, "That's it."

And she reluctantly agreed.

It was on to Australia. He did not see any of the sprawling green acres that might give him a taste of his own beloved ranch back in Texas. He went to the parliament building on Thursday, gave a speech, was heckled by a couple of members, and was on Air Force One to Hawaii.

Crossing the International Dateline, it thus became Thursday again. He toured Pearl Harbor, and had an evening fundraiser planned. Why not spend the night? That is what his staff thought. But no. Bush only had one vote, but it was the one that counted.

Aid pledges total \$33 bn

Madrid, Oct. 24 (Reuters): Some brought billions for Iraq, some brought hundreds of millions, some brought food and drink. Neighbouring Iran promised a tourist bonanza.

International donors pledged around \$33 billion in aid and loans over the next five years to help rebuild war-ravaged Iraq today as the response to a US-led drive for funds smashed expectations.

Donors other than the US promised some \$20 billion at the two-day conference in Madrid, Iraqi planning minister Mahdi Hafez said. "This is an excellent start...Most of the pledges are grants but the exact percentage will be announced later," he said.

That is on top of \$20 billion promised by Washington and is far in excess of what had been expected a few weeks ago, when political divisions threatened the existence of the meeting.

"If you take the American contribution which is hopefully totally a grant, then we have at least \$33 billion, of which \$25 billion is grants," said Marek Belka, a former Polish finance minister who is spearheading the fund raising efforts of the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority. He said the figure took the lowest likely contribution from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and excluded trade, finance and grants in kind.

US officials, who had lobbied hard to persuade reluctant donors to chip in more cash, were fulsome in their praise for the conference which they said marked a turning point in international

support for Iraq. "The Iraqi people will long remember the assistance we'll provide them at this critical moment of challenge and hope," US secretary of state Colin Powell told the conference.

Among the assistance pledged was 100 tonnes of tea from Sri Lanka and rice worth \$500,000 from Vietnam. Iran, which fought Iraq for eight years in the 1980s but retains strong cultural ties, made one of the most unusual offers — 100,000 tourists and pilgrims a month, whom foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi expected to spend \$500 million a year. Iraq contains some of the holiest shrines for Shia Islam, the majority faith in Iran.

The World Bank said it would make between \$3.5 billion available up to 2008, while the IMF promised support of up to \$4.25 billion over three years.

But optimism over the rash of pledges was clouded by the treacherous security situation in Iraq, from where international agencies, including the UN, have pulled out or reduced their staffing to a minimum.

Two US soldiers were killed in a mortar attack near Samarra today, a US military spokeswoman said, bringing to 108 the number of US soldiers killed since Washington declared major combat operations over on May 1.

The aid conference had struggled against scepticism from war critics and fault lines opened by the conflict were still apparent, with war opponents France, Germany and Russia making no new promises of aid.

Continuation to relevant provisions

Bush defends foreign policy

Kuta (Indonesia): US President George W. Bush made no apology on Wednesday to Muslims angry over the war in Iraq and the strong US relationship with Israel, defiantly declaring: "I'm proud of our foreign policy."



George Bush

Anti-US sentiment in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, has soared of late. A June opinion poll found that only 15 per cent of Indonesians have a favourable view of the US, down from 75 per cent three years ago.

Asked during a joint press conference here with Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri how he rebutted charges that Washington is biased in favour of Israel, Mr Bush renewed his support for creating a Palestinian state.

"I'm the first (US) president to ever articulate such a vision, and I still believe it is possible," said Mr Bush, here for three hours as part of a whirlwind six-nation tour of Asia and Australia.

"In order to achieve a Palestinian state living side by side in peace, there needs to be leadership

willing to fight off the terror that is trying to prevent the state from emerging," he said.

Later, Mr Bush joked about what some critics call Washington's go-it-alone approach to global problems, ribbing a US reporter who was poised to ask a question at the expense of local media. "Wait a minute, you're crowding out the host press. This is unbelievable. This is unilateralism at its worst," he said, drawing laughter from the crowd.

Earlier, security officials were nervous about Mr Bush's safety. At least 5,000 police and army troops were deployed for Mr Bush's visit, which was limited to just three hours because of security concerns.

Warships patrolled the seas, military forces in high-speed rubber rafts traced his arrival path and armoured vehicles were stationed at the airport, which was closed to commercial flights during Mr Bush's visit.

Meanwhile, the US will "eventually" hand over top terror suspect Hambali to Indonesia for trial, foreign minister Hassan Wirayuda said on Wednesday.

"The US needs time to interrogate Hambali," Mr Wirayuda told a press conference after a visit to Bali island by Mr Bush. Agencies

Bush praises Indonesia, angers clerics

Bali, Oct. 22 (Reuters): The world's most populous Muslim nation was praised today by US President George W. Bush for supporting the war on terror, but he told Indonesia that Islamic extremists had defiled a great religion.

Bush, however, ran afoul of leading moderate Muslim clerics during talks on the resort island of Bali, where Islamic militants linked to al Qaeda blew up two nightclubs packed with foreign holidaymakers just over a year ago, killing 202 people.

Reflecting growing mistrust of the US among ordinary Indonesians, the clerics criticised Washington for supporting Israel over the Palestinians and for the occupation of Iraq. They said Bush needed to listen more to the opinions of the rest of the world. Bush, speaking against the backdrop of a palm-fringed beach and turquoise sea, expressed his gratitude to Indonesia after meeting President Megawati Sukarnoputri and the

"We know that Islam is fully compatible with liberty and tolerance and progress because we see the proof in your country and in our own," he said.

"Terrorists who claim Islam



George Bush and Megawati Sukarnoputri in Bali. (AFP)

as their inspiration defile one of the world's greatest faiths. Murder has no place in any religious tradition. It must find no home in Indonesia."

Bush said he wanted to correct what he felt was a misconception that the war on terror was a cover for a war against Islam or that Americans thought all Muslims were terrorists.

Bush paid the brief visit to Bali under blanket security be-

fore flying to the Australian capital Canberra for talks with key ally Prime Minister John Howard as part of a six-nation tour. He paid tribute to the victims of the Bali bombings.

Indonesia took no chances with security, deploying seven warships along with 5,000 heavily armed police and troops backed up by sniffer dogs and bomb squad units.

Bush hoped his visit would

help dampen anti-Americanism in Indonesia. Megawati said she attached "great importance" to Jakarta's relationship with the US. But the Muslim clerics told Bush that United States policies in West Asia were one of the root causes of terror attacks.

"We told him US foreign policy should seek a new paradigm if the America wants to be respected by the world community and be safe," Syafii Maarif, head of the second-largest Muslim group in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah, said.

Maarif said he told Bush his policies toward Israel were "extraordinary" and his fear of terrorists "excessive". However, he said later that the meeting was also a positive development.

"I think I once said Bush was like Genghis Khan... but I didn't tell him that. If I consider what has happened, it was an open and lively meeting which we did not expect," he said.

Hasyim Muzadi, leader of Indonesia's largest Muslim group, Ulama, said the meeting was part of a "never-ending struggle". "The clash between Islam and America needs to be stopped because this will destroy everything," he said.

Canberra, Oct. 22 (Reuters): US President George W. Bush distanced himself today from a senior military intelligence official who sparked an international firestorm by saying that Muslims worship an idol and not a "real God."

Moderate Muslim clerics took issue with army Lt Gen. William Boykin, an evangelical Christian who serves as deputy undersecretary of defence, during talks in Bali.

"I said: 'He didn't reflect my opinion. Look, it just doesn't reflect what the government thinks.' And I think they were pleased to hear that," Bush told reporters afterward.

The comments were Bush's first in public on the controversy surrounding Boykin, who portrayed the US war on terrorism as a clash with "Satan," saying Islamic radicals sought to destroy America "because we're a Christian nation."

Bush, in contrast, has publicly — and privately — rebuked Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad over

his remarks about Jews controlling the West by proxy.

In an interview with reporters aboard Air Force One, Bush said he "didn't yell" at Mahathir at an Asia-Pacific summit.

"I said they (his comments about Jews) were divisive and unnecessary."

Defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced yesterday that the Pentagon would launch an internal probe into speeches given at churches and prayer breakfasts by Boykin.

Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Senator John Warner, a Virginia Republican, called for Boykin to be reassigned, at least temporarily.

Boykin's comments surfaced last week when NBC News broadcast videotapes of him giving speeches while wearing his army uniform at various Christian functions.

In one speech, Boykin referred to a Muslim fighter in Somalia who said US forces would never catch him because Allah would protect him.

"Well, you know what I knew, that my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol," Boykin said.

Several Democrats and some religious and civil rights groups have condemned his remarks.

Boykin said in a statement on Friday he was "neither a zealot nor an extremist," was "not anti-Islam or any other religion," and offered a "sincere apology" to those offended by his remarks.

Reflecting growing mistrust of the United States among ordinary Indonesians, the clerics meeting in Bali also criticised Washington for supporting Israel over the Palestinians and for the occupation of Iraq.

"There was kind of a sense that Americans believe that Muslims are terrorists," Bush said. "One of the reasons I wanted to have this meeting was because I wanted to make it very clear that I didn't feel that way and Americans don't feel that way."

US eases grip on funds to rebuild Iraq

Bangkok, October 20

UNDER PRESSURE from potential donors, the Bush Administration will allow a new agency to determine how to spend billions of dollars in reconstruction assistance for Iraq, administration and international aid officials say.

The new agency, to be independent of the US occupation, will be run by the World Bank and the UN. They are to announce the change at a donor conference in Madrid later this week.

The change effectively establishes some of the international control over Iraq that the USA opposed in the drafting of the UNSC resolution that passed on Thursday. That resolution referred to two previously established agencies devised to ensure that all aid would be monitored and audited.

But diplomats say other countries were unwilling to make donations because they saw the USA as an occupying power controlling Iraq's reconstruction and self-rule. The change, supported by Paul Bremer III, the chief occupation administrator, is meant to assure them as his team labours to reconstruct Iraq.

But instability continues in the country, with two US soldiers killed in an ambush in Kirkuk on Sunday and another soldier and two civilians killed after a patrol was attacked in the flashpoint town of Falluja on Monday.

A military spokeswoman said a roadside bomb exploded as the patrol was driving past on Monday. Attackers then fired assault rifles at the Americans, who returned fire. Witnesses said two civilians were killed and five wounded, including a woman and a child, in the crossfire.

Secretary of State Colin Powell, arriving here on Friday for the Apec conference, had said after Thursday's vote that he was "more optimistic than I was a week or so ago" about prospects of raising donations.

European countries are con-

cerned that the Coalition Provisional Authority "is the decision-making authority in Iraq," a World Bank official said. "For political reasons, they don't want their funds to be perceived as being commingled with funds controlled by the CPA, and want their own say over how it is spent."

American reconstruction aid, like the proposed \$20 billion that President Bush is struggling to get through Congress, would go to the previously set up entity, the Development Fund for Iraq, which is run by the occupation administrators and Iraqis. Other resources are to come from Iraqi oil revenues. This fund has given big contracts to American companies like Halliburton and Bechtel.

But the new agency could open up that process and award contracts through bidding practices open to global companies. Donors could also give directly to Iraq, specifying that their own companies do the work.

Leading up to Madrid, Japan has committed itself to \$5 billion over several years, including \$1.5 billion in 2004. The European Union has committed \$230 million and Canada about \$200 million for 2004. The World Bank plans loans of \$500 million in each of the next two years. Arab countries are also being wooed.

At first, the US Defence Department, which runs the occupation, had resisted handing over financial control of Iraq's rebuilding. Instead, the Pentagon set up the Development Fund, which is recognised by a UNSC.

The Administration changed its mind in recent weeks, in part because of Bremer. "We had to act because the world community was stonewalling us on aid," said an official. But the USA would still be consulted in the spending of aid money, for example to avoid duplication of spending. "The donors all want to have a little bit of distance from us," he said. "That's fine. But you can't really do much of anything without some coordination with us."

The New York Times

Senate defies Bush on Iraq loan waivers

Lower House grants \$87 bn

Washington, October 17

THE SENATE defied the Bush administration on Thursday by insisting that Iraq repay up to \$10 billion in reconstruction aid, even as a divided House took a different path and granted President Bush's \$87 billion request for Iraq and Afghanistan.

A bipartisan coalition of moderate senators, saying that American taxpayers should not bear the entire burden of rebuilding Iraq, prevailed against strong administration opposition in a 51-to-47 vote on Thursday.

Their amendment would require half of the \$20.3 billion in reconstruction aid to be a loan to Iraq, unless the administration persuaded other countries to forgive 90 per cent of Iraq's existing debt.

If the \$150 to \$200 billion in foreign debt is forgiven — which appears highly unlikely — the full \$20 billion in aid would be given to Iraq. The amendment was principally sponsored by Senator Evan Bayh, Democrat of Indiana.

"The American people are very generous," said Sen Susan Collins, a co-sponsor of the loan plan. "But the American taxpayer does deserve to be repaid eventually for some of our investment in this country. And Iraq deserves to be treated as a country that has the enormous economic potential that it clearly has."

For many senators, the administration's unyielding approach to post-war reconstruction could not be reconciled with the waves of opposition that their constituents have voiced in the five weeks since Bush announced his inten-

tion of spending \$87 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan. At a time when record-high deficits have squeezed public-works projects at home, many senators said it was only fair to ask Iraq to contribute to its own rebuilding with its future oil revenues. "All we're asking the Iraqi people to do is to take part of that \$130 billion or \$150 billion, whatever it will be that it adds up to, and share part of it with us, just share \$10 billion with us," said Sen Saxby Chambliss.

Sponsors of the amendment said that by linking the loan to a forgiveness of Iraq's foreign debt, they hoped to provide an incentive for the administration and other countries to reduce Iraq's burden of payments.

The amendment says if other countries forgive Iraq's debt, the US will forgive repayment of the \$10 billion.

By linking billions of dollars for the troops to Iraq's reconstruction, the administration forced lawmakers to either support a huge, unpopular spending bill or be branded missing in action in the war on terrorism.

More troops killed

Three US military policemen and two Iraqi officers were killed overnight in a clash in Karbala, it emerged on Friday. The firefight outside the offices of a local Shia cleric saw the patrol fired on with rocket-propelled grenades and AK-47s. A US military spokesman said four US military police and five Iraqi police were also wounded in the attack.

The New York Times

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES 18 OCT 2003

Washington Move Vindicates Government's Stance, Says Advani

US calls Dawood a global terrorist

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 17 OCTOBER

THE much-awaited US validation of New Delhi's position about Pakistan sheltering India's most wanted, Dawood Ibrahim, has come as a shot in the arm for the Vajpayee government. It not only represents a major victory for its post-December 13 diplomatic offensive against Islamabad, but a boost for the ruling coalition's anti-terror plank.

Deputy prime minister L.K. Advani, who described the US decision declaring Dawood as a global terrorist as a "major development" said it had vindicated the government's stand. The MEA summoned the deputy high commissioner of Pakistan and reiterated New Delhi's demand for the extradition of the 20 wanted criminals sheltered by Pakistan. The US concession to India must be damning for Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraf, who had mocked deputy prime minister's request for Dawood's extradition before the Agra summit. The US order detailing Dawood's residence, passport number and more importantly, the role that he had played in the Gujarat communal carnage at the behest of his handlers in Pakistan's ISI, will also help the government in rammimg in its



DAWOOD: MEIN HOON DON

point that the neighbour was aiding, abetting and sponsoring jihadis to the domestic as well as international audience.

The fact-sheet on Dawood Ibrahim put on the US department of treasury's website said, Dawood, son of a police constable, has financially supported Islamic militant groups working against India such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba. Information from as recent as 2002, indicated that Ibrahim has been helping finance increasing attacks in Gujarat by LeT which is the armed wing of Markaz-ud-Oawa-wal-Irsha, a Sunni organisation formed in 1989. The fact-sheet said Ibrahim's syndicate is involved in largescale shipment of narcotics in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. His smuggling routes from South Asia, the West Asia and Africa are shared with Osama bin Laden and his terror

network. "A financial arrangement was reportedly brokered to facilitate bin Laden's use of these routes," the department said. In the 1990's, Ibrahim travelled to Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban, it said. Vindicating India's position that Pakistan has been sheltering Dawood Ibrahim, the US treasury department said Ibrahim was in Karachi and possessed a Pakistan passport whose number was 0869537 under the individual category. The development is significant for the government for a variety of reasons.

One, it has come at a time when the government was facing criticism from within for its failure to achieve anything tangible after the December 13 build up. It may be recalled that the Opposition, particularly, the Congress have been accusing the government with achieving little from the military build up in the borders.

Secondly, Dawood has a larger than life image and him being branded as a global terrorist has a symbolic value. Of late, he has been trying to don the garb of an avenger of Muslim grievances. Thirdly, it could put the Indo-US relations back on the rails. As a matter of fact, government leaders have been critical of the US for not doing enough to rein in terror sponsors like Pakistan.

Govt tells Pak to hand over don

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 17 OCTOBER

WITH US confirmation of Dawood Ibrahim's terror credentials and his Karachi base under its belt, India on Friday called the Pakistani deputy high commissioner to South Block and once again demanded handing over of the underworld don so that he could be tried for various crimes.

At his meeting with Pakistani envoy Munnawar Bhatti on Friday morning, joint secretary in the ministry of external affairs (MEA) referred to the US Treasury notification, enlisting Ibrahim — giving his address as Karachi and confirming his possession of a Pakistani passport — as a "global terrorist" and reminded him of New Delhi's repeated requests for his deportation.

Islamabad has refused to heed India's requests claiming that the underworld don was not based or operating from its soil. However, with the US notification acknowledging Karachi as his current residence, the lie has been naited, giving India a fresh hope of getting Pakistan to deliver the Mumbai blasts accused.

"We also appeal to other states to disallow him transit or relocation from his current residence," an MEA spokesperson told newspapers later, while welcoming the US notification on Dawood Ibrahim. Deputy prime minister L.K. Advani, who described the notification as a "vindication of India's stand," was in touch with the MEA on the implications of US' designation of Ibrahim as a "global terrorist" for his links with Al-Qaeda and for financing terror outfits like Lashkar-e-Toiba. He raised the issue of Ibrahim's deportation on Friday with the Indian high commissioner to Pakistan, Mr P. Shivshankar Menon, during what was otherwise a routine meeting between the two. For Mr Advani, it was also a successful culmination of his active lobbying.

Statehood only if terror ends, says Powell

W9 (2) W Adm HT-15 1710

Washington, October 16

EXPRESSING OUTRAGE over the terrorist attack in Gaza which claimed the lives of three Americans, US Secretary of State Colin Powell on Thursday said the establishment of a separate Palestinian state was not possible till violence ended. "The terrorists are killing the dreams of the Palestinian people," Powell said.

"With Prime Minister Korei I made absolutely clear that we cannot move forward to a two-state solution without eliminating violence," he said, adding in an interview that the US-sponsored roadmap is still relevant. "Palestinian leaders and peo-

ple should realise that terror does not serve their interests. It is destroying the lives of innocents and dreams of Palestinian people." Asked whether the US remain a mutual broker between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Powell said: "We will serve our role."

Even as the general spoke, one Palestinian was shot dead and five others injured in an Israeli army raid on the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza.

Palestinian security services also arrested eight suspected militants in a refugee camp in northern Gaza Strip over Wednesday's bomb attack on the US diplomatic convoy. At least

three of those arrested in the Jabliya refugee camp, which is two km from the scene of the blast, were members of resistance committees. US President George W Bush had said that the bomb attack was evidence of a failure by Palestinian authorities to crack down on militants.

In another development, Bush has given the Palestinian Liberation Organisation a six-month waiver letting it keep its US offices open and use its US funds, the White House said. Had Bush not signed the waiver, the PLO's offices in the USA would have been closed and US banks would have been required to deny the group access to its funds. The an-

nouncement came minutes after Bush denounced the bombing.

'Brains, not brawn'

At the OIC meet in Putrajaya, Malaysia, host Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, a veteran leader with a reputation for speaking his mind, urged delegates to start using brains rather than brawn against Israel, telling the summit it was the only way to reverse 50 years of bitter defeat.

The Jewish people, because of their relationship with the USA, had an influence in the world that far outweighed their numbers, he said.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 OCT 2003

US set to win UN vote on Iraq resolution

10/10
United Nations: The United States is to present to the UN Security Council on Thursday a resolution on Iraq that France, Germany and Russia have said they will vote for despite continued reservations. Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said on Thursday in Brussels that Germany would approve the measure along with France and Russia, following telephone consultations with French President Jacques Chirac and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Mr Schroeder, however, said that Germany, France and Russia will not take part militarily in Iraq, despite supporting the new UN resolution. Washington seemed on the verge of what looked like a major diplomatic victory after facing down weeks of international criticism.

US officials said they were confident of getting the minimum nine votes on the 15-member council but agreed to a Russian request for a delay in a last-minute push to garner as many votes as possible. France, Germany and Russia on Tuesday proposed a se-

11-11
ries of minor amendments to the US outline but dropped their demands for the US to set even a rough date for the end of the US occupation in Iraq.

US (W)
R. Ahmed
"As far as Russia is concerned, quite a number of amendments which have been important to us were taken into account," Russian ambassador Sergey Lavrov said. "There has been real movement toward greater consensus on the council," US ambassador John Negroponte said before talks on another new US draft, the fifth put forward by the US in six weeks.

The resolution authorises a multinational force in Iraq that could provide the international cover needed for wary nations such as Pakistan, a nonpermanent member, to provide troops and cash to help stabilise the country.

The US refused to bend from its plan to have Iraq write a constitution first, then hold elections and only later gain full independence with the formation of a post-Saddam government. AFP

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 OCT 2003

TERRORISM / RANGE OF OPTIONS

U.S. House votes for curbs on Syria

WASHINGTON, OCT. 16. The U.S. House of Representatives has voted 398-4 to sanction Syria for its alleged ties to terrorist groups and efforts to obtain nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

The legislation, the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act, also calls on Damascus to end its occupation of Lebanon.

The U.S. President, George W. Bush, ended two years of opposition to the legislation, and has indicated he will sign it. The legislation gives the White House a range of options for sanctioning Syria, from restricting U.S. exports and business investment to downgrading Washington's diplomatic representation and imposing travel restrictions on Syrian diplomats in the United States.

"I think that this bill is crucial to the ongoing war on terror," said the House Majority Leader, Tom DeLay, at a press briefing. "Syria has evidently chosen to side with the terrorists in this war and it's time for the Government to start feeling the consequences of their actions."

"Terrorist states will not be tolerated," the Texas Republican said. "Congress has a responsibility to make Syria understand the recklessness of its actions."

Before reaching the President's desk, the measure must first be approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and then by the full Senate, which is expected in the coming weeks. — AFP

'Damascus will not bent'

AP reports from Damascus: Analysts on Thursday said the

U.S. vote will not make Syria buckle under pressure, stressing that the Government remains interested in a dialogue with Washington.

The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, last week said he warned the Syrian President, Bashar Assad, during a visit to Damascus in May that Congress would step in if Syria didn't reverse its policies that Washington considered hostile.

"This falls in the framework of pressure against Syria," Mahdi Dakhlala, editor-in-chief of *Al-Baath*, the newspaper of Syria's ruling Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, said on Thursday. He warned that the measure would not deter Damascus.

"Does Powell expect that if we didn't act before we will act now?" Mr. Dakhlala asked. "At the time when we didn't act, America's power was absolute in the region. Now they are finding difficulties in Iraq, why should we act now, and we didn't when they were strong?"

There was no official reaction from the Syrian Government. Mr. Assad did not touch on the issue in his speech hours afterward at the world Islamic summit of the Organisation of Islamic Countries in Malaysia. Syrian officials in the delegation refused to comment.

But on Saturday, as it became clear the House vote was a fait accompli, Syria criticised the measure as the work of Israel.

"Syria wants and calls for dialogue with America, but without dictates," Majed Halimi, a Syrian political writer and analyst, said. The Syrian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Bushra Kanafani, said Washington would be the main loser

Three Americans killed in Gaza blast

W32 WAW 9.11 16/10

Gaza, Oct. 15 (Reuters): A roadside bomb ripped through a US diplomatic convoy in the Gaza Strip today, killing three American security men in the first attack on American officials in three years of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Israel radio said the convoy included representatives from West Asia envoy John Wolf's office and the CIA, but US officials said Wolf was not in the region at the time.

A silver, armour-plated jeep used by American diplomats was demolished in the bomb blast, which dug a large crater in the street. Body parts, blood and debris were sprayed metres away and a black shoe lay on the ground.

Israeli security officials said three security guards attached to the US diplomatic contingent were killed and a diplomat was

wounded in the blast at the entrance to the teeming Jabalya refugee camp, a stronghold of Palestinian militants.

A spokesman for the US embassy in Tel Aviv said: "I can confirm there were American casualties." Diplomatic sources later said all the dead were Americans. The embassy advised all Americans to leave the Gaza Strip for their own safety.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Three Palestinian groups — Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — denied involvement.

Militants, who accuse Washington of heavy bias in favour of Israel, have frequently detonated roadside bombs against Israeli troops and tanks operating in parts of the Gaza Strip.

But it was the first time that a convoy of US diplomats had

been targeted in Israel or the Palestinian territories where violence has raged since a Palestinian uprising for statehood began in September 2000 after peace talks stalled. A US-backed "road map" for peace that Wolf was responsible for promoting has been stalled in recent months by tit-for-tat violence and Palestinian infighting.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat condemned the attack as "an ugly crime that targeted American observers as they were on their mission for security and peace" and he ordered an investigation, the official Palestinian news agency WAFA said.

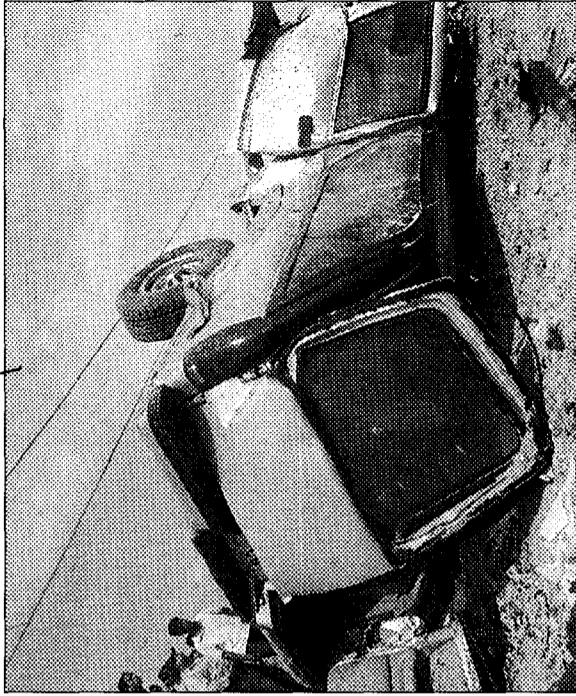
A Palestinian security source said the US delegation included a cultural attache on the way to interview students hoping to receive scholarships to study in the US. "It is an unacceptable attack against foreign and diplomatic

personnel," EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said. He called on the Palestinian Authority "to bring to justice the perpetrators of this cowardly act".

Though a small number of foreigners have been killed in suicide bombings in Israel, militant groups — mindful of the Palestinians' need to avoid alienating the international community — have insisted they are only targeting Israelis.

Palestinian youths throwing stones forced US investigators to leave shortly after they arrived at the scene near the Jabalya refugee camp. Palestinian policemen at the scene fired automatic weapons in the air to disperse the stone-throwers.

Israeli tanks located half a kilometre from the bomb site fired at the ground and in the air in an apparent attempt to secure the area.



Palestinians stand near a destroyed vehicle after the bomb blast in the Gaza Strip. (Reuters)

US sets Dec 15 date for Iraq poll schedule

UNHQ, October 13

A NEW US draft resolution gives Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council until December 15 to develop a time-table for elections and a new constitution.

The draft resolution was given to other members of the UN Security Council over the weekend, and the USA will seek a vote on it this week, diplomats said.

The draft comes at a time when Muslim nations were trying to overcome differences on the way forward in Iraq. Foreign ministers from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, meeting at Putrajaya in Malaysia ahead of Thursday's summit of 57 members, are riven by differences over Iraq, especially the issue of sending troops to help US forces administer the country. Hosts Malaysia said foreign occupation of Iraq should be ended as soon as possible and urgently called for a time-table to return power to Iraqis.

Turkey is the only OIC member currently willing to send troops but Iraq's Provisional Governing Council, hand-picked by the USA, opposes the plan as it fears motives of Iraq's neighbours.

OIC Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said he had encountered only reluctance from other Muslim countries to send troops, although they were needed in order to internationalise the occupying forces. "I don't think there is any desire by the Muslim countries to send troops. That is the feeling I am getting from my initial contacts," he said on the sidelines of the meeting.

The UN draft is the latest version of a resolution seeking international troops and money to help the US-led effort to rebuild Iraq. Earlier drafts came under criticism from some European nations seeking a stronger role for the UN and a speedier timetable for power handover.

According to the draft, the Governing Council must submit to the Security Council "a time-table and a programme for drafting of a new constitution and for holding of elections" by December 15.

Earlier drafts of the resolution had not mentioned any time-table for elections or a new constitution, and the deadline was likely a key concession to other members of the Security Council.

Like before, the draft calls for the creation of a multinational force to help

Saddam 'sighted'

SADDAM HUSSEIN is believed to have been near his hometown of Tikrit recently and is leading resistance to the US occupation, a senior US officer said on Monday. "We have clear indications that Saddam was here recently," said Major Troy Smith. "Do I know where he is? No."

Smith added that the fugitive former President might still be in the area around Tikrit, saying residents had reported this. "We feel like we're dealing with Custer's Last Stand of the Ba'ath Party in this area. It's really the only area he's got left." Saddam has a \$25 million reward on his head.

Reuters, Tikrit

maintain security. But unlike the previous draft, it says the Security Council will review the force's mission no later than a year after the resolution passes.

The latest draft also addresses concerns from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who had demanded a lead role for the organisation. It says the UN "should strengthen its role" ... by providing humanitarian relief, promoting economic reconstruction and helping to restore "institutions for governance".

US Ambassador to the UN John Negroponte said America would seek a vote on the resolution some time this week.

France, Germany and Russia are seeking a quick transfer of power to a provisional Iraqi government and want the UN to play a major role in overseeing the transition to a democracy.

Assassination bid

The governor of Iraq's Diyala province, near the Iran border, escaped an assassination attempt in Baqubah on Monday when a roadside bomb exploded, wounding two policemen and a civilian.

Four British soldiers were also injured on Monday in two separate explosions in Basra.

AP and Reuters

America gives up hope of UN support over Iraq

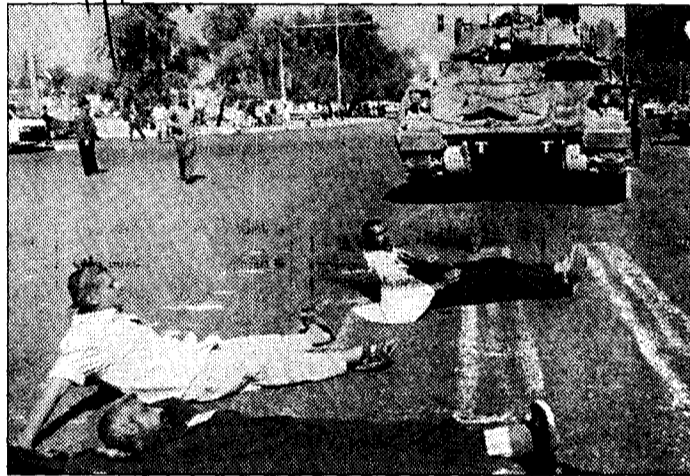
Washington, October 8

THE BUSH Administration has run into such stiff opposition at the UN Security Council to its plan for the future government of Iraq that it has pulled back from seeking a quick vote endorsing the proposal and may shelve it altogether, officials said on Tuesday.

Two weeks after President Bush appealed at the UN for help in securing and reconstructing Iraq, Administration officials said, his top aides will decide soon whether it is worth the effort to get a UN endorsement.

Originally, the Administration said UN approval of American plans for the next phase of post-war Iraq would encourage other countries to contribute money or troops. Now the tone has shifted to one of living without such help, if necessary.

"We don't want to play this game for long," said an official, reflecting exasperation with the Security Council. "This is as much a choice for the Council as it is for us. They can be multilateral and be part of it, or they can tell us to do it ourselves."



REUTERS

Nearly 2,000 Shias marched to the US Army headquarters in Baghdad on Wednesday demanding the release of an imam allegedly being detained by the Americans.

The new pessimism results from the cool reception accorded to the recent draft on Iraqi self-government, which had been redrawn to take into account suggestions of UNSC members. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan takes the view of the French that attacks on Americans in Iraq would subside once an interim

government was established. The point of contention between the USA and UK on the one hand and Annan, France and other Council members on the other is the American intention to retain control during what could be a long period of writing a constitution and holding elections.

The New York Times

Guantanamo interpreters under sabotage cloud

Washington, October 7

AMERICAN INTERPRETERS at the military prison at Guantanamo Bay base in Cuba, who are under suspicion of espionage may have sabotaged interviews with detainees by inaccurately translating interrogators' questions and prisoners' answers, senior American officials said on Monday.

It is unclear in how many cases, if any, this may have happened, officials said. But military investigators are taking the issue seriously enough to review taped interrogations involving the Arabic-language interpreters under scrutiny to spot-check their accuracy.

If the investigators' worst fears are realised, officials said, scores of interviews with suspected al-Qaida or Taliban prisoners at the Cuban detention centre could be compromised, and military officials could be forced to re-interview many of the camp's 680 detainees.

"There are enough suggestions that give us cause to compare the audiotapes with the

translations," said one senior American official familiar with the inquiry. The concerns about the reliability of some of the camp's 70 military and civilian linguists only add to the growing mystery surrounding the motives and objectives of as many as 10 people who worked at the camp, had contact with the prisoners and now are under suspicion in the widening inquiry.

Pentagon officials are saying very little publicly about the cases, in part because they are still baffled about whether there was a conspiracy to infiltrate the camp, and in part because of the nature of the investigation, a sensitive matter involving military and intelligence agencies. Top defence officials have yet to explain publicly what any of the accused spies may have been trying to achieve at Guantanamo Bay, a heavily-guarded camp on an American naval base.

The most serious charges have been levelled against an Air Force interpreter, Airman Ahmad I. al-Halabi, 24, who is accused of committing espionage by trying to deliver infor-

mation to Syria, including 180 messages from prisoners, many of their names, and flight schedules in and out of the camp.

Military officials have privately suggested a range of theories, including the possibility that the interpreters sabotaged the interrogations.

One Air Force official said on Monday that terrorists who might gain inside information from American confederates at the camp could have been trying to disrupt flights to and from the base. Another official said that terrorist leaders, by learning from the confederates which prisoners were in custody and what they were telling interrogators, could try to mitigate damage to their operations.

On one level, each branch of the military is investigating the espionage-related accusations against members of its own service. But a senior defence official said these inquiries were being coordinated as part of a broader investigation involving numerous government agencies that he would not discuss in detail.

The New York Times

Annan cloud on US draft

United Nations, Oct. 2 (Reuters): UN secretary-general Kofi Annan questioned today whether the new US-draft resolution on Iraq was enough to change attitudes towards the United Nations and other international bodies in the country.

Trying to win over sceptics, the US revised a UN Security Council resolution that emphasises a step-by-step transfer of power to Iraqis but gives no timetable for the end of the occupation. "We are studying it. We will have to determine whether it is a radical change from the past, or what it is," Annan told reporters. "Obviously it's not going in the direction I had recommended but I will still have to study it further." After the August 19 bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad that killed 22 people, Annan told council ambassadors he wanted a new "radical" approach that would make it safe enough for UN staff to return, UN officials said. Only about 30 foreign staff out of more than 600 are still in the country.

The new US draft strengthens duties of the UN but does not give the world body an independent role in overseeing the transition to sovereignty as many wanted. The main purpose of the new resolution, as in earlier drafts, is to transform the military operation into a UN-authorized multinational force under American command.

This provision is aimed at attracting more contributions from nations wary of sending soldiers as part of an occupation force, although volunteers appear to be scarce.

France had wanted an immediate symbolic handover of sovereignty to Iraq while Russia has advocated that the UN be given a date to formulate a timetable. Russia's UN ambassador, Sergei Lavrov said: "We believe that at this stage we should give the United Nations the leading role in the political process, to work with all Iraqis, to develop a timetable which should be clear, which would be leading to the full restoration of sovereignty and that this process could be supported by a multinational force."

2003

THE TELEGRAPH 3 OCT 2003

2 Iraqis killed, missile hits US hotel

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Sept. 27. — Three missiles or rocket-propelled grenades hit the Al Rashid Hotel, home to US military officers and civilian support staff, in central Baghdad today just hours after US soldiers killed at least two Iraqis at a checkpoint in Fallujah near Baghdad.

Mr James Smith, a spokesman for the US forces, said the projectiles struck the Al-Rashid Hotel about 6:30 a.m. There were no casualties. The Al Rashid, once one of Baghdad's best hotels, was taken over by the military after Saddam Hussein was toppled by US-led forces in April. It sits inside a heavily guarded compound that also houses the Baghdad Convention Center, where the military has its press office. The US-appointed Governing Council also has its headquarters in the complex.

Residents of the Salhiya neighbourhood just west of the complex said a rocket launcher was fired from the middle of a street and left behind as the attackers fled.

The attack came as residents in Fallujah, a hotspot of anti-US resistance west of Baghdad, reported that American troops fired on two vehicles at a checkpoint last night, killing four Iraqis and wounding at least three others, including a child.

The American military in Baghdad said soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division fired on an Iraqi vehicle as it ran a checkpoint in Fallujah last night. Spec. Nicole Thompson said two people were killed and four were wounded.

THE STATESMAN

28 SEP 2003

USA sets 6-month deadline for Iraq constitution

THE TIMES, LONDON

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27. — The United States of America changed track yesterday as it moved to speed up progress in Iraq, setting a six-month deadline for a new constitution.

Some members of the 25-man, US-appointed Iraq Governing Council have suggested that crafting the template for the country's political and social future would take much longer. The USA said it was up to the IGC to set its own timetable.

But after the United Nations said

this week that it was drastically scaling back its presence in Iraq because of increasing security problems, Washington is anxious to speed up matters.

The USA also hopes that the imposition of a time limit will help secure the UN's stamp of approval for the rebuilding of Iraq, easing agreement on a new Security Council resolution. Washington needs the resolution to pave the way for overseas troops and money to bolster the coalition.

Colin Powell, the US Secretary of

State, said: "We would like to put a deadline on them. They've got six months. It will be a difficult deadline to meet, but we've got to get them going."

The deadline will not necessarily be written into the text of the new UN resolution. But US officials hope that the time limit will help win French approval.

France has said it wants the resolution to spell out a speedy timetable for the transfer of power to the IGC. But the US is adamant that it will pass on authority only after Iraq's

first free elections, not to the unelected IGC.

Russia has pointedly not aligned itself with France's harder bargaining over the resolution. Mr Putin avoided direct criticism of the Iraq war when he addressed the UN General Assembly in New York this week, signalling that Russia was willing to play its part in Iraq.

The White House stepped up its defence of Mr Bush's \$87 billion budget for rebuilding Iraq after Republicans raised questions about some of the proposed spending.

'A step in the right direction'

BAGHDAD, Sept. 27. — The US deadline for drafting a constitution in Iraq is "a step in the right direction", Mofeed al-Jazaari, minister of culture and member of the political bureau of the Communist Party, which is represented in the Iraqi Governing Council, said today. "It is a sign that the process of transferring the power and authority to Iraqis is moving in the right direction. It is also a sign that the Americans are now aware of the necessity to accomplish the handing over of full authority to the Iraqis in a way that satisfies the Iraqi people, US public opinion and United Nations," al-Jazaari said. He said he believed six months "is enough to prepare a draft constitution" if all political groups work together. — AP

28 SEP 2003

THE TIMES

US bombs Fallujah house, kills civilians

32
XG-15 N/A

Fallujah, September 23

US FIGHTER jets bombed a house belonging to a family of 15 in a village just north of Fallujah early on Tuesday, killing three and injuring three.

Surviving family members said they had been asleep in the house when an American patrol began firing on them just before 2 am. The residents put up no resistance and after about 15 minutes the patrol began to withdraw. Several minutes later, a pair of American jet fighters

unleashed almost a dozen bombs on the house without warning, the residents said.

An American military spokeswoman confirmed that soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division killed at least one Iraqi on Tuesday morning after they had come under attack just north of Fallujah, a region north and west of Baghdad where loyalty to Saddam Hussein runs deep and most of the attacks against American soldiers have taken place.

"Folks from the 82nd Air-

borne were attacked, the attackers fled into a building and were pursued by coalition forces," said the military spokeswoman.

The Americans established a security perimeter around the building and called in "air support," she said. "One enemy was killed in action." There were no American casualties.

Bomb craters and shrapnel damage were visible at the house, a rough-hewn, five-room brick structure.

"We don't have any bullets in the house — it's a safe and quiet

area," said Abd Rashid, who was wounded in the attack. "Are they coming to kill the children and kill the people, attacking them during the night? The children were terrified. It's not acceptable in any country."

In New York, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Monday that the US is at odds with its chosen Iraqi politicians over how soon it should restore sovereignty to Iraqis.

But the US does not think the politicians on the Iraq Governing Council are ready to govern

and it would have trouble persuading Congress to give the Iraqis some \$20 billion as reconstruction aid.

"They would like to move more quickly," Powell said. "But they have no assets, they do not have enough income coming in, they don't have the institutions of government yet... To think that this can be done in a matter of weeks or a couple of months is very very unrealistic," he added. "If you do it too soon... that makes it very hard for us to ask the US Congress for \$20 billion to funnel

to an authority like that," he said. Powell said it would take at least a year to complete the political process which the US envisions — writing a new constitution, approving it by referendum, holding elections and setting up an elected government.

Even after that, the US could stay on in Iraq if the new government agrees, he said. The United States has had troops in South Korea and Europe for decades under agreements with friendly governments.

Agencies

US vetoes UN draft on Arafat

United Nations, Sept. 17 (Reuters): The US yesterday vetoed a UN resolution demanding that Israel not harm or deport Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, saying the text failed to name Palestinian groups blamed for suicide bombings.

Eleven Security Council members voted in favour of the draft while Britain, Germany and Bulgaria abstained after hours of consultations failed to lead to a compromise acceptable to both the US and Syria, the resolution's sponsor.

The measure, drafted by Palestinian UN envoy Nasser al-Kidwa with the support of Arab governments, "demands that Israel, the occupying power, desist from any act of deportation and cease any threat to the safety of the elected president of the Palestinian Authority."

"We will come back to you, perhaps soon in the future," Al-Kidwa told the council following the vote. "We will not be intimi-

dated by what happened."

Accusing Arafat of fomenting violence, an allegation he denies, the Israeli security cabinet last week announced Israel would "remove" him as "an obstacle to peace," although it did not say how or when.

The Israeli declaration unleashed a flood of international indignation. During nearly eight

hours of harsh debate in the 15-nation Security Council on Monday, more than 40 governments condemned the decision in principle to get rid of Arafat.

After the vote, US ambassador John Negroponte joined other council members in cautioning Israel that the veto did not mean it should harm Arafat or send him into exile.

He called the resolution "flawed" because it failed to explicitly condemn Palestinian militant groups, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, all of which have been blamed for suicide bombings in Israel. "This resolution did not take a clear stand against the actions of these terrorist groups or call for decisive action against them," Negroponte said.

But Syrian UN envoy Fayssal Mekdad called the veto "regrettable" and said Israel "should not be a member of the UN because it is not a peace-loving country. "Syria believes that Israel is responsible for its illegal policy and Israel is as well responsible for having scuttled the peace process in West Asia," he said.

The council decided late on Monday to hold a vote on the resolution at Syria's request, despite a veto threat from Washington.



Yasser Arafat in Ramallah on Wednesday. (AFP)

Palestinian leader unfazed

Ramallah, Sept. 17 (Reuters): Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said today he was unfazed by a US veto of a UN resolution demanding that Israel not harm or expel him.

"We are not shaken by a resolution from one place or another," Arafat told a delegation of Palestinian intellectuals and artists at his compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "We are more important than any resolution." Other Palestinian officials said the US veto yesterday, which angered the Arab world, showed that Washington was turning its back on a peace "road map".

In some of the most scathing Palestinian criticism since US President George W. Bush formally launched the peace plan in June, cabinet minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said US policy had become a "hostage" to Israeli hardliners.

US warns Israel on Arafat

Jerusalem, Sept. 14 (Reuters): Israel's vice premier today said killing Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was an option in its threat to "remove" him and the US rejected the idea, warning it would trigger "rage throughout the Arab world".

Also alarmed at Israel's threat was the chief Palestinian peace negotiator, Saeb Erekat, who expressed the fear that if Israel kills Arafat, Palestinian militias could unleash their wrath against moderate leaders such as himself.

"Killing (him) is definitely one of the options," Ehud Olmert,

rt, a mainstream member of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's cabinet, told Israel Radio today.

"We are trying to eliminate all the heads of terror, and Arafat is one of the heads of terror," said Olmert, who elaborated on a decision taken Thursday by Israel's security cabinet to "remove" Arafat, calling him an obstacle to peace.

Israel's threat followed a recent surge in Israeli-Palestinian violence, including back-to-back suicide bombings that killed 15 people on Tuesday. Israel, backed by the US, blames the 74-year-old Arafat, a former guerrilla leader,

for fomenting much of the violence of a nearly three year Palestinian uprising for statehood in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Arafat denies the charge for which the Israeli military has kept him largely confined to his battered headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah for 21 months.

The cabinet did not say when or how its threat against Arafat would be carried out, but the decision has brought an international outcry, and an outpouring of support for Arafat.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians demonstrated on Arafat's

behalf throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip yesterday, and today the protests spread through the Muslim world to nations as far away as Indonesia.

US secretary of state Colin Powell rejected Olmert's remarks. He said if Arafat was either exiled or killed "I think you can anticipate that there would be rage throughout the Arab world, the Muslim world and in many other parts of the world".

"The US does not support either the elimination of him or the exile of Arafat...the Israeli government knows that," Powell said.

Powell flies into Iraq as US death toll mounts

Baghdad: US secretary of state Colin Powell confronted the cost of the US-led occupation head-on when he flew into Iraq on Sunday just an hour after a bomb attack killed another US soldier. The second top US official to visit Baghdad in a little over a week, Mr Powell arrived at Baghdad airport fresh from talks in Geneva to try to coax other leading governments into helping to stabilise and rebuild the country. With US forces coming under fire more than a dozen times a day and the financial cost of occupation mounting, Washington is seeking a new UN Security Council resolution that would increase international involvement. Mr Powell did not win round all the other foreign ministers of the world's five major powers in

Geneva but they agreed to talk again at the United Nations next week.

A roadside bomb killed the soldier and wounded three in the restive town of Falluja around an hour before the start of Mr Powell's visit. The attack brought to 72 the number of US soldiers killed in action since May 1, when President George W. Bush declared major combat over in the US-led war that

ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

The soldiers' convoy hit a bomb planted on the road in Falluja, about 50 km (30 miles) west of Baghdad, a spokeswoman for the US-led occupying force said. Mr Powell was met at the airport by Paul Bremer, the US diplomat in overall charge of Iraq.

Scores of Iraqis gathered outside the headquarters of Iraq's US-led admin-

istration while Mr Powell was inside to air their grievances and demand assistance. "Tell him nothing has changed. It was better under Saddam," said 28-year-old Mushtaq Talib, a job-seeking army deserter, when asked what message he would like to convey to Mr Powell. "We need work to survive. But the Americans don't listen to us. The war did nothing for us," Reuters

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 SEP 2003

Rumsfeld in Iraq, faces troops' gloom

HC-15
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Tikrit, September 5

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 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 uncalled for."

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 firefight with Iraqi guerrillas. He later flew to the northern city of Mosul.

The US military tripled the usual troop numbers around Tikrit for the visit and soldiers swept streets clean around the complex of fishing lakes and mansions. But not all were ready to roll out the red carpet. "Personally I think the mission is over, so we should leave. I am ready to go home," Private Baraka Davis.

The Pentagon chief has been heavily criticised, both inside and outside the military, for extending troop deployment because of an unwillingness to send fresh US forces to Iraq. The United States has about 150,000 soldiers in Iraq, compared with about 22,000 soldiers from other countries.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov on Friday joined the leaders of France and Germany in rejecting the draft seeking UN support for a multinational force in Iraq, saying it "still needs further, very serious work". Rumsfeld said the US would recruit soldiers and policemen who served under Saddam Hussein's regime in the new Iraqi security forces.

The US military is accelerating the process of bringing former members of Saddam Hus-



Laura Bush wants to visit Baghdad

US FIRST Lady Laura Bush has expressed the desire to travel to Iraq and Afghanistan and said American schools should have tie-ups with institutions in the two war-torn nations.

After speaking to students at a South Carolina elementary school on Thursday, Mrs Bush said, "I hope I have a chance to travel to Afghanistan and Iraq."

She said it was important for Afghan children to return to classes after the Taliban's rule ended. "I've worked really hard and am still working on a number of issues that have to do with education in Iraq," the former teacher and librarian said.

PTI, Washington

sein's military — and possibly his security services — into the Iraqi security forces, Rumsfeld said on Thursday.

He said the top US generals in Iraq don't want more than the 140,000 American troops already on duty in the country. But they do want more Iraqis working as police, soldiers, security guards and border patrols.

In the latest spate of attacks, gunmen sprayed a Sunni Muslim mosque in Baghdad with bullets during dawn prayers on Friday, wounding three worshippers before fleeing, witnesses said. The attack took place in a mainly Shia area of Baghdad.

Reuters

'US will not pressure India to send troops'

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Much as the United States would like India to contribute troops to the operations in Iraq, Washington is not holding its breath or applying the squeeze in the matter and will continue to build its relationship with New Delhi, top US officials have indicated.

Responding to a variety of speculative reports, the officials, including US secretary of state Colin Powell, pointed out that the issue of troop contribution

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bution to stability in an area that's very important to India."

Mr Boucher also dismissed what he described as "coffee-shop" talk that India was holding back on the Iraq contribution because the US was giving Pakistan \$3 billion in aid, half of it in military supplies.

Elsewhere, Mr Powell, faced with a rebuff from France and Germany over what they saw as an inadequate new United Nations resolution, prepared the ground for an expanded non-UN force for Iraq even

Calling all allies to fight terror



We would certainly hope that New Delhi would find it possible to make a contribution to stability in an area that's very important to India

— Richard Boucher

from countries such as India and Bangladesh was mired in domestic debates and contingencies in those countries. And regardless of whether India sent troops or not, the US would continue to support New Delhi in its fight against terrorism, they added.

The US clarification comes amid fervid speculation in the Indian media about "US pressure" on the matter, a familiar neurosis among many analysts and reporters unused to the new paradigm between the two countries.

In recent weeks, US officials have repeatedly said that, while Washington would like India to step up to the plate in Iraq, it is a decision for India to make.

"Countries will get involved in this because they care about the region, because they care about the Iraqi people, because they think it's good for them to have a more stable region, particularly in a neighborhood that India is quite close to," US state department spokesman Richard Boucher said on Thursday. He added, "And we would certainly hope that India would find it possible to make a contri-

without contributions from countries such as India and Bangladesh.

"India, Bangladesh and others have their own political dynamic that has to be considered," Mr Powell told reporters on Thursday. "But I think I can say that we are very pleased and encouraged by the response we have had so far—that 30 nations have contributed something over 20,000 troops, who are there or on the way there, and that's pretty significant."

Indian officials say there has been no inordinate pressure from the US on the issue of troop contribution and reports in the media about the adverse effects of India not contributing were overblown.

"Of course, there is an element of regret, but they understand the very difficult domestic path we have to navigate," one official said.

US officials, too, denied that recent confabulations between the deputy chief of mission in New Delhi and foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal, as also the upcoming visit to New Delhi next week of assistant secretary of state Christina Rocca, are Iraq-centric.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

6 SEP 2003

Bush signs trade deals with Singapore, Chile

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4. — The US President, Mr George W Bush, has signed legislation to implement free trade deals with Chile and Singapore and anticipated more such agreements with many other countries.

The USA, Mr Bush said, is now negotiating with Australia and Morocco, five nations in Central America and the Southern African Customs Union. Soon it will begin negotiations with Bahrain and the Dominican Republic.

"We support free trade in the USA because it is vital to the creation of jobs," Mr Bush said yesterday during a signing ceremony.

"The USA also supports free trade because a world that trades in freedom will grow in prosperity and in security," he said.

"For developing nations, free trade tied to economic reform has helped lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty." Besides, he said the USA is working with 35 other nations in the hemisphere to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Also, the USA is encouraging the free flow of commerce and investment among its partners in APEC and Asean. The USA hopes to build on the success of its trade agreements with Jordan and Israel by establishing a US-Middle East Free Trade area within a dec-



LAISSZ FAIRE: President Bush signs a free trade agreement with Singapore and Chile during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House in Washington on Wednesday. — PTI

ade to create new opportunity and new hope in a region that needs them. Referring to the WTO negotiations, Bush said that completing the global economic success for rich and poor nations alike.

Hands off Iraq, US tells Iran

By Jal Taraporevala
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The chief US administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, has warned Iran not to interfere in the affairs of the country. Mr Bremer's comment underscores the failure of his administration to enlist the support of a significant number of Shiites (who constitute around 55 per cent of the population of Iraq) in view of the mounting problems on the economic front, the growing signs of lawlessness and the wide availability of weapons in the country. It is also a reflection of US concerns about the likelihood of increased rivalry in the coming weeks between the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which is the largest Shiite group



Paul Bremer

in the country, and other Shia organisations following the recent massive bomb blast in Najaf.

Any instability in the Shiite heartland of Iraq could work to the politico-strategic interests of Iran, a nation where Shiites account for nearly 90 per cent of the total population. After all, the more the Americans find the going tough in Iraq, the harder it will be for the Bush administration to step up the pressure on Teheran on the nuclear issue, human rights and support for such radical groups as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. For another, if Washington succeeds in establishing a federal framework in Iraq, the Iranian Kurds, who have long had their own sharp differences with the authorities in Teheran, could well demand for far-reaching autonomy similar to that enjoyed by their counterparts across the border.

Besides, the leadership in Teheran seems wary of the possibility that, in

new H. K. Adni
Once Iraq becomes a major oil-exporting nation again, crude oil prices will drop substantially, thereby resulting in a decline in its foreign exchange earnings

the event the US manages to win the backing of most Iraqi Shiites, Washington could try and stoke anti-government sentiment in Iran. Finally, once Iraq becomes a major oil-exporting nation again, crude oil prices will drop substantially, thereby resulting in a decline in Iran's foreign exchange earnings and an aggravation of the economic hardships in the country. Given these factors, Iran can be expected to use its influence with some of the Iraqi-Shiite groups to make things more difficult for the Americans in the post-Saddam Hussein period.

Bush upholds Israel's right to strike

110 WSA
10/6/03

Washington/Jerusalem, Oct. 6 (Reuters): US President George W. Bush today upheld Israel's right to self-defence after its air strike in Syria following a deadly Palestinian suicide bombing.

A White House spokesman said Washington had told both Israel to avoid escalation as tensions rose in West Asia.

In a new incident which heightened fears of conflict in the volatile region, security sources in Lebanon said Israel fired at targets across the border today. No one was hurt, Israel denied the report, but an official from the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon said one of its water trucks was hit by three bullets fired from inside Israel.

In Washington, a White House spokesman criticised Syria for "harbouring terrorists" and Bush said he had told Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon by telephone yesterday that Israel should not feel constrained in defending itself.

"I made it very clear to the Prime Minister, like I have consistently done, that Israel's got a right to defend herself, that Israel must not feel constrained in terms of defending the homeland," Bush said.

"However, I said that it's very

important that any action Israel take(s) should avoid escalation and creating higher tensions," he said. The air strike on an alleged training camp for Palestinian militants yesterday was Israel's deepest into Syria since the 1973 Middle East war.

The raid followed a Palestinian suicide bombing which killed 19 people at a restaurant in the city of Haifa on Saturday, just before the solemn Yom Kippur fast day.

US criticises Syria

"We urge both Israel and Syria to avoid actions that heighten tensions or that could lead to hostilities, but we have repeatedly told Syria that they need to stop harbouring terrorists," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said.

Syria has asked the UN Security Council to condemn the Israeli raid. It urged Washington not to block its resolution.

The Islamic Jihad movement, which carried out the attack in Haifa, said Israel would pay a big price if it extended its conflict with Palestinian militants abroad.

But Beirut-based Islamic Jihad official Abu Imad al-Rifai said: "I think our response will

remain first and foremost inside Palestine by virtue of our presence inside Palestine and the presence of our military forces inside Palestine." Islamic Jihad regards the state of Israel as being part of Palestine.

Political analysts doubt three years of Israeli-Palestinian conflict will trigger violence across West Asia, but Israel now faces heightened tensions with Syria and Lebanon. In Lebanon, an official with the UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL said no one was hurt in the shooting near the border with Israel.

"A UNIFIL water truck was hit by three bullets from the Israeli side," he said. "All our trucks are clearly marked."

A Lebanese security source had earlier said shots were fired from Israel into Lebanon and went over Lebanese cars on a road near the border. An Israeli army spokesman said: "The army did not attack any targets in Lebanon."

Syria called an emergency Security Council meeting yesterday but the US, which has a veto on the council, said it would not support a resolution which condemned the Israeli raid but made no mention of the suicide attack.



A fighter belonging to President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement with an anti-aircraft machinegun in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain el-Helweh, south Lebanon. (AFP)